

Report to the Services for Older People and Disabled People Task and Finish Panel



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Date of meeting: 2 November 2006

Subject: Review of Council's Handyperson Scheme

Officer contact for further information: J Scott (joint Chief Executive)

Committee Secretary: S G Hill

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

1. To review the operation and funding of the Handyperson Scheme.
2. To consider whether the current level of funding is sufficient to meet the objectives of the scheme.
3. To advise the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and via them the Cabinet accordingly.

Progress within the Council

On 20 July 2006, the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Councillor Stallan, asked the Panel to carry out a review of the handy Persons Scheme, which he said remained on his work programme from the previous Council year.

The request originates from a question to the Housing Portfolio Holder (Councillor Heavens) at Council on 21 February 2006 by Councillor Mrs Whitehouse. The question and answers are shown on the annex hereto.

The Handyperson Scheme is an offshoot of CARE (Caring and Repairing in Epping Forest) which is that part of Environmental Services, which provides the Council's Home Improvement Service. The purpose of the scheme was to provide retired homeowners and private tenants in the Epping Forest District with reputable contractors to carry out minor works.

Typical handyperson jobs are small repairs: to leaking taps and gutters for instance, and work to prevent falls in the home, like fitting grab rails and hand rails.

The Service is free to people who are over 60, retired and on a means tested benefit (such as Council Tax Benefit and Pension Guarantee Credit) for work costing up to a maximum of £150. Minor repairs costing more than this can be carried out but the homeowner has to pay the difference. Works can also be arranged for the same client group but who are not in receipt of a means-tested benefit but only if they agree to meet the costs in full.

It seems that the concerns behind the question put by Mrs Whitehouse were finance related in that the budget for the Handyperson Scheme had not been increased since the Scheme was first set up in 1999. To some extent this concern was addressed by the allocation of an additional £3000 via the DDF in the financial year 2006/07, making a total sum available of £13,250.

In 2005/06, the Scheme undertook 93 jobs at a total cost of £9,827 from a budget of £10,000.

So far this year a total of 52 jobs have been arranged at a total cost of £5868. Since demand rises in the winter months, it seems likely the total budget of £13,250 will be spent.

The additional sum of £3000 made available via the DDF in 2006/07 was a one-year only commitment. To date there has been no request for a similar sum in the new budget round. CARE staff believe that a similar provision would adequately fund the Scheme for the time being.