

Committee: Housing Board

Agenda Item

Date: 30th August 2011

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Title: Supporting People programme update

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Summary

1. This report sets out recent changes in the way that care for vulnerable people is being administered and delivered across the District in conjunction with Essex County Council. These services are generally referred to as the Supporting People programme.

Recommendations

2. That the Housing Board notes the contents of the report and the changes proposed to the provision of services.

Financial Implications

3. The County has had substantial reductions in its funding from central government and the 'ringfence' for funding for Supporting People services has been removed. The County have reduced funding for these services and consequently the Council will receive reduced funding in some areas which could impact on the delivery of services to residents in need of support.

Background Papers

4. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.
 - I. Essex Supporting People Programme – Provision of housing related floating support services – service specification – June 2011
 - II. Essex Supporting People – Core Strategy Group – Draft Supporting People Community Alarm Briefing – July 2011

Impact

5.

Communication/Consultation	N/A
Community Safety	Supporting People services contribute to Community Safety.
Equalities	N/A
Health and Safety	Supporting People services contribute to Health and Safety.
Human Rights/Legal Implications	N/A
Sustainability	N/A
Ward-specific impacts	N/A
Workforce/Workplace	N/A

6. Situation

Until December 2010, Supporting People activity was overseen by the Essex Supporting People Commissioning Body which included both Members and Officers from the County Council and non unitary Districts across the County. This body was disbanded in 2010 after Essex County Council took over full responsibility for budgetary decisions relating to Supporting People activity.

However it was agreed that an officer group will continue in an advisory role to the County and enable the Districts to comment on proposals and support the County in its formulation of policy as required. This report sets out some of the changes in programme management which the County has been consulting Districts upon.

7. Supporting People funding changes and Equality Impact assessment

The County is on target to meet its £6m saving through the reduction in hours and rates etc for various services including support for elderly persons in sheltered housing agreed following the reduction in its central government funding. There have been both administrative 'back office' savings and some service closures.

Some Districts are using funding from their Housing Revenue Accounts to fund some parts of the service and the County has suggested that there has been little negative feedback or impact as a consequence of the reductions in funding to services to date.

However, it is recognised that it is early days and any evidence to date has been anecdotal. The County is committed through its equality impact assessment action plan to seek feedback and measure the impact on service delivery. Districts will be invited to take part in the assessment and their level of involvement is currently under consideration.

8. Approach to Community Alarm Commissioning

The County aims to refocus the community alarm service and make substantial inroads into its £4m savings target for 2012 through changes to the service.

There is an inconsistent approach across the County and to some extent the service provided and how much an individual pays for the service can be reliant on historical factors amounting to a 'postcode lottery'. The County's approach is to broadly seek a consistent but lower level provision.

The exact level of inconsistency is not known and the County will be surveying all providers to build a full picture to inform decision making. One of the main issues that Districts have raised is that a lower level provision could conflict with the 'prevent' agenda and costs could be 'passported' elsewhere to the ambulance and other emergency services, but this is also difficult to quantify at present.

These proposals could have a significant impact in Uttlesford if the County agrees to only fund a monitoring service which is one option. The detailed consultation is expected to be take place during September and October 2011.

9. Floating Support – Procurement

'Floating support' for vulnerable persons was until recently provided by three different agencies in three areas across the County. It has now been agreed that the procurement process for contracts commencing in April 2012, will be for two areas, (North East and Mid Essex & South and West Essex) which are co-terminus with the existing Adult Social Care areas. The decision to reduce from 3 to 2 areas is also driven by a desire to make savings although the budget is only expected to only reduce from around £5.3m to £5m, with most savings made through administration and not front line services.

There has been a high level of interest in these contracts with over 60 expressions of interest. Appointments will take place in the Autumn. The contracts are flexible, enabling services to be extended if other funding becomes available.

10. Home Improvement Agencies

Contracts for the delivery of Home Improvement works to vulnerable private sector residents were tendered during the spring. Swan Housing Group and

the Papworth Trust were successful and they commenced work on the 1st July 2011.

Risk Analysis

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Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Reductions in level of services by County could impact on residents and incur costs elsewhere to the Council.	2 – Districts have no direct say in final decision making	2 – Residents could become more vulnerable and potential harm to themselves or others could increase.	Regular liaison with both County and service providers to identify areas of potential risk and action required.

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.