

# Report to Cabinet

**18 November 2021**

<b>Subject:</b>	Consultation Feedback and the Future of Walker Grange
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cllr Suzanne Hartwell Cabinet Member for Living and Ageing Well
<b>Director:</b>	Rashpal Bishop Director of Adult Social Care
<b>Key Decision</b>	Yes
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Colin Marsh Service Manager <a href="mailto:colin_marshall@sandwell.gov.uk">colin_marshall@sandwell.gov.uk</a>

## 1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the outcome of the consultation be noted, and that approval is given to Option 3 as the preferred option, which is to look at upgrading Walker Grange building to ensure it is fit for purpose to provide Extra Care Housing and to meet the changing needs of older people including those with Dementia.
- 1.2 Subject to Option 3 being approved under recommendation 1.1, that a further report be prepared and presented to Cabinet setting out a detailed implementation plan and the allocation of requisite financial resources.



## 2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 Following the permission to consult given at the September Cabinet meeting, there was a requirement for the outcome of the consultation to be reported back to Cabinet. This was to ensure an informed decision could be sought in relation to the options outlined in the original report; the consultation with tenants, their family and the staff at the unit has now been concluded and the preferred option arising from that consultation is Option 3.
- 2.2 There is further work to be undertaken to provide a detailed plan of work that required to the facility along with a comprehensive financial analysis that cabinet will be required to approve.

## 3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p><b><i>People live well and age well.</i></b></p> <p>With the appropriate level of investment and resources Walker Grange would provide high quality housing with on site care and support allowing our older and more vulnerable citizens the opportunity to remain within a community setting in a “Home for Life” as opposed to residential care.</p>
	<p><b><i>Strong resilient communities</i></b></p> <p>Walker Grange offers housing that accommodates a community of mixed needs within the building but also has strong links to the wider community.</p>
	<p><b><i>Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods</i></b></p> <p>Any investment to the building and refurbishment would provide additional support to people with Dementia as part of the Extra Care facility in the next 5-10 years.</p> <p>Sandwell's older population is growing, and people need quality housing that fits their individual requirements and offers an alternative to residential care. Walker Grange will</p>



	<p>continue to provide 39 units of accommodation for older people.</p> <p>It would also take into account the need to improve efficiency and energy saving projects such as improved heating and lighting systems in council owned buildings in line with opportunities to provide environmental and 'green' strategies.</p>
--	--

## 4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 Prior to the first report to Cabinet on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021, management at Walker Grange had been made aware of a number of potential issues to the building which would need to be responded to in order to ensure the continuation of service provision. These included upgrading or replacing the heating system, repair or replacement of a number of windows and work undertaken on parts of the flat roofs. It was thought that work in these areas would be necessary if the service was to continue at Walker Grange and would need to be costed and agreed. Via the consultation process agreed by Cabinet, this presented officers with the opportunity to gather views from directly affected stakeholders as well as information, including a full survey to understand the condition of the building, to ensure that resident needs are met and inform future decisions.
- 4.2 From the consultation, a clear message from tenants, their families and staff were that they valued and wanted Walker Grange to continue to provide services to the current cohort of people and potentially develop and promote the service further.
- 4.3 During the consultation period it became clear that further investment, rather than purely maintenance, could potentially provide the Council with a resource to provide additional support to vulnerable adults through extra care provision. This is outlined below in points 4.4 to 4.11.
- 4.4 Over the past two years during the Covid-19 pandemic there had been a reduction in demand in relation to people being supported in long term residential care. In Sandwell, the number of people supported in long term residential care fell to approx. 585 compared to approx. 650 at the same



junction in 2019/2020. However, the average weekly cost of a long term placement has increased steadily over the same period from £695 per week (clients supported end of Aug 2019) to £759 per week (clients supported end of July 2021)

