

Report to Housing Scrutiny Panel

Date of meeting: 28 January 2014

Portfolio: Housing – Cllr D. Stallan

Subject: Review of Handyman Scheme – One year on

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Committee Secretary: Mark Jenkins (01992 56 4607)



Recommendations:

That the Scrutiny Panel notes the contents of the report, 1-year on from the introduction of the Handyman Scheme;

Background

1. Up until April 2012, the Council only operated a Handyperson Scheme for non-Council tenants over 60 years of age and in receipt of benefits. The scheme was provided by the Council's Caring and Repairing in Epping Forest (CARE) Scheme, funded at a cost of a £10,000 per annum to the General Fund, with the administration costs funded by Essex County Council through the Supporting People regime and the works undertaken by private contractors.
2. In addition to this, the Council also funded Voluntary Action Epping Forest (VAEF) to provide preventative advice and undertake minor works in the homes of older and disabled non-Council tenants, to avoid them falling and injuring themselves in their homes. At that time, the funding supported around 5-hours a week in total.
3. As part of the Council's Housing Improvements and Service Enhancements introduced in April 2012, the Cabinet agreed to provide a free of charge Handyperson Scheme to the following groups of tenants, irrespective of means:
 - a. Those living in sheltered accommodation; and
 - b. Those living in any other Council dwelling.
4. For those living in sheltered accommodation, the Council has directly employed a multi-skilled operative, who attends each scheme on a scheduled rota basis for around half a day each week to undertake small repairs and odd jobs for the older tenants, which would normally be their responsibility, some of which could lead to them injuring themselves if they undertook them themselves and fell. The jobs are pre-booked through the Scheme Manager.
5. For those older Council tenants in both older-people's grouped housing schemes and in

general needs housing (who have nobody of working-age living with them) and to Council tenants with defined physical disabilities, who have nobody without defined physical disabilities living with them, the Council has entered into an agreement with Voluntary Action Epping Forest (VAEF) to provide a similar service. These repairs are generally booked through the Housing Repairs Service. However, occasionally VAEF take referrals directly. The grant paid to VAEF amounts to £36,000 per annum for an initial period of 3-years starting in 2012.

6. Attached at appendix 1 is the list of jobs available through the Handyman Scheme, of which some are entirely free of charge and others attract a payment for parts only.
7. During the last 12-months it is estimated that this combined service has undertaken more than 1,000 jobs across the eight sheltered schemes and over 280 jobs throughout the district in other Council accommodation.
8. The overall cost of the scheme is around £77,500 per annum, which takes account of the grant to VAEF, parts supplied by the Council, labour and vehicle costs.
9. Since its introduction in April 2012, the Council's Handyman Service has attracted a very high rate of satisfaction (100%), and has proved to be a very popular Service Enhancement. Attached at Appendix 2 is the first annual report of the Handyman Scheme from the VAEF, which includes a number of testimonials.

Appendix 1

Handy Person Scheme – List of Qualifying Jobs

Qualifying Jobs	Tenant to supply materials	Council to provide materials
Bulb Changing	X	
Electrical plugs	X	
Telephone extension cable running	X	
Radiator bleeding	n/a	n/a
Altering timers for heating	n/a	n/a
Tap washers		X
Shower Holders (that work off taps)	X¹	
Shower curtains & poles	X²	
WC seats	X³	
Sink, basin and bath plugs		X
Blocked drains, sinks, toilets, baths and pipes	n/a	n/a
Plumbing in washing machines	n/a	n/a
Loose tiling over baths or sinks	X⁴	X
Cupboard Doors that are loose or off	n/a	n/a
Tightening door handles	n/a	n/a
Door and window locks		X
Spy holes		X
Door chains		X
Draft exclusion		X
Small ramps to go over threshold when gaps or height difference is a problem for wheelchair		X
Replacing curtain rails	X	X (Battens)
Coat rails	X	
Shelving, hooks & rails	X	
Picture hanging	X	
Carpet trimming		X (Threshold Bars)
Flat pack assembly	X	
Path clearance	n/a	n/a
Putting up individual washing lines (Not communal)	X⁵	
Replacing broken fence posts		X
Fitting locks to back gates (for secure access)		X
Replacing gate springs		X

¹ The Council can supply, but will be recharged at cost

² The Council can supply, but will be recharged at cost

³ The Council can supply, but will be recharged at cost

⁴ Tenant to supply their own tiles if not Council standard 150mm x 150mm white tiles

⁵ The Council can supply, but will be recharged at cost