
REPORT TO:	HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 8
DATE OF MEETING:	27th November 2008	CATEGORY: RECOMMENDED
REPORT FROM:	Mark Alflat – Director of Community Services	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	Bob Ledger	DOC:
SUBJECT:	Housing Related Support funded by the Supporting People Programme	REF:
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	All	TERMS OF REFERENCE: HCSO1, FM01

1. Recommendations and Purpose

- 1.1 To delegate to the Head of Housing, or his nominated deputy, decision-making powers as a member of the Countywide Core Strategy and Commissioning Body for Supporting People (SP) in Derbyshire. To stipulate that prior to the meeting of the body the attending officer to consult the Chairman of Housing and Community Services, or his nominated deputy, on the agenda items.
- 1.2 To approve proposals for additional projects to be funded by a grant of £125,000 from the County SP team.
- 1.3 To note that as this paper also relates to financial matters it will need to also be considered by the Finance and Management Committee.

2. Background of Supporting and change to commissioning arrangements

- 2.1 Since April 2003 the Supporting People Programme has been the way that housing related support services have been funded. The programme is committed to providing a better quality of life for vulnerable people to live more independently and maintain their tenancies. The term for the services delivered through this process is Housing Related Support.
- 2.2 Housing Related Support usually comes in the form of 'floating' specialist support helping people in their own homes or provided as part of short-term accommodation projects such as in the case with the Homeless persons' hostel in Swadlincote. The support given includes helping individuals secure, improve or maintain their housing situation. It is centred on advice at vulnerable periods in peoples' lives. Housing Related Support cannot include actual care provision – this should be funded from mainstream Social Service and Health budgets.

- 2.3 There are a number of Housing Related Support services currently funded from SP, as well as several at a development stage, in South Derbyshire. The schemes currently funded include:

Delivery Organisation	Nature of client group receiving support
Trident Housing Association	Domestic abuse
P3 and Metropolitan Support Trust	Mental ill-health
P3	Young homelessness
P3	Homeless hostel provision
Metropolitan Support Trust	Tenancy sustainment
SDDC	Sheltered Housing warden services
SDDC	Telecare installations
Metropolitan Support Trust	Vulnerable Young Females including young single mothers
East Midlands Housing Association and Trident Housing Association	Older People
Trident Housing Association	Young People at Risk

- 2.4 Prior to April 2003 many of the services in the table at 2.3 were funded through Housing Benefit. The government decided that Housing Benefit should be primarily about property costs, and not advice and support services, and that was the rationale behind the separation. However it is important to be aware of the origins of SP funding as the criteria for accessing funding is still linked closely to qualification for benefits. For example of our 1,081 sheltered tenants in receipt of warden services, approx 780 get this service paid for by Supporting People as they qualify for Housing Benefit whereas the rest are either supported by this Council or are self-funders i.e. they pay the £9.19 a week warden charge themselves.
- 2.5 The current annual budget for SP across Derbyshire is just over £17m and in 2007/8 £1.5m was spent in delivering services in South Derbyshire.
- 2.6 Derbyshire County Council are the administering body for Supporting People in Derbyshire i.e. there is a team of officers to administer and ensure effective delivery of the programme. The main decision making body has been the Commissioning Body chaired by the cabinet member for Adult Social Services with representatives from the eight districts, the health authority, voluntary sector, probation service and users group. Our representative on the Body has been the Chairman of Housing and Community Services Committee since inception in April 2003. An officer attends in support of the Chairman and since January 2007 this has been the Head of Housing. The Chairman has had delegated authority to vote (if necessary) in the Commissioning Body on behalf of SDDC.
- 2.7 The Commissioning Body has taken the higher level decisions about funding as well as detailed decisions about specific projects where there have been issues to resolve. The Commissioning Body has also considered and given overall direction to the programme. Underneath the Commissioning Body sat the Core Strategy group made up of representatives from the same organisations but on an officer only basis (with the exception of service users). In practice the decision making process has been that County SP officers prepare papers, the Core Strategy group tweak them and give local perspectives, and the Commissioning Body formally approve/defer/change/reject them.