- 4.5 This decrease in demand had also impacted in a drop in demand at Walker Grange. The Grange has capacity for 39 self-contained flats, however, at present it has a void in demand for 18 flats. Notably, this has been as a result of the closure of admissions due to COVID 19, a decision made to effectively manage infection control. More recently, data is showing an increase in demand for residential placements in the wider market. Since September 2021 referrals for accommodation at Walker Grange have also seen to start to increase.
- 4.6 Extra Care provision remains a popular and valued form of housing, which was evident during the consultation. Extra Care provides both care and support by an onsite team of staff. Staff seek to reduce risk to clients and help manage and prevent crisis and can support older people with changing needs through flexible, tailored care plans. Extra Care has been identified as an appropriate form of housing provision in Better Lives – Dementia Strategy, Sandwell, 2019 – 2025, agreed at Health and Well Being Board.
- 4.7 There is evidence that there is an ageing population nationally and locally this is reflected in Sandwell’s Dementia Strategy, which highlights that there are around 3,705 people, over the age of 60 years living with Dementia. The Alzheimer’s Society predict this will increase to 5050 in 2030 (Alzheimer’s Society, Express and Star , May 2021).
- 4.8 Improving the environment and standards of the building at Walker Grange via investment and inclusion of a separate unit (a smaller care setting, within the Extra Care setting) would support people with varying levels of dementia with a higher level of care.
- 4.9 If an investment in Walker Grange was agreed this would provide a valuable asset to the council with 18 additional, in house, Extra Care units. This would provide a direct alternative to placements in residential care which may be used to offset spend in the community care budget. This would include bringing the empty 18 flats into use for people who would have their own tenancy and ensure a Home for Life



for them in an improved Extra Care scheme which can respond to changing needs.

- 4.10 A surveyor's report has been submitted alongside the consultation process. This was undertaken by the Senior Building Surveyor, on 22 October 2021, see Appendix 1. The survey outlines the areas which require repairs and maintenance, upgrades and investment, in line with Option 3 of the consultation. The estimated cost required to invest in Walker Grange safe housing environment for older people for the next 5 – 10 years approx. is £746.500. The estimate is representative of the minimum investment to maintain the facility to the required standard and includes estimated costs to improve part of the facility for existing and future tenants who have or may or may develop dementia.
- 4.11 If Cabinet is in agreement with Option 3, there is a recognition that further planning will be required to provide specific detail with regard to the development of the building for people with dementia, costs and staff resources. With the current staffing levels at the unit the council could provide an additional 8 placements for people with dementia and an additional 10 placements for people with needs. This balance of needs will retain the ethos of Extra Care in terms of have a client group with a mix of care and support needs.

### **The Consultation process**

- 4.12 On 1 September 2021, Cabinet approved a period of consultation to take place with both tenants and staff at Walker Grange on three possible options about the future of Walker Grange.

The proposed options were:

- 1. Do nothing – continue to provide Extra Care Housing at Walker Grange.*
- 2. Look at the closure of Walker Grange and the transfer of tenants to Willow Gardens or other suitable Extra Care Housing Provision.*
- 3. Look at upgrading Walker Grange to ensure it is fit for purpose for the future.*



## Consultation

- 4.12 The Consultation commenced on 23 September 2021 and communication was had with both tenants, families, representatives and wider public. The consultation also included a current tenant living in what was previously the wardens living quarters on site at Walker Grange.
- 4.13 Cabinet gave permission to consult with tenants, family and staff. It was envisaged that consultation would be for a period of 12 weeks, although no specific timescale was confirmed in the Cabinet resolution. A review of the consultation period was undertaken during this process which considered shortening the consultation if sufficient information/feedback had been received and key stakeholders being consulted were happy to do so. At engagement meetings with tenants and family representatives held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> November and in subsequent email correspondence from key stakeholders, the stakeholders supported the decision to end the consultation and move the recommendation of the outcome of the consultation forward. Key stakeholders confirmed that they were satisfied that sufficient consultation opportunity had been afforded and felt that having a decision on the future of Walker Grange sooner would be appreciated. Meaningful consultation has been undertaken and that is demonstrated by the feedback received which is set out in the Appendix to the report.
- 4.14 Consultation with staff commenced on 22 September for 30 days. This has also now been concluded.
- 4.15 HR and Union representatives were fully engaged throughout the process.
- 4.16 The consultation included:
- *Planned meetings with staff and tenants and their families held on site at Walker Grange, following COVID 19 infection prevention procedures and controls.*
  - *A meeting with the Leader of the Council was held at the request of tenants and their families*
  - *Use of Microsoft Teams for people who were unable to attend on site*



- *Tenants support provided by Appointeeship and representatives*
- *An online Public Survey publicised via SMBC's web page, and internally by Officers*
- *A dedicated email address created for staff queries and a box set up in Walker Grange for anonymous queries, concerns and suggestions.*

