

COUNCIL CABINET

21 APRIL 2009

Present: Councillor Jones (Chair)
Councillors Allen, Care, Naitta, Skelton and Troup
In attendance Councillor Hickson

This record of decisions was published on 23 April 2009. The key decisions set out in this record will come into force and may be implemented on the expiry of five clear days unless a key decision is called in.

266/08 Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Carr.

273/08 Review of Handy Person's Scheme

The Council Cabinet considered a report on a Review of Handy Person's Scheme. The Handy Person's Scheme helps older people to retain their independence by carrying out minor household repairs and other small jobs which they were unable to do safely themselves. The scheme had initially been set up as pilot project using Supporting People money to carry out 400 jobs per year. However due to its resounding success it was expanded to carry out 1200 jobs per year. In July 2008 the Adult Services and Health Commission learned that the performance of the Scheme during 2007 had been off target with completion of 900 jobs against a target of 1200. The Commission therefore decided to select this as its second major topic for review in its 2008/09 work programme. Written and oral evidence was presented to the Commission by the Council's Housing Renewal Manager, Operations Manager at Spirita, Handy Person's Van Operative and three service users at a meeting held in public on 24 February 2009. The Commission was informed that the main reason for the scheme to be below target was due to lack of awareness amongst potential recipients of the availability. As a consequence insufficient numbers of people were applying for assistance from the scheme. This situation was not helped by the restriction on the eligibility criteria as the service was currently only available to people over 60 who were in receipt of means tested benefits and to adults with disabilities. However, the scheme had been promoted recently and as a result the monitoring figures for the first ten months showed the scheme to be on target for this year. After checking for accuracy of the evidence with the witness, the final draft was approved by the Commission at their 16 March 2009 meeting and was attached in Appendix 2 of the report. The Commission felt that this service fulfilled an important local function and should continue to be supported. Evidence received by the Commission shows that there was capacity in the system to increase the total number of jobs carried out in a year. Members therefore recommended extending the service to all people over the age of 60 as it was considered that many elderly people could become vulnerable at some stage in their lives and could therefore benefit from this scheme.

The Commission made the following recommendations to improve the access to the service and achieve better value for money.

1. The Commission recommended that the criteria for accessing this service should be extended to include all residents over the age of 60 and not restricted only to those receiving benefits. The service should continue to be provided to adults with disabilities.
2. Re-launch the scheme with the new eligibility criteria and promote the service across the city including in community centres and by giving presentations at all the Neighbourhood Forums
3. Advise clients not to buy capital items in advance unless directed by the scheme administrator
4. Each van should be stocked up with basic items required for daily activity to minimise time loss

Decision

To request a further report on the scheme to a future meeting.