

Agenda Item No: 8 **Report No:** 103/15

Report Title: Scoping Reports – Village Agents Scheme and Living Wage Scheme

Report To: Scrutiny Committee **Date:** 10 September 2015

Cabinet Member: Councillor Elayne Merry

Ward(s) Affected: All wards

Report By: Nazeya Hussain, Director of Business Strategy and Development

Contact Officer(s)-
Name(s): Rachel Allan
Post Title(s): Performance Officer (Scrutiny)
E-mail(s): rachel.allan@lewes.gov.uk
Tel No(s): 01273 471600 x 6228

Purpose of Report:

1. To consider two potential future scrutiny reviews, namely “Village Agents” and “Becoming a Living Wage Authority”.

Officers Recommendations:

2. To agree the scope for a scrutiny review of Becoming a Living Wage Authority,, as set out in Appendix A,
3. To agree the scope for a scrutiny review of Village Agents, as set out in Appendix B, and
4. If the Committee wish to proceed with a scrutiny review, to agree the appointment, including size and make up, of Scrutiny Panels to oversee the work.

Reasons for Recommendation

5. To provide a focussed programme of work which will enable the District Council to consider whether any changes to its existing policies are to be recommended.
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Information

- 1 The two topics under consideration within this report are included in the Work Programme following a decision by Full Council at its meeting on 25 February 2015. The two topics are;
 - Village Agent Scheme

- Lewes District Council becoming a Living Wage Authority
- 2 Details of the potential scope for both reviews are listed in Appendix A and B.
 - 3 The Committee is asked to consider whether the scopes , set out in Appendix A and B, adequately cover all the matters members wish to examine in any review, or whether any adjustments are required.
 - 4 If the Committee wish to proceed with either review, or both, a Scrutiny Panel will need to be appointed. It is usual for Scrutiny Panels to be made up of an odd number of Members (either 3 or 5) and maintaining political balance.
 - 5 Given the topics in question, both reviews could benefit from the involvement of external partners, as set out in the Scoping Reports. The Scrutiny Panels, when they meet, would be able to decide how best such involvement might be achieved.
 - 6 Should a review, or reviews, be agreed, a Project Plan for the review would be prepared by officers, for consideration by the Scrutiny Panel.

Financial Appraisal

- 7 An annual budget of £1,000 is available to support the work of the Scrutiny Committee and its Scrutiny Panels. Any costs associated with the two reviews proposed are expected to be minor, given that the research work will be carried out in-house.

Legal Implications

- 8 In considering the recommendations of this report, the Committee should adhere to the Scrutiny Procedure Rules set out in part 4 of the Council's constitution.

Risk Management Implications

- 9 There is no requirement for an analysis of risk.

Equality Screening

- 10 An equalities impact assessment is not considered necessary at this stage. If the Committee decides to proceed with either Review, an equality analysis would be undertaken as part of the review and would be reported along with the review findings.

Background Papers

- 11 None

Appendices

- 12 Appendix A – Scoping Report for Lewes District becoming an accredited Living Wage Authority
Appendix B – Scoping Report for Village Agents Scheme

Appendix A: Scoping Report Template

Report Title: Becoming a Living Wage Accredited Authority

Report Author: Rachel Allan, Performance Officer (Scrutiny)

Reasons for Scrutiny

The suggestion for scrutiny in this area arose from a decision at Full Council held on 25 February 2015, following a Notice of Motion. The motion was:

“That time be allotted to the Scrutiny Committee to investigate and determine the implications and opportunities for the Council becoming an accredited Living Wage Authority”.

Background Information

Context

The modern UK Living Wage Campaign was launched in 2001. The founders were parents in the east end of London, who wanted to remain in work, but found that despite working two or more minimum wage jobs they were struggling to make ends meet and were left with no time for family and community life. In 2005, following a series of successful Living Wage campaigns and growing interest from employers, the Greater London Authority established the Living Wage Unit to calculate the London Living Wage. In 2008 Trust for London selected the London Living Wage as a special initiative and made a grant of over £1 million to deliver direct campaign work, research and an accreditation scheme for employers. It is not a statutory requirement but a voluntary undertaking, by those organisations wishing to be a ‘Living Wage Authority’.

The Government announced in the recent budget that from April 2016 a new National Living will be introduced. This will start at £7.20 in April 2016 and rise to £9 an hour by 2020, replacing the £6.50 minimum wage. This will only apply to those workers aged 25 and over. This means that by 2020, someone aged over 25 working 35 hours a week and previously earning October's minimum wage of £6.70 will see their wages go up by around £4,000 a year.

The Living Wage Foundation's view is that this is effectively a higher national minimum wage rather than a Living Wage.

Potential benefits

Research has shown that two thirds of employers that have participated in the Living Wage scheme reported a significant impact on recruitment and retention within their organisation. 70% of employers felt that the Living Wage had increased consumer awareness of their organisation's commitment to be an ethical employer.

Following the adoption of the Living Wage, Price Waterhouse Cooper found turnover of contractors fell from 4% to 1%. 75% of employees reported increases in work quality as a result of receiving the Living Wage. 50% of employees felt that the Living Wage had made them more willing to implement changes in their working practices; enabled them to require fewer concessions to effect change; and made them more likely to adopt changes more quickly.

National Picture

A total of 157 councils have signed up so far. Many other organisations, public and private, have signed up, there are around 1500 bodies participating in total across the UK.

Local Picture

The Council currently has one member of staff earning slightly less than the living wage. This will be rectified as part of the harmonisation of those contracts scheduled for 1 April 2016.

However, to become accredited, the council would need to demonstrate a commitment that could require a different approach when working with contracted staff and with apprentices.

