

**AD HOC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
(SUPPORTING PEOPLE INITIATIVE)
1ST OCTOBER 2003**

PRESENT: Councillors Akroyd, Allen, R. Kershaw, Pacey and Yardley

APOLOGY : Councillor Slater

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

RESOLVED that Councillor Pacey be appointed Chair of the Committee for the current Council year.

2. DISCLOSURES OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No disclosures of personal interest were made.

3. DECLARATIONS – THE PARTY WHIP

No declarations of the existence of the Party Whip were made.

PART 2 (DELEGATED)

4. SUPPORTING PEOPLE INITIATIVE

Initial scrutiny of the Supporting People Initiative had been undertaken by a joint committee comprising members of the Health and Public Protection and Housing Scrutiny Committees on 2nd October 2002. It had been decided at that meeting to hold a further meeting after May/June 2003 to consider how Supporting People was operating and provide initial input into the longer-term (five year) strategy. The Cabinet, on 17th October 2002, had considered how best to monitor use of the “single pot” money allocated for the initiative and how to scrutinise best use of that funding. The Health and Public Protection and Housing Scrutiny Committees had both expressed the view, with which the Cabinet had agreed, that all further scrutiny of the matter would be best undertaken by an ad hoc scrutiny committee comprising three members of each Committee with Cabinet Lead Members being invited to contribute in the discussions of that committee as it considered appropriate.

The minutes of the meeting of the Joint Committee held on 2nd October 2002 were submitted to provide background information on the item.

Ms D. Esmond, the Supporting People Team Manager, Mr J. Franks, Warden Services Manager at Lifeline and the Housing Strategy Manager attended the meeting to assist with the consideration of the item.

The Housing Strategy Manager and the Supporting People Team Manager gave a presentation on the progress made with the initiative since the meeting of the Joint Committee as follows:

Supporting People

Supporting People was the Government's long-term programme to enable local authorities and its partners to plan, commission and provide quality housing-related support services which would help vulnerable people to live independently in the community. The programme had begun in April 2003 and brought together a range of existing funding sources for housing related support services. The programme was overseen by the Supporting People Team, who would ensure local delivery through commissioning work through local organisations. The programme would ensure the quality and value of services through a series of contracts and reviews with service providers by March 2006.

The programme in Leicestershire was led by a partnership of eight local authorities, Leicestershire County Council, four Primary Care Trusts and Leicestershire and Rutland Probation Service.

Maximising Opportunities

In anticipation of the introduction of the Supporting People Initiative, Charnwood had increased the number of floating schemes in its area from five to over one hundred.

Funding had been made available, in the form of Pipeline schemes, for a local programme to bid for funding to continue work already in existence within its area when the Supporting People Initiative was introduced. Charnwood had received approximately two thirds of the funding it had applied for.

Day to Day Processes

Advanced payments had been given to some support providers to assist with cash flow. There had been difficulties in submitting invoices to people not eligible for subsidies. Fair charging assessments were being undertaken for tenants receiving Homecare. Other tenants would have the opportunity for assessments in the future as part of a five year programme.

Looking to the Future

A five year strategy was in place which would dictate priorities and direct any additional funding received. There had been slow progress in respect of involving councillors. In the near future, a Members Reference Panel would be established to consider issues within the programme.

The initial funding requirements for the scheme had proved to be greater than the Government had initially anticipated and programmes were being scrutinised by Ministers. Therefore, officers did not expect to receive additional funding in the next budget, rather that they would need to justify and meet the requirements of the existing schemes.

At the invitation of the Committee, Councillors Newton and Vincent, Cabinet Lead Members for Housing and Environmental Services took part in the discussion on the matter.

The following issues were raised and comments made by members of the Committee:

- (i) Further information was required in respect of which tenants could apply for assessments to claim subsidies within the Initiative.
- (ii) Further information was required in respect of the support providers.
- (iii) Further information was required in respect of how the amount of the “single pot” would be calculated in the future.
- (iv) There was an obvious need for additional accommodation for homeless people in Charnwood.
- (v) Further information was required in respect of how the funding was distributed within the local Initiative Programme.
- (vi) Further information was required in respect of the opportunity for new innovation schemes to be introduced within the Initiative.
- (vii) The Initiative was aimed at tenants in Council and social housing. Owner/occupiers and privately rented housing tenants should also be able to claim support.
- (viii) It was of concern that some Charnwood tenants claiming housing benefit would not be aware of the Supporting People Initiative and would not therefore obtain the support to which they were entitled.
- (ix) It was of concern that tenants not claiming benefits but on a low income or in receipt of pension credits would not receive support from the Initiative.
- (x) The Committee would need to consider how to proceed with the scrutiny of the Initiative.

In response to issues raised and comments made, the Housing Strategy Manager and the Supporting People Manager stated:

- (a) All tenants in receipt of housing benefit could claim support from the Initiative. Those not eligible through that route could apply for an assessment in order to receive a grant.
- (b) Support providers included sheltered accommodation, voluntary agencies, for example The Bridge Support Schemes, Loughborough Night Stop and housing associations.

- (c) A formula had been proposed to calculate the funding made available to a programme, taking account of need/population size/geographical area.
- (d) In April 2003, funding for the various agencies had been guaranteed at the same level as that applying prior to the introduction of the Supporting People Initiative. Funding would be received monthly.
- (e) New innovation schemes could be introduced. However, they would have to be financed within existing resources.
- (f) At the present time, owner/occupiers could apply for grants through the Home Improvements Agency, which was funded through the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the local authority. The Supporting People Initiative would be taking that over work in the future and bids could be made for additional funding for that purpose.
- (g) All tenants claiming housing benefit prior to the introduction of the Supporting People Initiative would continue to receive benefits. Any new applications would need to produce evidence to support a claim. However, Wardens and officers were available to assist with the completion of those claims.
- (h) It was anticipated that tenants claiming pension credits would receive benefits, possibly through the Fair Charging Assessment.
- (i) Councillors would be invited, in the near future, to take part in a Members Reference Panel, to input into the consultation process in respect of the strategy. At least two councillors from each district would be invited to participate.

RESOLVED

1. that the information be noted;
2. that the Housing Strategy Manager be asked to provide further information to the Committee when available, in respect of the strategy and the Members Reference Panel.

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