

**EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**  
**HOUSING COMMITTEE 25 JANUARY 2006**  
**THE SUPPORTING PEOPLE PROGRAMME**

**Joint Report by the Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services and the  
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services**

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To advise members of the operation of this national initiative in East Ayrshire Council.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Previous reports to Committee have detailed the policy background to the Supporting People Programme together with the funding being made available to the Council through to 2007/2008.

**3. SERVICE REVIEW GUIDANCE**

- 3.1 The original timescale set by the Scottish Executive was that all Supporting People funded services would be reviewed by April 2006. Further guidance issued by the Scottish Executive earlier this year however revised the end date for the initial round of service reviews to April 2007. This was in recognition of the fact that unlike East Ayrshire Council, many local authorities had not at that time actually started their reviews. Although there has been some slippage on our own review programme due to the level of detail that has been required on the review of older peoples services, the initial round of Supporting People service reviews in East Ayrshire will still be completed during 2006.

**4. 2006/2007 FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS**

- 4.1 As has been previously reported, the Council's Supporting People Grant allocation for 2006/2007 will be £6.464M. This appears as a headline increase of £280,000 on our original 2005/2006 Grant allocation of £6.184M. However, the fact that underspends from previous years totaling £228,000 were able to be brought forward to be spent in 2005/2006 has meant that the total amount of Supporting People Grant available in 2005/2006 is actually £6.412M. As a consequence, the 2006/2007 funding is only £52,000 more than the total amount of Grant available for 2005/2006.
- 4.2 While it is understood that the Scottish Executive will, as in previous years, allow local authorities to carry forward any Grant underspends, it is considered highly unlikely that there will be any significant Supporting People Grant underspends in 2005/2006 that could be carried over to 2006/2007.

- 4.3 As previously reported, no inflation uplift was provided to Supporting People contract values for this year. As the service review process has yet to be completed, no overall view of the relative value of services is yet available. There is accordingly as yet an insufficient objective evidence base for any decisions on which services would give the best return on any new investment. The Supporting People Commissioning and Purchasing Group has, therefore, concluded that the best option for utilising any additional funding available for 2006/2007 would be to provide a general uplift to all contract values to help providers meet inflation costs.

## **5. MEMBER OFFICER WORKING GROUP UPDATE**

- 5.1 The Member Officer Working Group that was established to direct the review of Sheltered Housing within East Ayrshire continues its work. This is a comprehensive review of the service including consideration of interaction with Care at Home and Community Alarm services. It is anticipated that detailed reports and recommendations for action from the group will be brought to the appropriate service committees once the Member Officer Working Group has considered options in respect of proposed models to meet the future needs of service users and the legislative requirements of the Council.

## **6. SUPPORTING PEOPLE CHARGING POLICY FROM APRIL 2006**

- 6.1 Since 2003 the main difference between the Scottish Executive's guidance on charging policy for Supporting People funded services and the charging policy for other non residential services has been the 'passporting' to free Supporting People funded services provided, on the receipt of Housing Benefit by service users. COSLA and the Scottish Executive have now agreed to change that guidance. This will ensure equity of treatment for service users irrespective of tenure.
- 6.2 From April 2006, all new users of Supporting People funded services will no longer be 'passporting' to free services by receiving Housing Benefit. They will instead be assessed for liability to pay under the same charging policy as currently applies to other users of non residential services. Existing service users who are not assessed for charges as they receive Housing Benefit will continue to be exempt from charging on a preserved rights basis until they leave that service. Short term or emergency services will still not be re-charged.
- 6.3 It is not anticipated that there will be a major increase in the actual amount of income generated by this expansion of charging policy. However, the expansion of financial assessment to cover all service users is expected to have positive aspects in that the first step of financial assessment is the maximisation of income from welfare benefits for all service users.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT**

- 7.1 As previously reported, the carry over of underspends to 2005/2006 has enabled the Council to eliminate the need for other existing budgets to meet the previous shortfall between Supporting People contractual obligations and the amount of Supporting People Grant received from the Scottish Executive. Although the amount required to be paid from the Housing Revenue Account for the service provided to protect tenants continues to fall as their numbers reduce over time, the ongoing contribution is expected to be about £125,000 for 2005/2006.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR OTHER BUDGETS AND THE GENERAL FUND**

- 8.1 There remains the fundamental issue that the amount of Supporting People Grant received by the Council has hardly changed since 2003/2004, while the overall level of need for housing support services has continued to grow. As previously reported, the two main factors in this are the increasing level of needs arising in our elderly population and the continuing hospital retraction programme.
- 8.2 Overall, East Ayrshire Council continues to spend considerably more on the provision of housing support services than is received from the Scottish Executive in Supporting People Grant. It is difficult at present to give a firm indication of the likely total spend on housing support services for 2005/6 as this will depend on the differing discharge dates and associated service start dates for the hospital retraction programme. The discharge dates are still subject to change. Certainly, the recent hospital discharges have added on additional financial pressures. It is however already clear that the overall level of housing support service expenditure will exceed the total amount of Supporting People Grant available for 2005/6 by more than £1M. These are budget pressures that have arisen after April 2003 and as such could not have been realised through the original grant submission. The final overspend will, as before, need to be met from the community care budget as the overspend relates to the increased costs of integrated packages covering both housing support and personal care services.

## **9. COMMUNITY PLANNING/POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Delivery of the Supporting People Programme supports the strategic objectives as set out in the Local Housing Strategy and East Ayrshire Community Plan.

## **10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

## **11. RECOMMENDATIONS**

11.1 The Committee is recommended to:

- (i) agree the service review and funding arrangements as outlined in the report;
- (ii) otherwise note the contents of the report.

William Stafford  
Executive Director of  
Neighbourhood Services

John Mulgrew  
Executive Director of  
Educational & Social Services.

20 December 2005

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. COSLA charging policy paper of December 2005
2. Supporting People Commissioning and Purchasing Group minutes

For further information please contact Geoff Crow, Senior Supporting People Officer  
telephone: 01563 554832.

Implementation Officer: Chris McAleavey, Head of Housing  
[chris.mcaleavey@east-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:chris.mcaleavey@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)