4.17 In order to support tenants and staff to fully consider the options a number of materials were produced:

- *A Walker Grange brochure was produced for Tenants and Staff (Appendix*
- *Flip Charts were used, and comments captured and recorded*
- *Notes of meetings were provided*
- *One 2 One meetings were offered*

4.18 Staff Sessions were held on:

- 22 September 2021 (3 sessions)
- 29 October 2021 (2 sessions)

Tenants & Relatives Sessions:

- 23 September 2021 (4 sessions)
- 3 November 2021 (2 sessions)

4.19 The results of the consultation identified that consultees were in favour of Option 3, *Look at upgrading Walker Grange to ensure it is fit for purpose for the future.*

#### 4.20 **Key Findings:**

Tenants and families expressed a view of the importance of receiving Services from a Council provision which were valued rather than transferring into private/independent sector extra care schemes. Their views were based on a perceived higher quality being provided by Council services, confidence in secured tenancies and the cost of living at the scheme.



Three tenants expressed an interest in the new Council run scheme at Willow Gardens, Rowley. They will be supported to explore this alternative as a personal request for this provision.

Both staff and tenants reflected that they believed the building was in reasonable condition but that it needed some improvement and investment to ensure current provision. They also offered suggestions about meeting future demand and felt part of the building may be developed for people with dementia and other health issues.

The staff also presented similar views about the condition of the scheme and ideas to be able to support people with a range of physical and mental health needs enabling Walker Grange to be a true “Home for Life”.

A consistent view throughout the consultation was how the service and the staff at Walker Grange were valued by tenants and families.

All of the above consultees provided information throughout the consultation process to inform the decision to recommend option 3, promoting the investment in Walker Grange and adding value to the portfolio of services offered by the Council.

It is of importance to reiterate that the consultation process has allowed assurance for Cabinet that Walker Grange remains a valued provision. By agreeing Option 3 this will not only support the current residents in their home, but will also add value to the provision of services to the council, by allowing the provision of an additional 8 placements for people with dementia and an additional 10 placements for people with needs. This will be able to be provided with the current staffing levels. This balance of needs will retain the ethos of Extra Care in terms of have a client group with a mix of care and support needs and by implementing the survey findings this will also ensure that the Walker Grange remains fit for purpose.

#### 4.21 Walker Grange consultation highlights

The following points are the main findings from both the internal and public survey undertaken during the consultation period.



## Tenant consultation responses

Of the 23 tenants who took part in the consultation, **91%** of respondents indicated that feeling safe and secure where they live was most important to them.

Over 73% said the location of Walker Grange was most important to them, with cleanliness of the scheme and the accessibility and suitability to needs also scoring highly.

Over 65% of the tenants who took part said they did not feel a move to another extra care housing scheme would suit their needs, but the remaining tenants either felt it was a suitable option or weren't sure.

Over 82% said that Willow Gardens would **not** be somewhere they would consider wanting to live. However, if the decision was made to close Walker Grange this is something they would consider. 2 tenants (8.70%) wanted more information and to consider this option.

## Public survey highlights

Respondents who completed the survey identified themselves as the following:

A tenant of Walker Grange - 3

A family member, carer or supporter of a tenant affected - 19

A member of staff who works at Walker Grange - 2

A member of Sandwell Council staff - 11

A professional working in another organisation - 8

A member of the community - 116

## To what extent do you agree or disagree that the current provision of Extra Care Housing at Walker Grange is fit for purpose?

79 people (52%) who responded to this question said they strongly agreed that the current provision at Walker Grange was fit for purpose. A further 43 respondents indicated that they tended to agree with this statement.

Only 3 individuals (2%) responded to say they strongly disagreed.

## Which option do you feel would provide the best option for the future provision of Extra Care Housing at Walker Grange?

Of the total 153 responses to this question, 124 (81%) responded to say they felt **Option 3: Look at upgrading Walker Grange to ensure it is fit for purpose for the future** would be the best outcome, with 28 respondents stating they would prefer to do nothing, and only one response in favour of looking at the closure of Walker Grange.



## Why have you chosen your preferred option?

107 (just over 70%) of respondents stated that they felt it would mean minimum disruption to service users.

