

SUPPORTING PEOPLE – PROGRESS REPORT

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 To report the progress of the Supporting People project and to note the developing Supporting People initial position statement and tenancy support model.
- 1.2 The local Supporting People Officer, Andrew Wilson, will be attending the Committee meeting.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Supporting People is due to be implemented in April 2003 when several funding streams that provide for supported housing will be incorporated into the Supporting People Grant. Essex County Council (the “Administering Authority”) will be responsible for administering the grant under new decision making arrangements.
- 2.2 The Supporting People Administrative Guidance, issued by the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR), outlines the framework under which the scheme will operate both before and after April 2003. The interim tasks in the run up to April 2003 include:
 - (i) to ensure all current and potential supported housing providers are identified and have completed the necessary “supply form”
 - (ii) to develop a strategy in partnership with key stakeholders such as housing providers, Social Services, Probation and Health
 - (iii) to ensure that interim contracts are in place to fund the continuation of current services.
- 2.3 A key component of the Supporting People programme is the preparation of an Essex-wide Supporting People Strategy which should reflect the priorities of the Districts. Although the Supporting People Administrative Guidance does not require Districts to produce their own strategic documents, a local position statement will help ensure that the interests and needs of the Rochford district are taken into account in the County strategy.
- 2.4 After April 2003, Supporting People services will be available to everyone, subject to eligibility criteria and a new means test for support, and this will be met from the Supporting People Grant. Housing Benefit will continue to be paid in respect of rent and certain

service charges.

- 2.5 In order to undertake and co-ordinate the required work at a local level, Rochford District Council and Castle Point Borough Council have created a new joint post. The post is one of a number that have been created throughout Essex to deliver the programme.

3 SUPPORTING PEOPLE LOCAL POSITION STATEMENT

- 3.1 As the Administering Authority for Supporting People in Essex, by mid-September 2002, Essex County Supporting People Team will produce one over-arching countywide Supporting People strategy. This will include the findings and priorities of local position statements and will aim to:

- (i) outline how the local authority intends to deliver the programme
- (ii) show the arrangements for local consultation
- (iii) include a full “map” of the current provision or supply of supported accommodation
- (iv) produce a series of position statements on each of the Supporting People client groups
- (v) identify relevant capital priorities.

- 3.2 According to the DTLR's Supporting People Administrative Guidance published in October 2001, Districts are advised to:-

- (i) provide a clear vision statement of what the local Supporting People programme will deliver locally
- (ii) quantify existing service provision and clarify who it is provided for
- (iii) identify the consultative mechanisms in use
- (iv) refrain from need analysis until further DTLR guidance is published.

- 3.3 At present, it is not feasible to produce a full local Supporting People Strategy since needs assessment is still continuing and further guidance has yet to be published by the DTLR. A position statement is being produced which, in time, will be developed into a local strategy.

- 3.4 Overall, what is needed is a local programme that meets local needs. The position statement, currently under development, emphasises the preventative nature of the Supporting People programme and includes a series of statements for the following client groups:

- Older people with support needs
- People with mental health problems
- People with learning disabilities

- People with physical or sensory disability
- Single homeless with support needs
- People with alcohol problems
- People with drug problems
- Offenders or people at risk of offending
- Young people at risk of leaving care
- Women at risk of domestic violence
- People with HIV/AIDS
- Homeless families with support needs
- Refugees

The position statement will be presented to Members at a later date when it is completed.

4 CONSULTATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

- 4.1 The local consultative arrangements that are in place for the development of the local Supporting People position statement include:-
- (i) an Inclusive Forum for all stakeholders
 - (ii) a Core Strategy Group comprising key agencies such as housing, health and social services who are responsible for developing position statements for each client group
 - (iii) an officer Project Management Team comprising housing services and housing benefit staff from both this Council and Castle Point Borough Council
- 4.2 A Providers Forum and Workshops for senior managers in the Social Services and Home Improvement Agencies are also being held in March 2002 to further progress needs assessment where information is still required.

