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<h1>REPORT TO EXECUTIVE</h1>			
PORTFOLIO AREA: HEALTH & WELL-BEING			
Date of Meeting:		1st September 2003	
Public			
Key Decision:	Yes	Recorded in Forward Plan:	Yes
Inside Policy Framework			

Title: HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCY - SUPPORTING PEOPLE FUNDING

Report of: HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION SERVICES

Report reference: EP 58/03

Summary:

To update Members on the progress made to date, on the proposed new funding/structure of the Home Improvement Agencies in Cumbria.

Recommendations:

Members are requested to note the content of the report and

- 1. instruct officers, in partnership with Eden District Council, to produce an Options Report for consideration by the Supporting People Core Strategy Development Group at their meeting on the 14th October**
- 2. produce a report for the Executive meeting on 27th October for consideration of the agreed option.**

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2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND OPTIONS

1.1 Carlisle City Council has contributed to the running of the Home

Improvement Agency (HIA) since the early 1990's. The HIA was initially set up to help vulnerable people access grant assistance for such items as Home Repair and Renovation: Disabled Facilities grants: and Crime and Disorder grants. It provides a valuable service to vulnerable groups, resulting in improved housing/living conditions for many people. They assist clients to access reputable contractors, relieving the problem of 'cowboy builders', and also, one of the founding principles of HIA's was to attempt to access private funding sources for those people who could not afford their contributions/excesses over their grant approval. This

was in order to relieve the pressure on Local Authorities funds, which in some instances were overstretched. Currently, Carlisle City Council provides £12,600 to assist with the running of the Agency, and Hanover Housing (our "provider") provide management and IT support. They also pick up any operational deficit at the end of the financial year.

1.2 A review of the service has been conducted by the Office of the Deputy

Prime Minister (ODPM), and this has earmarked additional funding for (a) the creation of additional HIA's in areas where they do not presently exist and (b) the restructuring of existing Agencies to make them more efficient and effective.

3. The Government tasked "Foundations" – the National Co-ordinating body for HIA's, with setting up a Structures Support Team to assist Administering Authorities in this process, and a forum has been established in Cumbria, to take the process forward. There are currently 5 HIA's in Cumbria (Carlisle : Eden : Barrow : Allerdale and Copeland), South Lakes District Council being the only Authority not to have an Agency.
4. In previous years, funding for the Agencies has been allocated from the ODPM, but, as of 1st April 2003, this funding comes directly from the Supporting People regime, and will continue to be provided in this manner for the foreseeable future.
5. The Government has proposed structural and organisational reforms, where

these are necessary, to improve the cost effectiveness of the service, and pave the way for national coverage. Additional funding has been made available to ensure that Agencies are set up where none exist at present.

6. A number of proposals/options have been discussed by the Forum,

regarding the Agencies that already exist in Cumbria and these are as

undernoted:-

- i. A county-wide model, with one overall manager, and one single provider,
- ii. A county-wide model, with one overall manager and several providers
- iii. The Status quo
- iv. In house provision of services
- v. An LSP (Local Strategic Partnership) model, based on current LSP areas

3. Taking each option in turn has produced a consensus that option (v) is the preferred one. Due to the fact that there are three different providers at present i.e. Hanover Housing in Carlisle and Copeland; Anchor in Eden and Barrow (Anchor have however pulled out due to financial difficulties, and the Eden Agency is currently being managed on a part time basis from Barrow) and an 'Independent' provider in Allerdale, it has been impossible to agree to a county-wide model. These problems are exacerbated by the fact that each Local Authority inputs a different amount of funding and therefore receives a different amount of subsidy from Supporting People. Hanover Housing, whilst wishing to continue to support the City Council in providing the Agency service, have indicated their need to reduce their financial exposure.
4. The Status quo is not considered as a viable option in light of the recommendations/guidance received from ODPM and Foundations, who see the Agencies as being part of a wider set up, to increase cost effectiveness/economies of scale.
5. A further option that was considered, entailed the provision of an individual in-house service, in each Local Authority area. This option was immediately discounted, as it would not attract Supporting People funding in that it would not comply with the official guidance.
6. The preferred option is No (v), an LSP model, which fits the guidance as laid

down by ODPM and Foundations. Should Regional Government eventually come to Cumbria, it would then be opportune to look at a county wide model.

7. Costings are at present being drawn up to assess the viability of option (v).

An agreed Options Report must then be submitted to Supporting People Core Strategy Development Group by 1st October for consideration at their meeting on 14th October. The resolution from this meeting must then be submitted to the ODPM by 31st January to ensure funding is secured for the Home Improvement Agencies for 2004/05 and potentially subsequent years.

1. CONSULTATION

1. Consultation to Date.

All Cumbria Authorities have been consulted together with Foundations, Supporting People and involved Housing Associations.

2. Consultation Proposed.

Joint working with officers of Eden District Council to produce an Options Report based on option (v) as identified in this report.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to note the content of the report and

1. instruct officers, in partnership with Eden District Council, to produce an Options Report for consideration by the Supporting People Core Strategy Development Group at their meeting on the 14th October
2. produce a report for the Executive meeting on 27th October for consideration of the agreed option.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure that there is continuity of services provided by the Home Improvement Agencies throughout Cumbria, and especially in Carlisle and Eden.

1. IMPLICATIONS

- Staffing/Resources – The preferred option may entail partial secondment of an officer within the Housing and Health Partnership section of the City Council.
- Financial – Within existing resources.
- Legal – Nil

- Corporate – Nil
- Risk Management – Nil
- Equality Issues – The Home Improvement Agency provides an invaluable service to some of the most vulnerable people, who require to access funding for home improvements.
- Environmental – Nil
- Crime and Disorder – The Repeat Victimisation Scheme, provided under the Minor Works Assistance scheme, provides help to people who have been victims of crime i.e. burglary.