



PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION NOTICE

INDIVIDUAL DECISION BY THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR COMMUNITIES, SAFETY AND PUBLIC HEALTH

TOPIC – APPROVAL FOR SPENDING ON A COMMISSION CONTRIBUTING TO DELIVERY OF THE ACTIVE COMMUNITIES CHANGE PLAN

PROCEDURAL INFORMATION

The Access to Information Procedure Rules – Part 4, Section 22 of the Council's Constitution provides for a decision to be made by an individual member of Cabinet.

In accordance with the Procedure Rules, the Corporate Director (Governance), the Chief Executive and the Head of Finance are consulted together with Chairman and Vice Chairman of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee and any other relevant overview and scrutiny committee. In addition, all Members are notified.

If five or more Members from those informed so request, the Leader may require the matter to be referred to Cabinet for determination.

Contact Officers:

Case Officer: Jen Anderson – janderson@winchester.gov.uk

Committee Administrator: Nancy Graham – ngraham@winchester.gov.uk

SUMMARY

This decision notice seeks approval for a commission in line with the Council's Sustainable Community Strategy and Active Communities change plan. The need for this commission has arisen because the resignation of a council officer which has meant a change is required in the delivery of an existing project.

Members will be aware of the 'VISA' ('Village Information and Service Advisor') project which involves the recruitment, training and support of volunteers who live in identified target areas. The concept is that the volunteers act as trusted friends and provide that little bit of help at the right time to older people in the community enabling them to access the services they require. Volunteers promote their service to older people living in their community and make themselves available through attending events and groups for older people, home visits and via the telephone. The principles of the programme have been based on the highly successful Gloucestershire 'Village Agent' initiative which has received national acclaim. The need for such a service was identified initially by the Over 55's Forum and subsequently built into the action plan of the Winchester District Older People's

Partnership. The possibility of 'piloting a village or community agent' initiative was flagged up in the Winchester District Older Persons Housing Action Plan 2008/09 – 2012/13, and has also been included in the Active Communities Change Plan. The two pilot areas are Stanmore and Winnall. The project has been proceeding as planned and there are trained volunteers in both communities beginning to deliver the new service.

The VISA programme is running in parallel with, and is complementary to, the County Council (HCC) led Village Agent Pilot which is focussing on specific rural communities in the County - VISA is a pilot for urban areas.

From its inception, VISA has been a partnership led initiative. To date the project steering group has included representation from the City Council (WCC), HCC Adult Services, Winchester Area Community Action (WACA), Age UK Winchester, Age Concern Hampshire, Over 55's Forum and Winchester Good Neighbours Scheme. Successful delivery of the programme remains one of the key priorities for the Winchester District Older People's Partnership. In order to exploit the numerous synergies between the VISA and Village Agent pilot programmes (e.g. joint training), WCC officers have developed close working relationships with HCC Older People's Wellbeing Team and Age Concern Hampshire (which has been commissioned to manage the Village Agent pilot for HCC). WCC is also represented on the Village Agent Project Steering Group and officers maintain an ongoing dialogue with the Village Agent Project Manager.

Funding arrangements for the project to date are as follows. Funding was made available to WCC by HCC Adult Services in 2010/11 to support additional staff costs incurred by WCC during the development phase of the project. A further grant of £10,000 (to cover 2011/12 and 2012/13) was awarded by Hampshire County Council (East Central Hampshire Action Team) to contribute to the costs of the Stanmore and Winnall pilots i.e. venue hire, technology (laptops, internet, phones etc.), training materials, community transport, publicity, information events, CRB checks etc. The application did not include any element of staff costs - this was to be provided by WCC as our contribution to the project. An additional staff resource was made available through WCC's Community Wellbeing Team in 2011/12 via a temporary increase to the hours of an existing part time officer at a cost of £13,437 over the full 12 months – this equates to 16 hours per week at SCP30 (£25,472 per annum or £13.24 per hour). The officer concerned has recently resigned from the Council and the following alternative proposal for the management of the project is set out here for approval.

PROPOSAL: It is proposed that project management funding of £15,000 is used to commission this work from voluntary sector partners through a grant with service level agreement. The service specification will cover the period to 31 March 2013 when the pilot is due to end. It is proposed that the additional project funds which were awarded to WCC by HCC are retained by the Council and drawn down to deliver the project as per the project plan as and when specific milestones are reached.

This Decision Notice therefore seeks approval to for this proposal.

DECISION

That the project management of the VISA project to the end of 31 March 2013 is commissioned from voluntary sector partners by way of a grant of up to £15,000 with a service level agreement in line with a detailed service specification.

REASON FOR THE DECISION AND OTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

The decision is necessary due to the need to replace day to day management of the VISA project following the resignation of the officer formerly employed on a fixed term contract to provide this service. There is insufficient capacity in the Community Wellbeing Team to absorb the VISA project management function. An alternative option would have been to seek an in-house secondment via the One Team process. However, it is considered that colleagues in the voluntary sector have more experience of this and other similar projects than in-house staff and will be better placed to provide the service required.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

The resource implications of this decision are £15,000. The funds for this commission will come from two sources: £5,000 already allocated to the project in the current financial year (to be vired from the salaries budget), and £10,000 from the Active Communities commissioning budget 2012/13.

CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN ON THE DECISION

WCC officers, VISA Steering Group members, Older People's Partnership.

FURTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED FOLLOWING PUBLICATION OF THE DRAFT PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION NOTICE

Councillor Brian Collin raised a concern about the lack of prior consultation with Hampshire County Council Members. In view of the financial support awarded to the project by the Hampshire Action Team, he felt it would have been appropriate to inform the relevant HCC Members about the proposed changes to the management arrangements prior to the publication of the PHDN. Officers have subsequently circulated a detailed briefing note to HCC Members apologising for the oversight and explaining the circumstances leading up to the proposals set out in this PHDN. The briefing note also provided assurances that the VISA volunteers will receive appropriate support from WCC officers during the transition period to the new arrangements and that HCC Members will receive regular updates as the project develops.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY THE DECISION MAKER OR A MEMBER OR OFFICER CONSULTED

n/a

DISPENSATION GRANTED BY THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

n/a

Approved by: (signature)

Date of Decision: 22.09.11

Councillor John Cooper – Portfolio Holder for Communities, Safety and Public Health