

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Member for Adult Social Care
Date:	17 September 2015
Title:	Village Agents Project – extension request
Reference:	6934
Report From:	Director of Adult Services

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Executive Member for Adult Social Care for a grant of £33,352 in order to continue the Village Agent project for an additional 5 months to 31 March 2016. The original Village Agent project was funded by Adult Services between July 2012 - July 2015, with additional funding coming from the Rural Development Fund. If approved the grant extension will be paid to Age Concern Hampshire to fund the maintenance of support to the existing 60 Village Agent volunteers.
- 1.2. The Village Agent programme was established to increase and improve the way that older people living in rural parts of Hampshire, find and benefit from information. Through its network of proactive volunteer Village Agents, the project provides support for older people to help them access information in a format they are comfortable with and is therefore a key element of the Care Act requirements as met by Hampshire County Council.
- 1.3. The programme is a partnership between Hampshire County Council, Age Concern Hampshire, Hampshire Fire & Rescue, and relevant borough and district councils. It also engages with other key organisations across the county such as Hampshire Police, local Neighbourhood Watch groups and Hampshire Association of Parish Councils.

2. Contextual information

- 2.1. Village Agents, will, with the five month extension to the project, continue to ensure a range of interventions that enable older people to remain living independently in their rural communities.
- 2.2. The Village Agent Project is designed to increase the participation and involvement of older people in their communities, build strong and cohesive rural communities, and avoid social isolation and loneliness

- 2.3. The project to date has been managed successfully by a coordinator at Age Concern Hampshire which also runs the Older People's Area Link project and the Hampshire-wide Information and Advice line. These services offer added value through the provisions of volunteer visitors as well as free information provision to support the Village Agent activity network.
- 2.4. The Village Agents will remain as volunteers. Over the life of the project, the Village Agent concept has been extended to include Community Agents funded by and covering urban areas of Hart District Council areas as well as Community Agents in the Winchester City Council areas covering the urban areas of Winnall and Stanmore. A plan is in place to develop Community Agents for Communities of interest, for example within the Nepali Community.
- 2.5. Both Community Agents and Community of Interest Agents are part of the Village Agent project and feed outcomes and activity into the Steering Group which oversees the project. As the Supportive Communities programme develops work will be undertaken to use the learning from Village Agents to provide a Hampshire wide offer. This will seek to explore new models to support county wide coverage.

3. Finance

- 3.1. The cost of the programme for 3 years has been £170,000 to Adult Services. Additional funding of £30,800 has been provided from the Rural Delivery Strategy to extend the scheme in 2014/15.
- 3.2. The additional funding of £33,352 to extend the project for an additional 5 months to 31 March 2016 will be funded within business as usual and no additional funding is being requested.
- 3.3. The Village Agent three year project has demonstrated its reach with relatively little resource. In particular it reaches people who can sometimes struggle to access services and may be isolated.

4. Performance

- 4.1. Between July 2012 and July 2015 Hampshire Village Agents generated 7673 volunteer hours, supporting 3155 older people. This resulted in a total 503 referrals to organisations. The interactions focussed largely on health and wellbeing, benefits and income concerns, groups and clubs enquiries, help with computers and transport concerns. As well as Age Concern Hampshire's Information and Advice/OPAL service, referrals were also made to Hampshire Fire & Rescue, Hampshire County Council CIT teams, Hitting the Cold Spots.

5. Consultation and Equalities

- 5.1 An original Equalities Impact Assessment was carried out (2012) the key findings of which are detailed below:
- 5.2 Village Agents help alleviate issues of social isolation and exclusion amongst older people, particularly those living in rural communities.

5.3 The programme helps address issues around rural deprivation, ensuring older people are aware of how to access services that are available to them.

5.4 The model can be extended to ensure older BME people as well as older people living within Gypsy & Traveller communities and other communities of interest to have equal access to services.

