

**TITLE OF REPORT: ITEM REFERRED FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:
20 SEPTEMBER 2016 – PROPOSAL TO SET UP A COUNTY WIDE IMPROVEMENT
AGENCY SERVICE IN HERTFORDSHIRE**

The following is an extract from the Draft Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 20 September 2016.

53. PROPOSAL TO SET UP A COUNTY WIDE HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCY SERVICE IN HERTFORDSHIRE

The Environmental Health Manager presented the report of the Head of Public Protection Service entitled Proposal to Set Up a County Wide Home Improvement Agency Service in Hertfordshire.

He advised that the report outlined the proposal to establish, in conjunction with the County Council and other District Councils, a shared service for the delivery of adaptations and other improvements to help elderly and other vulnerable people live independently and safely at home.

He referred Members to the background to the report which included the Council's Housing and Homelessness Strategy, in which there was an action to explore the options for improving the value for money for Disabled Facilities Grants.

The Government had invested significant additional funding in Local Authorities with responsibility to deliver Disabled Facilities Grant in order to support the national Care Agenda.

This service would result in an improvement to the quality of the service delivery by reducing the time taken to provide adaptations and provide efficiencies in the process. This would also provide a platform from which other services could be delivered to support people to live independently.

This report sought in principle agreement following which a detailed business case would be developed and a further report would be presented to Cabinet,

In response to questions the Environmental Health Manager advised that the proposed shared service would increase resilience, benefit residents and produce efficiencies by making better use of the resources available.

He further advised that the different Authorities were at different stages in the provision of this service, for instance one District already has a contact with a provider that will run for another 2/3 years. Those Authorities who did not wish to or were unable to join the shared service at this point would be welcome to do so at a later date.

Members asked about the management of the Occupational Therapists employment and whether, by being part of a shared service, this Council becomes responsible for the duties of other authorities within that shared service.

The Environmental Health Manager was unable to comment on the employment terms of the OTs as they were currently employed by Serco on behalf of the County Council. In respect of responsibilities, the shared service would enable this Council to discharge its duties and provide a platform for other agencies to contribute towards the service.

The Head of Public Protection Service advised that this Service was seen as a delivery vehicle for the statutory duties of this Council and it had been made very clear that the monies put in to deliver those duties would be protected for that use. It would be necessary to ensure clear governance arrangements to ensure that the statutory duties of this Council were delivered.

In respect of the means-tested element, Members were concerned that, when a Policy is written for this service, exceptional circumstances should be taken into account, such as someone who could no longer earn due to an accident and that the future earnings be considered and that consideration should be given to special arrangements for members of the Armed Forces.

The Head of Public Protection Service informed Members that a further report would be presented to Council and that one of the work streams was to consider Policy making.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: That the recommendations contained in the report Entitled Proposal to Set Up a County Wide Home Improvement Agency Service in Hertfordshire be supported.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to comment on the report entitled Proposal to Set Up a County Wide Home Improvement Agency Service in Hertfordshire prior to consideration by Cabinet.

[NOTE: The report to which this referral relates is Item 11 on this agenda.]