- 2.8 In April 2008 the Derbyshire SP process was the subject of an inspection by the Audit Commission. The outcome was “a fair service” with “uncertain prospects for improvement” i.e. on a scale of possible scores from zero to three the outcome on both judgements was one. There were a number of recommendations in the report and the County team is now working to implement these asap. A key recommendation related to the role of the Commissioning Body.
- 2.9 The more common model of Supporting People decision making processes nationally, is that the Core Strategy group of officers takes the decisions about individual scheme finance within an overall broad direction already agreed through political decision making structures i.e. the strategy group is also the commissioning group. The Audit Commission were critical of the pace of decision making in Derbyshire SP and put that down, in part, to cumbersome decision making arrangements. Their recommendation was that the Core Strategy group should take the commissioning decisions in line with broad priorities to reflect the more common model operated nationwide.
- 2.10 At the Commissioning Body meeting held on the 12th September, attended by Cllr Lemmon, it was decided to broadly fall in line with the Audit Commission recommendations and to restructure replacing the Commissioning Body with a ‘Strategic Partnership for Accommodation and Support’. This would broadly retain existing membership but would lose its commissioning and detailed finance decision-making role. The Strategic partnership is to provide overall strategic direction. It was further agreed that the Core Strategy group would take on the detailed commissioning role.
- 2.11 The net result of these changes is that our representation at the new commissioning forum is an officer. If Committee agrees it is proposed that this be formalised with a requirement for officers to consult with the Chairman, or his nominated deputy, on the agenda items before the meetings take place.

3. Additional proposed projects

- 3.1 The County SP team have decided to release additional funding to the eight districts to help support existing and new projects costs provided that the District develops proposals on for how the money is to be allocated. The County SP team have allocated £1m for this initiative divided equally amongst the eight districts i.e. £125,000 each. This is one-off funding and will not be repeated and therefore will not readily support additional permanent staff or accommodation for service providers. There is an imperative for the County SP team to commit these resources asap to ensure that the funding opportunity is not lost.
- 3.2 In order for County SP officers to progress this matter through their Cabinet structure they asked the Districts to supply proposals of how the additional resources would be committed. Your officers supplied the following proposals with the proviso that they were subject to committee approval.

Project	Project description	Number of estimated clients benefiting	Cost £k
Specialist Homeless advice	Support for specialist Homeless Person's advice. The aim is to prevent homelessness and fund specialist independent advice for those who are, or consider themselves to be threatened, with homelessness.	75	10
Housing support for people with alcohol abuse issues	Increased intensive support for vulnerable clients concentrating on the mental health / alcohol abuse overlap. Utilising existing providers work to meet the gap in service provision for those with alcohol issues bordering on mental health. This is about sustaining tenancies and contributing towards Crime and Disorder reduction targets.	35	18
Minor adaptations	Low level public sector minor adaptations e.g. grabrails, stairrails, etc.	200	40
Outreach housing advice for those in rural communities	Housing Options and Homeless Prevention advice for those outside of the urban centre of the District i.e. most of the District is rural but most services are delivered in the urban area. This is about taking services out and preventing gravitation of the homeless to the urban centre.	100	10
Equality and Diversity	Equality and Diversity training for all Housing Related Support providers to ensure consistency of approach and access to services by all.	40	2
Free Broadband access for those with mobility problems	Free Broadband access for those with mobility problems aimed at the elderly and infirm with poor quality of life to improve access to services and communications and reduce isolation	100	15
Private sector leasing scheme aimed at the young homeless.	Intensive ongoing tenancy support for private sector leasing scheme aimed at the young homeless to ensure tenancy sustainment, improved life skills and homeless prevention	60	30
Total		610	125

3.3 Your officers are currently working on the detail of these proposals with a view to submitting them to the County SP team early in December 2008. It is envisaged that all projects will be delivered through existing partners i.e. there will be no additional staff proposed for South Derbyshire District Council.

3.4 Members' approval for the proposed projects is requested.

4 Corporate implications

- 4.1 The delegation of commissioning body decision making to officers is a request being made of all Districts to fulfil the recommendations of the Audit Commission inspection of the County SP processes. Not adhering to the recommendations would expose the County as a whole to further adverse comments and potential funding implications.
- 4.2 The additional SP funding into the District provides an opportunity to grow services and to reach more vulnerable people with housing related support needs in our community.
- 4.3 At this time none of the additional projects are proposed to add to the staffing complement of South Derbyshire DC. However there is a possibility that it may not be possible to attract suitable partners to deliver services, if this is the case a further report will be submitted to members for consideration.

5 Community implications

- 5.1 The additional SP funding into the District provides an opportunity to grow services and to reach more vulnerable people with housing related support needs in our community.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 All of the additional services currently being worked upon or proposed are projected at this time to be delivered without any additional financial or direct staffing implications for the Council. If this position changes a further report to Committee will be made.
- 6.2 The additional resources coming into South Derbyshire as a result of the projects identified in the paper is £125,000.