

Report



meeting

CABINET

date

10th January 2007

agenda item number

REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR, ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH

LINK-AGE PLUS PROJECT

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek Cabinet approval for the initiation of the Link-Age Plus project and to agree the administrative and governance arrangements.

2. Information and Advice

- 2.1 The Department for Work and Pensions invited Nottinghamshire County Council to apply for temporary funding to improve and expand services for older people under the Link Age Plus initiative, and a proposal was submitted. Approval of £1.1m payable over just under two years, ending on 30th August 2008, has been received, and a memorandum of understanding has now been agreed between Nottinghamshire County Council and the Department for Work and Pensions. Cabinet gave approval for Nottinghamshire County Council to take part in the Link-Age Plus project on 3rd May 2006. This report outlined the activity, expenditure and outcomes planned.

- 2.2 Link-Age Plus or “Sure Start for Older People” is a joint initiative by the Department for Work and Pensions, the Department of Communities and Local Government, the Department of Health and the Social Exclusion Unit aiming to both improve access to services for older people and to improve the range of services for older people. This will be achieved by expanding the established Link-Age initiative with its principles of joined up working by providing access to a wider range of services including social care, housing, energy efficiency and home safety. The project will build on effective links between central government, local authorities and other organisations and will be driven by the needs and aspirations of older people who will be involved throughout the project. Its aim is to test a range of approaches in selected local authority areas, evaluate them carefully and use the learning to inform future national strategy and funding.

- 2.3 The purpose of the Nottinghamshire proposal is to develop a joined up approach, to give access to information, services and opportunities across

a wide range of partner agencies through a quality assured service with a common branding. This will be supported by investment in low level but vital preventative services.

2.4 There are six distinct but interdependent priorities to the proposal:

- **Better access to information, advice and advocacy** through a First Contact Signposting Scheme, expansion of the role of the Joint Team with the Pension Service and new Community Outreach Advocates who will reach otherwise isolated people.
- **A network of services** across the County through developing **practical services** with the voluntary sector, statutory agencies and the private sector such as a shopping service, home handyperson service and an approved traders register.
- **Involving the voluntary sector** to develop the services which older people need to live independently.
- **Promoting volunteering** through recruiting and supporting older people in ways which recognise and value their contribution to their communities.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation** is crucial to the project and the project plan includes professional evaluation as well as involvement of older people as evaluators.

2.5 Older people have been involved at every stage in the development of this proposal.

2.6 Older people will continue to have a central role in the project either as volunteers, paid workers or as service users and on a broader level through representation on the Project Board and wider representation through consultation and participation in evaluation.

2.7 The project will deliver the new and expanded services that Nottinghamshire's older people tell us they want, over a two-year project life at a total cost of approximately £1.1m. Nottinghamshire County Council is not expected to make a financial contribution to this project. A project board will manage the project where Link-Age Plus partners are represented. This Board will report to Cabinet and to the County Wide Older Persons' Strategic Partnership.

2.8 The funding will be used in a variety of ways but most services will be in the voluntary sector. Invitations to bid for funding to provide services through grant aid have been issued.

2.9 During the course of the initiative, services will be carefully evaluated with the aim of determining their longer term impact, any benefits and efficiencies they create, and ways in which they could be funded on a longer term basis. No

guarantees have been given that any service will be funded beyond the use of the Link-Age Plus funding. It is recognised locally and nationally that this project allows only a short period for evaluation of preventative services.

3. Statutory and Policy Implications

3.1 This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, personnel, crime and disorder and those using the service. Where such implications are material, they have been described in the text of the report. Members' attention is however, drawn to the following:

3.1.1 Personnel Implications

The personnel implications for the employment of additional Adult Social Care and Health staff are limited as most services under Link-Age Plus are provided by partner organisations. The directly employed workers were approved by delegated authority on 24th November 2006 (AC/2006/00020) and are three temporary workers, a half-time Project Administrator, a part-time Monitoring and Evaluation officer and a part-time performance review officer. This report does not request any further staff.

3.1.2 Financial Implications

The Department for Work and Pensions have offered Nottinghamshire County Council £1,152,167.99 for this project starting on 1st September 2006 until 31st August 2008.

3.1.3 Equal Opportunities Implications

This project aims to reach people who are otherwise hard to reach and incorporates a range of ways of improving access to services as well as providing new services that have been requested by older people.

3.1.4 Implications for Service Users

This project aims to provide universal services with minimal means testing and assessment.

This project will allow Nottinghamshire County Council to pilot a new range of services in line with the Countywide Strategy on Ageing "Opportunity Age in Nottinghamshire 2006-2009" and various recent government key policy documents on Older People's Services.

3.1.5 Crime and Disorder Implications

This project aims to deliver a range of security and improvement measures which will improve home security through improving access to home handyman and police security schemes.

4. Recommendations

4.1 It is **recommended** that:

- (a) Cabinet approve Nottinghamshire County Council's involvement as lead partner in Link-Age Plus
- (b) Cabinet agree that detailed project management decisions, including the release of funding in line with the proposals agreed at Cabinet on the 3rd May 2006, are approved by the combined Invest to Save/Link-Age Plus Project Board which is chaired by an Adult Social Care and Health Service Director.

5. Legal Services' Comments (DLS/PTW 12/12/06)

5.1 In awarding any funding the Save/Link-Age Plus Project Board will need to comply with any conditions put upon the funding received by the County Council. The proposals are within the authority of the Cabinet. There are no other legal issues arising from the report that require specific comment.

6. Strategic Director of Resources' Financial Comment (SLM 24/11/06)

6.1 The financial implications are contained in the body of the report.

7. Background Papers Available for Inspection

- 7.1 31st March 2006 – Link-Age Plus Proposal Template [application].
- 7.2 4th October 2006 – Link-Age Plus Memorandum of Understanding between the Department for Work and Pensions and Nottinghamshire County Council.

8. Electoral Division(s) Affected

8.1 Nottinghamshire.

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(Comm/Cabinet/CAB256)