

# Corporate, Adult Services & Social Inclusion Select Committee

A meeting of Corporate, Adult Services & Social Inclusion Select Committee was held on Monday, 4th August, 2008.

**Present:** Cllr Mrs Lynne Apedaile (In the Chair), Cllr Mrs Ann Cains, Cllr Aidan Cockerill, Cllr Mrs Suzanne Fletcher, Cllr Andrew Larkin, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Roy Rix

**Officers:** Mrs J Higgins, Ms L Stephenson (DNS), B Park (CESC), Mrs T Harrison, N Hart (LD)

**Also in attendance:** Mrs C Clark (Parent Governor Representative)

**Apologies:** Cllr Mick Womphrey

## 1 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Mrs Fletcher declared a personal non prejudicial interest in relation to the presentation by Housing and Neighbourhood Partnership as part of the Older People's Strategy review, due to being a member of the North East Housing Board Voluntary and Community Sector Advisory Forum and a Voluntary worker at the Citizens Advice bureaux.

Cllr Rix declared a personal non prejudicial interest in relation to the same item due to being a Trustee of the Alms Houses.

## 2 Scrutiny Review for Older People's Strategy

Members were provided with a presentation from Housing and Neighbourhood Partnership advising on its contribution to the Older People's Strategy via:

- Partnership Members; including representatives from Age Concern and Housing Associations responsible for Older People's accommodation;
- Investment and improvement of social housing stock through development of evidence based bids to the Housing Corporation in Partnership with Registered Social Landlords;
- Commitment to meeting the Decent Homes Standards/adaptations for 100% of the Council's Housing Stock by 2010;
- Development of Home Improvement Agency (HIA) to be appointed by October 2008 to support older people through advice and information;
- Analysis of key issues identified in the Local Housing Assessment (LHA) to identify any gaps in service provision, particularly now focusing on older people's issues;
- Maintaining the profile of the Older People agenda including making housing for an ageing population a national and local priority.

Examples were provided of funding that had been secured to improve the provision of Older people's accommodation; such as the facilities at Aspen Gardens and a 20 no. bungalow scheme at Hardwick.

Whilst noting that the decent home standard would be met by March 2010 and improvements would continue to be made on adaptations, it was acknowledged that the standard was a minimum standard; and that the future challenge was to consider how much more improvement could be made.

Members were advised that the Partnership's intention was to provide housing for an ageing population and the aims and objectives of the strategy were embedded within the Service Planning process.

Reference was made to the Department of Communities and Local Government 'Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods' Document, which provided a national strategy for housing in an ageing society and built upon much of the current work of the Partnership.

Members referred to the:

- Expectations of the public to have installed new kitchens and bathrooms, double glazed windows and doors etc;
- Amount of older people's accommodation in existence, compared to demands;
- Importance of ensuring that housing was appropriate for need, i.e. cupboards being the right height;
- The importance of having a transparent mapping procedure in place regards all partners involved in the design of older people's homes;
- The need for a platform to feed back information to all Members from an older persons perspective;
- Reluctance of some older home owners to ask for needed aids and adaptations.

Further discussion took place regarding the barriers preventing older people claiming Housing and Council Tax Benefits and the efforts made by the Benefits Department to inform and encourage people to claim. This included close working with the Pension Service regarding ways of simplifying and having more connectivity between access to pensions and access to Housing and Council Tax Benefits.

Take up campaigns were also promoted via all Tristar Older Persons tenants; and through linked campaigns with the free bus pass scheme. Nationally, it was estimated that only 60% of pensioners who were entitled to Council Tax benefit made a claim. Of those people who did not claim, 80% were owner occupiers. Clarification was also requested regarding older peoples eligibility to insulation grants.

CONCLUDED that:

1. The report be noted.
2. Further information on older people's eligibility for insulation grants be provided.

### **3 Work Programme**

Members were advised that the next meeting on 26th August would be a site visit to the Bunny Hill Customer Services Centre at Sunderland to view an integrated 'One Stop' approach to service provision.

CONCLUDED that the report be noted.

