

# **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## **Notes of a meeting of the Handy Persons Scheme Task and Finish Forum held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 6 February 2015**

### **\*1 Election of Chairman and opening remarks**

Councillor Christine Drew was elected as Chairman. She welcomed all the members of the Forum.

### **\*2 Appointment of Vice Chairman**

Tenant member Harry Roberts was appointed as Vice Chairman of the Forum.

### **\*3 Declarations of interest**

<b>Board Member</b>	<b>Minute number</b>	<b>Type of interest</b>	<b>Nature of interest</b>
Susie Bond		Personal	Mother is a Home Safeguard user.
Joyce Ebborn		Personal	She is a sheltered housing tenant.
John Powley		Personal	She is a sheltered housing tenant.
Harry Roberts		Personal	He is a sheltered housing tenant.
Peter Sullivan		Personal	He is a sheltered housing tenant.

### **\*4 Terms of reference/Scope**

The Forum considered the scope of work for the Task and Finish Forum, which was presented at the meeting. Those present agreed the scoping document (attached to the minutes) and the need to be clear in what the TaFF was trying to achieve. The possibility of piloting a handyman scheme in one area of the district was suggested and also aggregating the handyman scheme, along with the garden maintenance and painting schemes.

**RESOLVED:** that the scope of the TaFF be agreed as set out in the agenda.

### **\*5 Consider need for other participants in TAFF**

The Forum considered that the right people had been invited to the meeting, but discussed the Men's Shed project in Littleham, Exmouth who had been asked to carry out some repairs for some tenants on Littleham Estate. It was acknowledged that there were some concerns over using them any further, as there were insurance and health & safety issues. Agreed to leave any decision about who will deliver the Handy Person Scheme until we have decided on the scheme to be provided.

\*6

## **Review of HRB report and identification of key issues for consideration**

The Forum discussed the list of items that could be undertaken by a handyman such as putting together flatpack furniture, shelving and replacing light bulbs. Members acknowledged that it would be difficult to put together a scheme that everyone agreed with. Dennis Boobier, Housing Needs & Strategy Manager, highlighted seven different handyman schemes from other social landlords that he had found on the internet, all of which were different in some way.

It was noted that there had been 170-180 responses to a survey to tenants asking what sort of handyman scheme they wanted. The responses included requests to help with things such as changing light bulbs, curtain poles and blinds. There was also the need to have a menu of things that the scheme would not cover, such as dealing with gas and major electrical items.

In response to concern raised at the meeting, Dennis Boobier, Housing Needs & Strategy Manager, reported that the Housing Team had already identified those tenants that were extremely vulnerable, who already received more support than other tenants.

The idea was that the handyperson would be an employee of the two contractors in the district, which would ensure that they had sufficient insurance, training, tools and a van. They would be directed by the Council to where they were needed. The cost of the 4,500 small repair jobs undertaken to the Council's housing stock was estimated at £200k per annum. It was hoped that there could be cost savings through the introduction of a handypersons scheme, which could possibly go towards making the garden maintenance and painting schemes free to those eligible.

Both the contractors present at the Forum reported that they were in support of the introduction of a handypersons scheme. If they were not undertaking the small repair jobs then this would give them more time to undertake the bigger planned maintenance jobs. They did not feel that there would be any shortage of work, or need to layoff staff.

Members considered the Exeter City Council scheme was a good one to follow and had worked successfully. The Forum agreed that the age of those eligible for the handypersons scheme in East Devon should be 70+ and those in receipt of at least one disability benefit, those with close relatives within a 10 mile radius should be excluded.

The issue of whether the scheme should be free to users or whether they should pay for it was discussed. Charging would be expensive to collect, but could have the effect of limiting demand to those who really needed it. The scheme should also initially, be a pilot scheme, trialled in one specific area of East Devon.

**RESOLVED:** that the following be produced for the next meeting on 19 February 2015:

- A list of tasks that should and should not be undertaken by a handyperson;

- Costs of the scheme (including the Contractors producing ball park figures from provision of the man and the van etc for one handyperson in each area);
- A list of those we are providing the scheme for.

\*7 **Date of next meeting**

Thursday 19 February 2015 at 9.30am in the Committee Room.

**Present:**

**Councillors:**

Christine Drew(Chairman)  
Susie Bond  
Pauline Stott

**Tenants:**

Joyce Ebborn  
John Powley  
Harry Roberts

**Officers:**

Dennis Boobier – Housing Needs & Strategy Manager  
Mark Dale – Senior Technical Officer - Day to Day Repairs  
Sarah Walton –  
Chris Lane - Democratic Services Officer

**Contractors:**

Laurence Hughes  
Andrew Sturgess

**Also present:**

**Councillor:**

Peter Sullivan

The meeting started at 9.30am and ended at 10.55am.