

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY

SERVICES COMMITTEE

5 MARCH 2008

Item 12 – CARE AND REPAIR AGENCY – PROPOSED PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT WITH
WOKING BOROUGH COUNCIL

I now attach the above report previously advised as *'to follow'*.

M.L. WHITE
Committee Administrator

12. CARE AND REPAIR AGENCY – PROPOSED PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT WITH WOKING BOROUGH COUNCIL (DHCS)

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 **The purpose of this report is to obtain approval to partnership working with Woking Borough Council for Occupational Therapy and “Handypersons” Services.**

2. Background Information

2.1 The Home Improvements Agency (also called “Care and Repair”) provides help to vulnerable people with the maintenance of their homes. A range of help is given including provision of adaptations and general repairs. This service helps people to remain independent and can expedite their return to home from hospital.

2.2 Surrey County Council (SCC) are very supportive of this service and at last June’s meeting details were provided of the funding that was to be made available, from them, to enhance the current services. The funding amounted to £145,000 for both Runnymede and Woking Borough Councils, of which, Runnymede was to obtain an estimated £55,000.

2.3 The conditions attached to the funding from the SCC are as follows:

- (i) That Runnymede ensures that the details of the clients handled by the Home Improvement Agency are recorded on the County Council’s software so that SCC can demonstrate that a number of people are receiving services;
- (ii) That a Housing Occupational Therapist is appointed to work for both Woking and Runnymede in assessing clients’ needs;
- (iii) That the Home Improvement Agencies (HIA’s) become involved with the voluntary organisations (primarily the Red Cross) in the provision of an equipment store;
- (iv) That both HIA’s investigate the possibility of merging in order to produce greater efficiencies.

2.4 Last June, this Committee agreed to accept the funding on the terms outlined above and Officers have subsequently been working with Woking Borough Council to set up the procedures required.

3. Report

3.1 The first tranche of the funding has now been received from the County Council. The necessary procedures have also been put in place to achieve condition (i) above and although condition (iii) has not been fully implemented other arrangements have been put in place to access equipment for clients.

3.2 There are two issues that remain: (i) the appointment of the Occupational Therapist, and (ii) the investigation of the possibility of merging the two Home Improvement Agencies in order to achieve greater efficiencies.

3.3 It is proposed that Woking Borough Council will employ an Occupational Therapist who will work across the two Boroughs. This Officer will provide advice on the extent of adaptations required for clients and will work closely with staff who have responsibility for authorising Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG’s). The post-holder will also work closely with the “Handyperson”.

3.4 Woking Borough Council has provided a “Handyperson” service for the two Boroughs for some years. Only one “Handyperson” is currently employed and he works for Woking Borough Council for 4 days of the week and for Runnymede for one day. The post is funded from another grant provided by the County Council.

- 3.5 It is proposed that a proportion of the recent grant funding should be used to employ an additional "Handyperson". This will allow a service to be provided for Runnymede clients for additional days each week as well as enhancing the Home Improvement Agency service. This proposal has been discussed with the County Council who support the initiative.
- 3.6 It is also felt that by working in partnership with Woking on both the "Handyperson" and the Housing Occupational Therapist Service, the County's aim to merge the agencies' services is being progressed. The extent to which any further merger might be required is also being ascertained, and, if further measures are needed, then these will be reported to this Committee before any commitment is made.
- 3.7 It is proposed, therefore, that a Partnership Agreement is drawn up to include the arrangements to be made for the Housing Occupational Therapist and "Handyperson" appointments and also for the management of the two services. The latter will fall to Woking Borough Council but Runnymede will need to reimburse Woking that proportion of the grant that is received from the County Council.
4. Financial Implications
- 4.1 This Committee has already considered the financial implications of accepting the County Council's funding and it is not felt that by entering into the Partnership Agreement any additional financial implications arise. The Partnership Agreement will be framed so that the Agreement is for current funding levels and ceases to apply if funding is not continued in subsequent years.
5. Legal Implications
- 5.1 The partnership working with Woking Borough Council for the provision of Housing Occupational Therapy and "Handypersons" services requires the approval of the Committee under the Scheme of Delegation.
6. Conclusions
- 6.1 The partnership working will be reflected in an agreement to be entered into between Woking and Runnymede Borough Councils.
- 6.2 Funding from the County Council for enhancements to the Home Improvement Agency services in both Woking and Runnymede has been received. It is now necessary for a Partnership Agreement to be drawn up between the two Councils (Woking and Runnymede) to deliver the proposals contained within the funding agreement. Standing Orders dictate that the establishment of such an Agreement is approved by Committee.

OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that –

the partnership working with Woking Borough Council for the delivery and co-ordination of the Occupational Therapy and "Handyperson" services with Woking Borough Council be approved.

(TO RESOLVE)

Background Papers

The Housing & Community Services Committee Report of the 6 June 2007.
Private Sector Housing Manager's file on Partnership Working with Woking.