5 TENANCY SUPPORT SERVICE

- 5.1 Accompanying the aforementioned tasks, is the need to maximise the opportunities Transitional Housing Benefit can offer in developing tenancy support services prior to Supporting People going live. Such services can help to prevent tenancy breakdown. Tenants who are vulnerable, or have high and persistent rent arrears, tenants who cause nuisance and tenants in temporary accommodation, may require support.
- 5.2 There are clear advantages to housing management if support can therefore be provided to prevent avoidable future tenancy action.

Castle Point Borough Council, Colchester Borough Council and Epping Forest Borough Council have either successfully appointed or are in the process of recruiting Tenancy Support Workers to meet their need using Transitional Housing Benefit.

- 5.3 Officers have already undertaken an identification of need in Rochford. Twenty council tenants have already been identified as having some level of support need. These are already placing increasing demands on officer time, and a tenancy support worker would be able to offer specialist and ongoing counselling and support enabling existing officers to spend more time on core activities. However, the development of tenancy support requires:

- (i) the tenant claiming or being eligible for housing benefit
- (ii) the tenant agreeing to receive support
- (iii) a Deed of Variation to the tenancy
- (iv) an “assessment” of housing related support needs.

- 5.4 A further report with options and financial implications will be brought to a future meeting.

6 DECISION MAKING BODIES FOR SUPPORTING PEOPLE IN ESSEX

- 6.1 The County-wide decision making bodies for Supporting People include:
- (i) the Essex Commissioning Body, comprising Member level representation for housing, social services, health and probation, whose role it is to approve the Supporting People Strategy through sign up of individual agencies and to oversee the implementation of the programme
 - (ii) a Chief Officer Steering Group that oversees the implementation of Supporting People across Essex, proposes policy and procedures, and proposes an Essex Supporting People Strategy for Member approval
 - (iii) an Implementation and Planning Group of senior managers from all partner agencies whose role is to develop a consistent approach to setting up and maintaining the systems necessary to implement Supporting People in Essex, including setting consistent quality standards for support services

- (iv) a County Commissioning Team responsible for administering the programme on a day to day basis and the preparation of the Essex Supporting People Strategy.

- 6.2 The Association of Essex Authorities at their February 2002 meeting, considered a report on the establishment of the Commissioning Body for Essex by June 2002, excluding Southend and Thurrock. Each local authority will be required to nominate a Member to the Commissioning Body in the near future.

7 FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS

- 7.1 The County Supporting People Budget is currently estimated at £14 million. In Essex, the budget will be paid to the County Council by the Department of Transport Local Government and the Regions. Decisions on how to spend the grant will be a joint responsibility between Essex County Council, District Authorities, Health and Probation services.
- 7.2 From recent statistical returns to the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions, there currently exist 23,000 units of supported accommodation from over 1,000 providers in Essex. There are 4505 Transitional Housing Benefit claims in Essex per week, totalling well over £71,000 in general counselling and support payments to tenants in the social and private rented sectors. This compares with just over 160 Transitional Housing Benefit claims totalling just over £2,000 in payments per week in the Rochford district.
- 7.3 A concurrent report before this Committee outlines the proposed Supporting People Charging Arrangements.

8 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Supporting People Grant will be a cash-limited grant that will only continue to fund supported housing schemes following appropriate service review recommendations. Furthermore, each service provider will have to give the County Supporting People Team, acting on behalf of the Commissioning Body, sufficient detail to enable them to register that organisation as accredited, as a pre-requisite of the service provider tendering for specific services.
- 8.2 Once the charging policy is determined, enforcing individual eligibility will be the responsibility of the "Charging Authority". This is explained further in the concurrent report on this agenda.

9 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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- 9.1 The Government has provided a guarantee of service to existing sheltered tenants in that, tenants will continue to receive the level of support that is currently being delivered. It also states that changes to service providers will be exceptional.

10 RECOMMENDATION

- 10.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

- (1) That the progress of the Supporting People project be noted
- (2) That the Council's appointment to the Essex Commissioning Body and local Core Strategy Group be the Chairman of Community Services Committee
- (3) That the Supporting People local position statement be presented at a future committee. (HHHCC)

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Background Papers:

DTLR Supporting People Administrative Guidance.

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