6. Other Key Issues –

6.1. Objectives – The objectives of the Village Agent project remain as:

Enabling older people and other vulnerable individuals to maintain their independence and maximise their safety, health and well-being

To proactively provide the right information at the right time to older people in a format which is acceptable and understandable. This format may mean face-to-face contact

Through prevention and early intervention, avoid more costly outcomes

Create the Village Agent community resource for rural communities in Hampshire to develop/publicise community activities

To carry out the remit of the volunteer Home Safety Advisor (Hampshire Fire & Rescue)

Village Agents to help develop the links between rural communities and individuals, their councils and other service providers

Increase the health and well-being of older people through guidance and information in order to maximise their income; increase community participation and social interaction; source care for self, home and garden; shop and eat well, promote home safety and warmth

Ensure older peoples' wishes, requirements and views are at the forefront throughout the process

Signposting to a wide range of services and activities as appropriate

7. Links to Adult Services Priorities

7.1. To support the activities of the Adult Services Supportive Communities Programme as part of the T17 vision and the Adult Services Care Offer to 'enable citizens of Hampshire to remain active and independent, participating in the community without relying on Hampshire County Council as a provider'.

7.2. Village Agents help to deliver the Care Act requirements 'Effective interventions at the right time can stop needs from escalating, and help people maintain their independence for longer' (Department of Health Implementation Guidelines 2014).

7.3. The expansion of the Village Agents programme continues to support the key aim of Hampshire County Council's *Rural Delivery Action Plan* (agreed by Cabinet in 2009) to have "rural communities that are resilient and sustainable socially, economically and environmentally".

- 7.4. Health and Wellbeing Boards priorities: Living Well 'We want all people in Hampshire to be able to live healthy lives. To achieve this we will focus on encouraging people to take action to stay as healthy as possible. To make this happen we will work to ensure that everyone has access to the right information and access to support.'
- 7.5. The Village Agents programme supports each of Hampshire County Council's three Corporate Priorities:
- *Hampshire Safer and More Secure for All*
 - *Maximising Well-Being*
 - *Enhancing Our Quality of Place*

8. Outcomes 2012 2015

- 8.1. The following are examples of some of the outcomes resulting from the Village Agent programme, all of which have increased the health, well-being or independence of the older people affected:

Village Agent supported a local resident in her successful application for the Personal Independence Payment

Installation of new smoke detectors as part of a Home Fire Safety visit

Sign posted to SAAFA who have eradicated dampness and provided mobility aids

Obtained assistance on a number of minor repairs & decorating jobs from Aster Living

Set up Steady and Strong falls prevention classes in Odiham

Village Agent set up transport for medical appointments for a blind lady aged 90 and living independently

Assisted resident to arrange Meals on Wheels together with the Food & Friendship service.

9. Future direction

- 9.1. It is envisaged that the extension to the scheme will enable the maintenance of the existing 60 Village Agents so that the Adult Services Supportive Communities Programme team can develop a project plan to expand the model, so that Hampshire has a far wider Village/Community Agent coverage and extending the reach beyond older people to include vulnerable people.
- 9.2. The five month extension to the project would cost an additional £33,352.00 which would sustain the coordinator activity and manage the existing 60 Village Agents.

10. Recommendation

- 10.1. That the Executive Member for Adult Social Care, approves a grant to Age Concern Hampshire for the Village Agent project from November 2015 to March 2016 (5 months) for £33,352.00.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	yes
Maximising well-being:	yes
Enhancing our quality of place:	yes

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:		
<u>Title</u> Roll-Out of Village Agents Programme	<u>Reference</u> 3901	<u>Date</u> 25 May 2012
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>	

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

DocumentLocation

None

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equality Duty

1.1. The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act;

Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;

Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;

Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;

Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

1.2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

An original Equalities Impact Assessment was carried out, the key findings of which are detailed below:

Village Agents help alleviate issues of social isolation and exclusion amongst older people, particularly those living in rural communities.

The programme helps address issues around rural deprivation, ensuring older people are aware of how to access services that are available to them.

The model can be extended to ensure older BME people as well as older people living within Gypsy & Traveller communities and other communities of interest to have equal access to services

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

The Village Agents project works with both Hampshire Constabulary and the Hampshire Association of Neighbourhood Watch Groups.

A key aim of the Village Agents project is to reduce isolation amongst older people living in rural environments and to build safer and more cohesive communities.

Some of the main areas that Village Agents target include improving home security and the establishment of no cold-calling zones

Climate Change:

A key successes of the Village Agents project to date has the strong links with other Hampshire County Council initiatives including *Hitting the Cold Spots*.