PRESENT:

Councillors Ms Edwards (Chairman), H Avis, Mrs New and Mrs Roodhouse

Steven Shanahan (Head of Housing and Property), Liz Dunlop (Operational Housing Manager), Kate Miley (Sheltered Housing Team Leader), Debbie Dawson (Scrutiny Officer) and Veronika Beckova (Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer)

Janet Giles (Locality Warden), Sharon Checkley (Community Warden) and Jane Wainwright (Community Warden)

20. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 April 2015 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

21. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence from the meeting was received from Councillor Mrs Garcia.

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs New declared a general non-pecuniary interest by virtue of her employment with Warwickshire County Council.

23. THE ROLE OF COUNCIL'S WARDEN SERVICE IN PROMOTING INDEPENDENT LIVING IN THE BOROUGH

The task group received evidence from representatives of the warden service in response to the key lines of enquiry identified in the briefing paper circulated with the agenda papers.

What do you currently do to help people to live independently?

- The warden service operates from 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday. Outside of these hours, emergency calls are put through to the control room and ‘on call’ wardens are available. The wardens support tenants in living independently and maintain regular face-to-face contact with tenants.

- Locality wardens are linked to community facilities, while community wardens provide support for sheltered housing tenants in the rural area.
• Tenants of Albert Square range from 60 to 97 in age. There is a mix of cultures and backgrounds, and a very positive community atmosphere with tenants supporting one another.

• A daily programme of social activities (such as lunch clubs, coffee mornings, and bingo) is arranged in the community rooms, and other events, trips and holidays are also organised. These activities are open to residents of other sheltered housing schemes in the area and some private housing residents also attend.

• A number of other examples were given of constructive activities that tenants are engaged in, such as maintaining an allotment at Duffy Place and knitting items for the premature babies’ wing at Northampton Hospital.

• A wide range of services are also brought into the sheltered schemes in the urban area, including the mobile library, chiropody, dental care and hairdressing. Guest rooms are made available for relatives to rent for £15 a night.

• Albert Square scheme has worked closely with local schools – for example pupils from Brooke School had helped with events in the community room and a pupil from Avon Valley School had taught card making and spoken to tenants about the fashions when they were younger.

• Rural tenants receive one or two visits per week, depending on their location. There is no prescribed time for a visit and the time spent will depend on the needs of the resident on the particular day.

• Residents living in the villages tend to be more self-sufficient but can suffer from loneliness and isolation. The community wardens provide advice and offer signposting to other agencies rather than running activities themselves.

• Wardens also report health and safety issues and carry out regular checks of the welfare and fire alarms. Monthly, quarterly and annual updates are carried out to cater to the different needs of individual clients.

• Wardens interact with other agencies, for example to secure care support, encourage and promote participation in leisure and community activities or to provide access to bereavement counselling. They have also recently received training as part of a new Dementia Friendly Communities scheme.

• Lifelines and other assistive technology (such as bed sensors) are monitored by the control room 24 hours a day. When emergency alarms are triggered, the control centre operator will know who is making the call, the address, any medical conditions and the family's emergency contact details. The next of kin or a neighbour is contacted (depending on the agreement) but a member of the call out team goes out when in doubt.

• Lifelines are also offered privately at a cost of £4 per week plus VAT and the services are the same: 24 hour call out and monthly visits/checks. A response is guaranteed and services are provided as needed.
The council is currently working with Coventry and Rugby Clinical Commissioning Group to pilot the use of 'Toughbooks' by Control Centre operators. A Toughbook is a mobile, durable computer and they are being used to enable residents to be assessed by a qualified medical person based in a centre in Yorkshire. It is hoped that this technology will have a long term benefit of possibly reducing unnecessary hospital visits and demand for ambulances. The team is currently experiencing some issues with the quality of signal in some areas in Rugby.

What could you do that you don’t do already and what would you need in order to do this?

Support for hospital discharge

Routine use of multidisciplinary meetings to ensure all agencies are working together effectively to support those recovering from a hospital stay would be beneficial. It was also suggested that there may be ways of making it easier for wardens to call on carers for additional support where needed. Previously there had been an intermediate care flat, which worked well, but this service had been withdrawn as social services were meeting needs in a different way.

Cooking

An example was given of someone who had asked a warden to help teach them to cook. There was some discussion of the potential to run cookery classes at the urban sheltered schemes as the facilities are available and this could help people to remain independent for longer.

Expansion of services to private sector housing residents

There was the potential to provide warden services to people living in private homes, but this would require additional resource and capacity. It would be important to develop an attractive service that people would be prepared to pay for.

What barriers exist to helping people to live independently?

Transport

In the rural area, access to transport is a significant issue. Bus services can be very irregular. There was a particular problem in Wolston as the bus operator had changed the bus route for Wolston so that Bennett Court residents now have to walk some distance into the village to catch a bus. There are also difficulties in travelling to hospital appointments at UHCW. Volunteer drivers are available but the cost can be up to £20. There are particular criteria to be met in order to access ambulance transport which excluded those suffering from dementia.

Access to care

The process of obtaining professional carer support could often be complex and lengthy. Sometimes wardens were aware that residents had needs that were not necessarily identified in short assessment visits by social services, and it could be
difficult to provide evidence of need to meet tight criteria. It was suggested that the introduction of personal care budgets may assist in addressing this concern.

The wardens spoke about situations they had encountered where residents needed assistance to reach bathroom facilities in their home, but wardens were unable to assist. Sometimes there was a considerable delay in accessing necessary support from carers.

**What gaps in services are you aware of?**

In addition to the points raised above, the following gaps were identified:

- More provision of hot meals for residents could help prevent people from needing to go into residential care.
- Sometimes there was a lack of flexibility in the system to enable residents to access end of life care in their own home for an indeterminate period of time.

During the discussion, the following additional questions and points were raised:

*Some of the sheltered housing is now made available younger people. How is this working?*

Some sheltered housing has been redesignated as general needs housing. Research indicated that older people prefer to live in accommodation with a mix of ages, and the feedback on the redesignation schemes had been very positive.

*What procedures are in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of staff working on their own in isolated communities?*

There is a strong team ethic and staff support and provide cover for each other as needed. All staff movements are communicated through the Control Centre.

*Is counselling and support given to wardens as needed when they deal with difficult situations?*

All wardens are trained in counselling and provide support to each other. One-to-ones take place every month. Additional support can be brought in through Human Resources if necessary.

**24. DATE OF NEXT MEETING AND PROGRAMME OF WORK**

The task group agreed the following programme of work:

The next meeting of the task group will be held at 5.30pm on Wednesday 15 July when the task group will invite representatives from:

- Social Prescribing Project;
- Warwickshire County Council Transport Department;
- Coventry and Rugby Clinical Commissioning Group – to inform on what is currently done to support patients coming home from hospital.
A visit to the Control Centre at Rounds Gardens and Albert Square will be scheduled in July.

A further meeting of the task group will be scheduled for September when the task group will invite representatives from older people’s groups to participate in a discussion on the current and future provision of services provided by the council and its partners to support older people to live independently. Officers will make some proposals to the next meeting of the task group about the suggested focus of that meeting to ensure the task group is able to deliver clear outcomes.

CHAIRMAN