

**Report of the Rapid Scrutiny Exercise –  
Older People Accommodation Development Strategy**

**Background and Purpose**

1. The Health & Adult Social Care Select Committee (HASC) agreed to hold this rapid scrutiny exercise after receiving the report, 'SW Region – Use of Resources Programme', on 9 September 2010.
2. The Use of Resources Report followed the release of the guidance paper, 'Use of Resources in Adult Social Care – A Guide for Local Authorities' by the Department of Health in October 2009. Following this, the South West Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) agreed to a programme of regional work to address the financial and demographic challenges facing local authorities in the south west. As part of discussion, HASC noted that a paper was expected to be submitted to Cabinet on the Older People Accommodation Development Strategy. Although it was clarified that this did not form part of the Use of Resources Programme, members felt that the Committee would benefit from scrutinising the paper prior to its submission to Cabinet.

3. The rapid scrutiny meeting was held on 19 January 2011 and attended by:

Cllr Peter Hutton	(Lead Scrutiny Member)
Cllr Malcolm Hewson	(Scrutiny Member)
Cllr Jeff Ody	(Scrutiny Member)
Cllr Nina Phillips	(Scrutiny Member)
Mr Brian Warwick	(Scrutiny Stakeholder – WSUN representative)

Cllr Jemima Milton	(Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care)
Cllr John Thompson	(Cabinet Member for Community Services)

Karen Jones	(Senior Project Officer)
Janet O'Brien	(Head of New Housing)
Henry Powell	(Senior Scrutiny Officer)
Sue Redmond	(Corporate Director – Community Services)

Cllr Mike Hewitt	(Observing)
Cllr David Jenkins	(Observing)

Cllr Chuck Berry gave his apologies.

4. This report aims to outline the key comments made by Scrutiny members in response to the report and Strategy.

## **Key Points**

5. The meeting began with a presentation from Karen Jones, Senior Project Officer, providing an overview of the strategy, its objectives and benefits, projections for Wiltshire's elderly population, details of specific developments, on-going consultation, the project timeline and financial implications. There followed an opportunity for members' questions and a discussion of the Strategy and the plans for its implementation.
6. Members requested clarification of the Council's relationship with Devon County Council with respect to the two authorities' procurement of a Preferred Developer Partner Framework. It was reported that this relationship had come about through the Corporate Director's work with other authorities in the south west region. It was anticipated that offering larger parcels of land for development (i.e. land in both counties) was likely to attract more favourable bids from developers. The joint approach also allowed the authorities to share the procurement process and therefore the resources required and expertise gained along the way. Central Government were supportive of this regional approach and it had strengthened the Council's bid for funding through the Department of Health Social Care (DHSC) Private Finance Initiative (PFI).
7. It was reported that some of the sites proposed for development may change as circumstances change, but it had been necessary to specify specific sites at an early stage in order to submit a strong PFI bid.
8. It was confirmed that the Strategy did not become untenable if the Council's capital assets were not used to provide funding for the project. The savings highlighted within the Strategy were based on service provision. There was potential for using capital assets to raise funds but any such proposals would be considered by the Capital Assets Committee and Cabinet on a case-by-case basis. Also, other parties such as the Orders of St John Care Trust (OSJCT) and Social Housing Associations have their own resources, which might be an alternative to using the Council's capital assets.
9. Members queried what the impact on the Strategy might be if the Order of Saint John Care Trust (OSJCT) did not wish to continue to provide care services for the Council. The Cabinet Member replied that this was unlikely as the OSJCT had been involved in the development of the proposals contained within the Strategy and were generally supportive. However, if this they were to pull out the logical next step would be to re-tender the contract or bring the service provision in-house.
10. Although the demographic analysis and forecast of future requirements for older people's accommodation was based on thorough calculations, it would be important to review these projections regularly. Any developments being planned by private providers had been taken into account when assessing future need and the Council was in regular communication with these and Housing Associations in order to keep pace with their intentions. Sufficient

flexibility was built-in to the Strategy to be able to adjust for any new private developments.

11. It was reported that the project was being managed and delivered in-house where possible and that this approach would continue. In some cases, it was of course cheaper to buy-in external expertise for a set period than to recruit a permanent member of staff.
12. The on-going review of the county's Sheltered Housing stock included an options appraisal with respect to schemes that are considered to be 'unviable' at present. The option of refurbishment refers to a 'minimum standard'. Members queried what this standard was, and also queried whether the Strategy would lead to more equity across the county in terms of the quality of provision. It was reported that the Care Quality Commission (CQC) had recently changed their ratings system to grade care homes as simply as 'adequate' or 'inadequate'. However, the Council has its own monitoring team and the aspiration was to procure only 'good' or 'excellent' care services.
13. There was agreement that the most important aspect of the Strategy was how the well-being of residents, especially those who might need to change residence, would be maintained throughout the process. The Cabinet Member reported that this hinged upon proper consultation, giving people the maximum possible notice of change. It was also important to take time to look at where residents' families were living; this often being a more significant consideration than the location of residents themselves. The disruption of changing accommodation could be minimised for residents by ensuring that their family and friends were still able to visit them easily.
14. Members suggested that an independent body be asked to provide an advocacy service for those residents facing changes to their place of residence or provision. This would help to make the process as stress-free as possible by providing residents with independent advice and support. The body might also act as an arbitrator in cases where there was disagreement between the service user and provider.
15. The important process of communicating with stakeholders was already being done with residents of the Paddocks care home in Trowbridge, who under the Strategy proposals will be relocated to the new Rutland House site in April 2011 as an interim measure. Views had been invited from local members, staff and residents and information packs had been circulated.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

16. The Rapid Scrutiny Group acknowledged the need for significant investment in older people's accommodation in Wiltshire and the financial savings and improvements to people's lives that could be achieved through this programme of work. They also acknowledged the scale and complexity of the project and the work already done by officers and the Cabinet Member and Portfolio Holder. All were thanked for attending the meeting and responding to the Group's questions.

17. The Rapid Scrutiny Group envisaged that the Health & Adult Social Care Select Committee would wish to undertake regular monitoring of this large and important project, possibly through a dedicated task group, meeting at key milestones throughout the project's implementation.
18. The Rapid Scrutiny Group, on behalf of the Health & Adult Social Care Select Committee, recommends that:
  - a. **Town/Parish Councils and Area Boards are added to the list (in the Communications Strategy) of parties to be engaged with once the Strategy is adopted and that they are consulted on planned new developments prior to the planning application stage.**
  - b. **An independent body is enlisted to provide an advocacy and arbitration service for those residents who may be required to change residence, temporarily or permanently, due to proposals within the Development Strategy.**
  - c. **The Health & Adult Social Care Select Committee are updated at key milestones throughout the project, including on:**
    - **the status of the Preferred Development Partner Framework currently being procured in conjunction with Devon County Council**
    - **the status of the Department of Health Private Finance Initiative**
    - **the outcomes of contract negotiations with the Order of St John Care Trust (OSJCT)**
    - **the initiation of individual parts of the project prior to the planning application stage and to a timescale which allows for proper scrutiny**
  - d. **When these updates are received, an updated version of the Strategy timeline is also provided.**

**Cllr Peter Hutton, Lead Member for the Rapid Scrutiny Exercise**

**Paul Kelly, Scrutiny Manager and Designated Scrutiny Officer**

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