

Council: 23 January 2007

Administration Policy Item: Cllr. Lynne Hillan

Barnet's Vision for the Elderly: Choice and Independence

Council welcomes the new vision for Adult Social Care: *Choice and Independence*, which Council believes will enable the changing aspirations of our vulnerable residents by offering them control over the services offered to them.

This is intended to increase the numbers of Barnet's clients who will be able to directly purchase their own care and support arrangements, increasing choice for those people.

Council believes this important initiative should form the bedrock of a number of schemes to help the elderly and vulnerable across the Borough.

Council notes that access to IT facilities and the internet also serves to promote independence and choice for our citizens, allowing them to access services, keep in touch with friends and family, compare prices, shop, and meet new people. However, this is not a facility that many elderly people are able to take advantage of. *Help the Aged* revealed in 2006 that over 50% of those aged over 50 had no access to a computer.

Council believes this must change, and that LBB must investigate any scheme that would give over 65s in the Borough access to a computer.

Encouraging more of our elderly to remain in their own homes is also extremely important in promoting independence. Many over 65s (and others) experience extreme difficulties in keeping their homes warm, often the result of poor insulation. However, a scheme run by *British Gas* offers qualifying residents who install insulation in participating authorities, money off their Council Tax bills at little or no cost to the Council.

Council believes this would provide a real boon to the elderly and those on a budget to make their homes more energy efficient and consequently reduce heating bills. This would, in turn, allow more of our elderly residents to remain in their own homes.

Accordingly, Council requests Cabinet to:

- Ratify and agree the vision for adult social services: *Choice and Independence* when the costings are re-presented to Cabinet.
- Work towards providing access to computers to the over 65s resident in Barnet.
- Investigate the implementation of the *British Gas* scheme to give residents who install loft or cavity wall insulation money off their next Council Tax bill.