

## **Proposal for a Comprehensive Review of Housing Schemes: Towards a More Efficient and Sustainable Future - Balancing Enhanced and Sheltered Housing to Secure Our Communities**

The introduction of the new Enhanced Housing concept to the communities committee marks a significant turning point in the evolution of the local housing strategy. As our population's needs grow increasingly diverse and the pressures on public funds intensify, it becomes imperative to re-examine the approach to providing safe, affordable, and supportive living environments for all. At the heart of this proposal lies a simple yet powerful idea - by reviewing all 56 current housing schemes and thoughtfully combining enhanced and sheltered housing, it can create a system that is not only more cost-effective but also better equipped to serve the varied requirements of tenants. This approach will promise to safeguard the future of all our homes while ensuring that every individual can live with dignity, independence, and peace of mind.

With the unveiling of the Enhanced Housing proposal, the Aberdeenshire Council is presented with a unique opportunity to re-evaluate the entire portfolio of 56 housing schemes.

It is important to state at the outset that the proposed review of the 56 sheltered housing schemes should be conducted with a clear and constructive aim, to keep all schemes open. The initiative will not be driven by an agenda of reduction, closure, or cutbacks. Instead, the goal is to ensure that each scheme is operating as effectively and efficiently as possible, to secure their future and to enhance their role in supporting communities.

This review is not merely a bureaucratic exercise but a crucial step in ensuring resources are deployed to maximum effect.

- **Adapting to Changing Demographics:** Communities are experiencing shifts in age distribution, health profiles, and expectations regarding independence. By revisiting every scheme, it can ensure that housing on offer aligns with current and future demand.
- **Addressing Financial Constraints:** Public sector budgets are under more strain than ever. A targeted review can help identify efficiencies, avoid unnecessary duplication of services, and ensure every pound spent delivers tangible benefits for tenants.
- **Safeguarding the Future of All Homes:** Rather than risking the closure or underuse of some schemes, a comprehensive approach allows for the repurpose of or upgrade to underperforming assets, preserving housing stock and maintaining community cohesion.
- **Promoting Fairness and Transparency:** By subjecting all schemes to the same standards of scrutiny, this avoids the perception of favouritism or arbitrary decision-making, building trust among tenants and stakeholders alike.

The proposal advocates for a thoughtful blending of enhanced and sheltered housing within our existing infrastructure. Such integration unlocks a key advantage of maximising the use of existing assets. Some schemes may lend themselves naturally to the enhanced model due to their size, layout, or location, while others may best serve as classic sheltered housing. Strategic realignment ensures each site is used to its greatest potential.

A successful review must be thorough, transparent, and participatory. The following principles should underpin the process:

- **Inclusivity:** All stakeholders, including tenants, families, staff, and local partners, should be consulted through surveys, focus groups, and public meetings.

- **Evidence-Based Assessment:** Each scheme should be evaluated using a consistent set of criteria, including physical condition, occupancy rates, tenant satisfaction, and financial performance.
- **Future-Proofing:** Demographic projections should be considered and likely shifts in demand, ensuring that any changes made stand the test of time.
- **Transparency:** Regular updates should be shared with the community, and all decisions should be clearly explained and documented.

Following the review, it should be anticipated that each scheme will fall into one of several categories:

- Transition to Enhanced Housing
- Retain as Sheltered Housing
- Hybrid or 'Hub and Spoke' Models

A detailed implementation plan should be developed for each scheme, with clear timelines, budgets, and monitoring arrangements. Special attention should be paid to minimising disruption for tenants and supporting staff through any transitions.

A move towards a more integrated, dynamic housing system will deliver a host of benefits for both individuals and the community as a whole:

- **Financial Sustainability:** Efficient use of resources ensures that existing homes are preserved and maintained, rather than being lost to closure or neglect.
- **Improved Tenant Outcomes:** Tenants enjoy greater choice and flexibility, with support tailored to changing needs and aspirations.
- **Stronger Communities:** By keeping people in their local area and maintaining diverse tenant populations, we strengthen neighbourhood ties and promote inclusivity.
- **Reputational Gain:** Demonstrating innovation and responsiveness reinforces your reputation as a caring, forward-looking provider of housing and support.

No major change is without its challenges. Key issues to manage include:

- **Managing Change:** Tenants and staff may feel anxious about the review and potential changes. Clear communication and timely support are vital.
- **Resource Allocation:** We must balance short-term costs against long-term savings.
- **Fairness:** Some communities may be more affected than others. The process must ensure equity and sensitivity to local circumstances.

The proposal to review all 56 housing schemes and to adopt a combined model of enhanced and sheltered housing represents a bold, pragmatic step towards a more efficient, inclusive, and sustainable future for our community. By embracing change and committing to a transparent, evidence-based process, you can secure the future of all our homes, deliver better outcomes for tenants, and make the very best use of your shared resources.

It is now time for the Aberdeenshire Council, stakeholders, and the wider community to come together in a spirit of collaboration and optimism. We urge you to seize this opportunity—not just to save all our homes, but to shape a housing system that truly meets the needs of today and tomorrow.