
OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

1. The following were the main areas of work under my Community and Public Protection Portfolio:-

Housing Strategy and Business Plan

2. The Government Office for the North East has recently awarded 'Fit for Purpose' status for the Housing Business Plan and Housing Strategy. Only one other local authority in the North East has achieved this standard for both documents so far, although five Council's have achieved Fit for Purpose separately for their Housing Strategy and two for their Business Plan. The documents are assessed against a number of key criteria that need to be addressed in a robust, effective and forward looking Housing Strategy and Business Plans.

Housing Capital Programme

3. Mid-way through the year we have already undertaken:
- Internal modernisation to 93 Council dwellings including new kitchens, bathrooms and electrical re-wiring.
 - Various additional improvements to the bungalows at Parkside to reflect the needs of older residents such as flat floor showers and additional security measures. Twelve parking bays are also to be provided and the Community Centre has been totally refurbished and redesigned.
 - New gas central heating systems to 85 dwellings.
 - Re-modelling and significant upgrading to one block of 18 flats at Dinsdale Crescent nearing completion and another block being prepared.
 - External and internal improvements to 76 dwellings at Firthmoor.

Extra Care at Oban Court

4. The extensive refurbishment of Oban Court on Whinbush Way is well under way. The first 12 flats are almost finished and their occupants have been moving back throughout November. Each flat has been extensively refurbished to a very high standard. New kitchens have been installed with a choice of units and tiles, the bathrooms have been totally redesigned and now all have a flat floor shower, new toilet and hand basin. The hall area is wide and spacious with a double cupboard for storage and an attractive hall unit with illuminated mirror.
5. The communal facilities have been totally rebuilt and extended and are due to be finished at the end of November. The new facilities include a large lounge and dining area with coffee bar, hairdressing salon, health and exercise room and several seating areas. An assisted bathing area and guest room, together with the improvements to the remaining flats are in the second phase of works to be completed March 2004. The kitchen has been extended and refurbished and an on-site lunchtime meal facility will be available, providing a two course lunch for only £2.75, when the building is fully occupied March 2005.
6. As with the recently completed Extra Care Scheme at Dalkeith House, the meal service will be available to non-resident older people living in the local community.

Improvements to Sheltered Housing Schemes

7. The Warden Service is continually improving the communal facilities in existing Sheltered housing schemes and extending the use of these facilities to a wide range of non-residents. Recent examples of these are:-
 - The full Warden Service has been extended at Branksome Hall to include 29 additional people who previously only received the standard emergency response service.
 - The Havelock Street Community Centre has been totally refurbished and redesigned to include a new kitchen, new lighting, suspended ceiling, the provision of a toilet for disabled persons and a loop system. The wide range of activities include; weekly usage by a West Indian Group, the Chinese Community and the Hard of Hearing Group.
 - Pilmoor Green Community Centre has been similarly refurbished and redesigned and is now used by older people from Redhall who enjoy the activities available exclusively for older people in addition to those available on their own estate.
 - Warden call systems have been upgraded at four sheltered housing sites resulting in 166 properties benefiting from enhanced safety and security. This includes the installation of a mains smoke detector in each flat linked to the CCTV Control Room and the potential to fit telecare facilities such as movement monitoring equipment to meet the individual needs of more vulnerable people.

Supporting People

8. To improve the availability and access to information regarding Supporting People Services, the Supporting People Team have developed for the first time a Service Directory, which contains all details of the Supported Accommodation Services available in Darlington. The Directory will be distributed to all Council customer contact points, all Supporting People providers and information and advice agencies throughout the Borough.

CCTV Control Room – Future Planning

9. Approval was given for the Closed Circuit Television service to bid for contracts with other public and private organizations with the provision that bids are only submitted where it is of benefit to the overall service provision for the residents of Darlington.

Crime Disorder Reduction Partnership and Darlington Drugs and Alcohol Action Team

10. I have been involved with work on the Crime Disorder Reduction Partnership and Darlington Drugs and Alcohol Action Team.

Councillor Bill Dixon
Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Community
and Public Protection