### Tenant and supporter comments

Key themes from the comments received during the consultation indicate:

- A very strong connection to the local area for tenants and the family members who responded, not wishing to move away from Tipton
- Wishing to stay near to family
- Feeling that Walker Grange is home
- Feeling safe and secure where they are
- Praise for staff at Walker Grange
- Concerns with the upheaval and stress of a move  
Not wishing to relocate to another part of Sandwell that is unfamiliar

## 5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 If Cabinet do not approve the recommendation to agree to Option 3 then the two alternative options put forward as part of the consultation would need to be considered. These are-

### Option 1 – Do nothing – continue to provide Extra Care Housing at Walker Grange.

This is an option initially supported by tenants, families and their staff, but the survey found that Walker Grange would still require investment to address immediate areas of improvement required – heating, roof, windows, lighting, and investment to make it fit for the future and for an ageing population.

If Option 1 is preferred, the survey undertaken detailed that the cost of undertaking this element of work to be in the region of £536K, however, this would not provide upgrades to the building in order to support the development of dementia friendly support services.

### Option 2 – Look at the closure of Walker Grange & the transfer of Tenants to other suitable Extra Care Housing provision.



This was the least preferred option by tenants, families and their staff. There is an established risk to frail older people who are moved. This would need to be part of a further assessment of need for the individuals who are in this position as this option may have an impact on their health and wellbeing. The consultation process has shown the current tenants to be a well-established and settled group of people within the Extra Care scheme at Walker Grange who feel a real affinity to the local area and community. Under this option tenants would be placed in different Extra Care schemes homes across the borough, breaking up established friendship groups and potentially increase distance for family to visit.

## 6 Implications

<p><b>Resources:</b></p>	<p>The resources to fund the final quote to bring Walker Grange needs to be explored predominantly from the HRA budget which should give us the opportunity to invest. If not, in conjunction to this the use of capital investment may need to be considered.</p> <p>The annual budget for the existing staff across Extra Care and Day care at Walker Grange £1.075 million. Any investment and refurbishment, including a service for an additional 18 people (8 with dementia in a dementia friendly environment) could be met from this resource.</p> <p>A survey has indicated an anticipated cost of £746,000 which will be included in a further report as more details are known</p>
<p><b>Legal and Governance:</b></p>	<p>The recommendation to approve Option 3 “<i>Look at upgrading Walker Grange to ensure it is fit for purpose for the future would provide an opportunity to enhance the service</i>’ in accordance with Housing Regulations. The additional work to develop the refurbishment scheme will be in accordance with the Council’s Financial and Building regulations. Option 3 if agreed also reflects the local authorities responsibilities under the Care Act 2014 to prevent, inform and advise, and shape the market of care and</p>



	<p>support services to ensure people who live in Sandwell MBC to -</p> <p>receive services that prevent their care needs from becoming more serious, or delay the impact of their needs</p> <p>can get the information and advice they need to make good decisions about care and support have a range of provision of high quality, appropriate services to choose from</p>
<b>Risk:</b>	<p>If Option 3 is agreed then the risk to moving potentially vulnerable individuals to new care settings is removed.</p> <p>The anticipated expenditure on upgrading the building will provide assurances that the building is in a position to provide ongoing care for current and future tenants now and into the future.</p> <p>If Option 3 is agreed, the need to further risk assess the impact of undertaking the work with tenants being on site while the work is done will be required. This may be mitigated with the current empty accommodation being used to offset the disruption.</p>
<b>Equality:</b>	<p>When making a decision as to changes in service provision, the local authority must comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and, in particular, section 149 (the Public-Sector Equality Duty).</p> <p>The protected characteristics to which the duty applies includes age, as well as disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, sexual orientation, religion or belief and sex.</p> <p>In order to ensure that the PSED is complied with an Equality Impact Assessment will be maintained and updated.</p>
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	<p>If Option 3 is agreed by Cabinet this would ensure retention and improvement to the site and maintain a Good standard of service within an improved</p>



	environment which will have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of existing tenants at Walker Grange and new tenants. An enhanced focus on dementia will also offer support in line with anticipated local demand.
<b>Social Value</b>	The proposed investment in the Building may provide employment opportunities for local traders, which may include young people. Extra Care schemes are seen as a community resource and the Preferred Option 3 would provide an asset to the local community and Sandwell for people who require this service.

## 7. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Walker Grange Consultation Data  
Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment

## 8. Background Papers

None

