
**SHELTERED HOUSING OFFICERS
RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT**

Report of the Director of Housing

1. Summary

This report looks at the options for lifting the requirement for future Sheltered Housing Officers (Wardens) to live in their allocated sheltered housing unit.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the present policy with the residential requirement continues unless the vacancy cannot be filled, in which case the post will be readvertised without the residential requirement.

3. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications in this report.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION/APPENDICES

1. Report

- 1.1 Following extensive consultation with elected Members, service users and officers, the job description, duties and conditions of service of the Sheltered Housing Officers (Wardens) was radically changed in 1998. Some discussions took place at this time over the issue of residency in, or near, the Sheltered Housing Units (WAAs) and the decision was made to continue to make this mandatory except where officers were being redeployed from other posts.
- 1.2 The major review of Warden Assisted Accommodation, now known as Sheltered Housing, and the LeicesterCare Emergency Alarm Dispersed Service, which took place during 1998, resulted in twelve Warden vacancies. Two of the vacancies were filled through the redeployment of officers from LeicesterCare and the remaining ten went out to advert.
- 1.3 The ten vacant posts were advertised on four separate occasions as the response to the initial advertisements was very poor. Enquiries were received from potential applicants living in the City who wanted to apply but were unwilling, and/or unable to fulfil the residency requirement, usually due to owning homes and/or having settled domestic arrangements in specific locations that they did not wish to disrupt.
- 1.4 The fact that the Wardens have to pay full rent for their properties as recommended by the District Auditor is a further deterrent to taking such posts.
- 1.5 The low level of applicants meant that problems occurred in appointing officers and two appointments failed within the probationary period.
- 1.6 The anticipated cost of the recruitment exercise was £20,000. Tenants were distressed due to the long periods of time they were without a Warden (Sheltered Housing Officer) and existing staff were stressed due to the additional cover they were providing.

RECENT/CURRENT SITUATION

- 1.7 In November 1999, four Sheltered Housing Units were without a Sheltered Housing Officer (SHO). Two officers had left, one because he could not fulfil the residency requirement, and the second to move to another Local Authority. The other two SHOs were on long term sick leave, one having become ill within weeks of her appointment.
- 1.8 The LeicesterCare Emergency Alarm Service review provided an opportunity to redeploy two officers into the vacancies with a residency exemption. The two officers on long term sickness will have left our employment by the end of February and the vacancies can then be advertised.
- 1.9 The role of Sheltered Housing Officers has experienced a major shift of emphasis in duties and conditions of service from the previous good neighbour Warden role, based in a "Warden's" home, available on demand, to a professional officer with clear duties and parameters, working from an office, 37 hours per week.
- 1.10 The expectation of tenants, however, has not changed and all resident SHO's experience disruption to their private lives, day and night. This disturbance is in spite of consistent attempts to dissuade tenants from the practice and explanations of the role of the LeicesterCare Alarm Service in providing out of hours support. The resultant stress to SHOs and their families is not acceptable and is a regular area of concern at staff meetings. When officers are disturbed, time has to be given to recover lost time and sleep and this disrupts working patterns for the following day and reduces the level of service.
- 1.11 Three of the four Units where there is no resident Sheltered Housing Officer function very well and the level of satisfaction amongst tenants and the officers appears to be high. These Units are:
 - (1) Rupert House, and
 - (2) Bob Trewick House which have had non-resident SHOs since September 1998
 - (3) Gumbrell House has had a non-resident SHO since November 1999, and
 - (4) William Smith House since January 2000
- 1.12 The fourth Unit has only recently lost its resident SHO. Therefore, the tenants have not had the opportunity to experience the role of the non-resident Warden for very long. They are naturally concerned, and these concerns have been exacerbated by two recent muggings of tenants within close proximity to the Unit. Although the presence of a resident SHO would have been irrelevant in preventing these incidents, it cannot be denied that additional peace of mind does result from someone living "on the job". It is hoped that the additional security proposed for this site, CCTV and the perimeter fencing, will result in improved safety and peace of mind for the tenants. Senior officers are monitoring this situation.

THE FUTURE

- 1.13 The SHO job specification demands a skilled experienced officer who can ensure the wellbeing of tenants, the security and upkeep of the building(s) and liaise with other care agencies, doctors, hospitals and relatives. The SHO is also required to act as an advocate in ensuring that tenants receive the full range of services that they need. This is no longer a good neighbour role where a caring approach and physical presence are sufficient.
- 1.14 In an ideal world, we would probably want to provide both roles. This is not possible. Sheltered housing is not residential care; it is independent living with some support and a 24 hour emergency alarm service. The service will only suffer if the proposed changes are not made.

EXISTING STAFF

- 1.15 All existing officers will remain on their current terms and conditions and the new proposals will only apply when a vacancy occurs.

2. Equal Opportunities Implications

- 2.1 This proposal is to bring all new appointments in line with other staff who have to work similar hours without being expected to live on site.

3. EMAS

- 3.1 There are no EMAS implications in this report.

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 There are no legal implications in this report.

5. Sustainable and Environmental Implications

- 5.1 There are no sustainable and environmental implications in this report.

6. Crime and Disorder Implications

- 6.1 The provision in the future of CCTV cameras at Sheltered Housing Units will reduce the fear of crime.

7. Consultations

- 7.1 No consultation has taken place outside of the department.

8. Aims and Objectives

- 8.1 The aim of the Housing Department is “a decent home within the reach of every citizen of Leicester”.
- 8.2 To enable all the citizens of Leicester to find and retain a home which suits their needs.

9. Human Rights Act

- 9.1 There are no implications for the Human Rights Act.

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