

SUPPORTING PEOPLE ADVISORY PANEL

6 MARCH 2008

Chairman: * Councillor Eric Silver

Councillors: * Mrs Margaret Davine
* Nizam Ismail (1)* Mrs Myra Michael
* Narinder Singh Mudhar* Denotes Member present
(1) Denotes category of Reserve Member**PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS - NIL****PART II - MINUTES**65. **Attendance by Reserve Members:****RESOLVED:** To note the attendance at this meeting of the following duly appointed Reserve Member:-Ordinary MemberReserve Member

Councillor David Gawn

Councillor Nizam Ismail.

66. **Declarations of Interest:****RESOLVED:** To note that there were no declarations of interests made by Members in relation to the business transacted at this meeting.67. **Arrangement of Agenda:****RESOLVED:** That all items be considered with the press and public present.68. **Minutes:****RESOLVED:** That (1) the minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2007 be taken as read and agreed as a correct record;

(2) the Chairman be authorised to sign them when the Bound Minute Volume was available.

69. **Public Questions:****RESOLVED:** To note that no public questions were received at this meeting under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 16 (Part 4E of the Constitution).70. **Petitions:****RESOLVED:** To note that no petitions were received at this meeting under the provisions of the Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 14 (Part 4E of the Constitution).71. **Deputations:****RESOLVED:** To note that no deputations were received at this meeting under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 15 (Part 4E of the Constitution).72. **The Supporting People Programme Update:**

The Panel received a report of the Interim Corporate Director, Adults and Housing, updating Members on key developments and progress on key priorities in the Supporting People (SP) Programme since the previous meeting of the Panel in December 2007.

An officer from the Adults and Housing Directorate briefed Members on developments on matters raised at the previous meeting, as set out in the report. These included the issue of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs), on which an officer from the Harrow Adapt & Repair Team (HART) briefed Members on the information set out in Appendix 2 to the report, and answered Members' questions. The officer from HART informed the Panel that DFGs were mandatory grants to provide adaptations to enable disabled

people to remain in their own home, retaining or regaining independence. The maximum grant payable was currently £25,000, soon to be raised to £30,000. It was noted that Government subsidised 60% of all DFG expenditure up to a maximum, the current allocation being £838,000 (including a subsidy of £502,800). Discretionary DFGs were available for adaptations costing more than £25,000 as set out in the Council's Private Sector Housing Renewal Grant Policy. These were funded without subsidy from the Council's budget. The current year's mandatory allocation had been spent, but a carry-forward from the previous year meant that there was likely to be a balance of £50,000 at the end of the year.

The officer from HART described the process of dealing with grant applications and said, in answer to a question from a Member, that the average time between initial enquiry and the start of works was currently 44 weeks. The officer added that not all of this was within the Council's control and there were stages in the process when it was up to clients to progress matters. Members expressed the view that the process would be quicker if it were dealt with in one area of the Council, rather than several areas. Both officers reported that the number of departments involved had been reduced and they agreed to keep the Panel informed of progress. The officer from HART reported that the average grant paid in 2006/2007 was £13,711, with a total of around 50 grants issued. He then briefed Members on forthcoming changes to the DFG in line with the Government's *Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods* housing strategy, including:

- increasing the maximum grant payable to £30,000;
- simplifying the means test.

Members noted that, although the maximum grant would be increased to £30,000, the Government allocation would not go up, and this could place more pressure on the Council's budget. In 2009/2010 the DFG allocation would no longer be ring-fenced so that, for example, the money could be used to pay someone a grant to move to an adapted property. The Council will also be allowed to impose some pay-back terms in cases where facilities paid for by DFGs had increased the value of a property.

The Chairman thanked the officer from HART for briefing Members and answering their questions on this issue.

The officer from the Adults and Housing Directorate briefed Members on the contents of the report, including:

- the Supporting People (SP) three-year funding announcement – a 7% increase over the next three years;
- progress towards carrying out the action plan;
- an update from the 12 January 2008 meeting of the Commissioning Body (CB), including the agreed strategy for using unallocated short-term SP funding now available as a result of prudent management, responsible commissioning, efficiencies and value for money savings. Members welcomed the CB's recommendations;
- the scoping of options for an SP strategy in the context of the forthcoming alignment of SP with the Local Area Agreement (LAA) from April 2009. The officer agreed to circulate more information on the report commissioned on this;
- performance in relation to key performance indicators;
- the programme of contract monitoring, a full evaluation report on which would be submitted to the next Panel meeting.

The officer also agreed to supply the following information:

- how older people could get help with clearing lofts prior to the installation of insulation;
- a "defence" document, showing where SP could make a contribution within the LAA;
- whether, as one of the 12 funding streams in the LAA, SP was ring-fenced;

- the likelihood of improvements to the communications strategy and the possibility of a single point of referral for SP;
- indicators on the target list referred to in the action plan;
- the Memorandum of Understanding agreed by the CB;
- further information on the report scoping options from April 2009.

The Chair thanked the officer from the Adults and Housing Directorate for a very clear presentation and informative answers to Members' questions.

RESOLVED: That the report and the comments above be noted.

73. **Date of Next Meeting:**

RESOLVED: That Democratic Services liaise with Members for a date in June 2008.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 10.05 am, closed at 11.50 am)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR ERIC SILVER
Chairman