Councils locally who have been accredited as a Living Wage Authority include Brighton and Hove City Council and Crawley Borough Council.

Other Considerations

Should this review be undertaken the following issues would need to form a part of the scope:

- Accreditation
- Contractors
- Apprenticeship Programmes

Link to Strategic Objectives

Partnership – to work with staff and partners to inspire exceptional contribution

Objectives of the Review

The objective of this review is to determine what the implications would be on LDC of becoming a Living Wage Accredited Authority, considering the both the risks and benefits, in order to make appropriate recommendations on this issue.

Not in Scope of Review

The following items will not be considered as part of the review:

- Minimum wage

Timeframe

A potential timeframe for this is suggested below:

October 2015: First Meeting of the Panel. Invite relevant stakeholders to give evidence.

November 2015: Second and Final Meeting – develop recommendations based on evidence.

January 2016: Full Scrutiny Committee agree recommendations from review.

February/March 2016: Recommendations considered at Cabinet.

Outlining the stakeholders and evidence required

HR Services.

Unison: Views on becoming a Living Wage Authority.

Research into other local authorities: Who has already implemented the scheme, and learn from their experience.

Procurement: Impact on contracts at Lewes District Council, may wish to talk to local businesses who the Council contracts work to.

Apprentices: Assess possible implications for future Apprentice programmes.

Resources

To become accredited, there is an annual cost.

Cost to staff budgets (£0 at present) but could be future financial implications.

There should be no need to use the scrutiny budget for this review, as the work can be undertaken in house, unless the Panel feels that a visit to another local authority who has implemented the scheme is required.

Approval of Scope

(a) Head of Service	Jo Harper (Approved 23/7/15)
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(b) CMT	Approved 19/8/15
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(c) Scrutiny Committee	
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Appendix B: Scoping Report Template

Report Title: Village Agents Scheme

Report Author: Rachel Allan, Performance Officer (Scrutiny)

Reasons for Scrutiny

The suggestion for scrutiny in this area arose from a recommendation from Full Council held on 25 February 2015, following a Notice of Motion:

“That the Council give consideration to the creation or support of a Village Agents Scheme, and that the Scrutiny Committee undertake to scope and research this work and seek out partnerships. Should the Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet agree it, any call on funding would be from the Strategic Priority Fund”.

Background Information

Context

Village Agents began as part of the LinkAge Plus scheme funded by the Department for Work and Pensions in 2006. The aim was to provide older people in the county's rural communities with easier access to information and services. Village Agents becomes a trusted and well integrated person within the community, helping to improve the information and communications between and within the community and supporting the development of local initiatives as defined by local needs and aspirations. The Village Agents' role is as a facilitator and catalyst for community development but also be a conduit to and from external service providers and agencies that support individuals thus effectively linking services to people and their community. This role can be either paid, or in a voluntary capacity.

Potential benefits

Each Scheme is slightly different in its approach, but the common thread is providing easy access in a rural area, through a key individual, to a wide range of information that will enable residents to make informed choices about their present and future needs. Often this is a scheme in partnership with an organisation, such as Age Concern, directed at older people, although many schemes are relevant for the community as a whole. The Wealden Scheme has established over fifty new groups and programmes in the rural communities of the district, and established a resource scheme to lend equipment (sports and games) to groups.

Village Agents can also be used by organisations, such as the Council to gain intelligence from rural communities, and to get key council messages out to those communities.

National Picture

There are around thirty schemes across the UK, most of which are aligned with another organisation such as Age Concern or a local voluntary group.

Local Picture

Action in Rural Sussex is currently running a scheme in Wealden, funded by East Sussex County Council. This focus is empowering the community to continue this work, therefore continual funding is not necessary. It's about building self-sufficiency in the community. The scheme in Wealden has run for one year. In this scheme, Village Agents are paid for 16 hours per week.

Other Considerations

- Whether the scheme is voluntary or paid.

- Whether a pilot scheme should be examined.
- Should the scheme be targeted at older people.
- Are there other organisations the Council could work with.
- Who other suitable funding bodies might be for such a scheme

Link to Strategic Objectives

Customers – to have an unswerving commitment to customer service

Partnership – to work with staff and partners to inspire exceptional contribution

Objectives of the Review

The objective of this review is to determine what the implications would be on LDC of funding a Village Agents Scheme in the rural areas of the District, considering the both the risks and benefits, in order to make appropriate recommendations on this issue.

Not in Scope of Review

The following items will not be considered as part of the review:

- The District Council running an in-house Scheme

Timeframe

A potential timeframe for this is suggested below:

October 2015: First Meeting of the Panel. Invite relevant stakeholders to give evidence.

December 2015: Second Meeting – develop recommendations based on evidence.

January 2016: Final Meeting – Finalise Recommendations.

March: Recommendations agreed by Whole Committee.

April: Recommendations considered at Cabinet.

Outlining the stakeholders and evidence required

Parish Councils: Whether they could support such a scheme and welcome it in their area.

Current Village Agents in Wealden: Front line information – how the scheme has worked and lessons learnt.

Action in Rural Sussex: How the scheme has worked in Wealden, suggestions for how it be expanded in Lewes District.

Other Schemes across the country to look at different models.

Resources

Action in Rural Sussex estimate it will cost: £10-15K to extend the scheme into Lewes District for one year. Full Council agreed on 25 February 2015 that should the Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet agree it, any call on funding would be from the Strategic Priority Fund.

Approval of Scope

(a) Head of Service	Jo Harper (Approved 23/7/15)
(b) CMT	Approved 19/8/15
(c) Scrutiny Committee	