

THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

21 JANUARY 2013

FINDINGS OF THE INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUP ON ACCESS TO SERVICES
IN THE MARKET TOWNS AND RURAL AREAS

REPORT OF CHAIR OF THE ISG, COUNCILLOR THERESE EVANS

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RECENT REFERENCES:

OS43 – Update On 2011/12 Informal Scrutiny Groups, Appointment of Batch 3 Informal Scrutiny Groups and review of the new Overview And Scrutiny procedures – 28 May 2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee decided at its meeting on 28 May 2012 to establish an Informal Scrutiny Group (ISG) to review Access to Services in the Market Towns and Rural Areas.

This report describes the process of the review and the ISG's consequent recommendations in order to improve access to services in the market towns and rural areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That The Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the recommendations of the ISG and recommend to Cabinet the following:

- a) The City Council should reintroduce some form of annual printed publication for distribution to all households in the District including an investigation into the potential for offsetting costs through advertising or partner contributions;

- b) If the annual printed publication is not adopted then the contact numbers card proposal should be implemented and distribution arranged through existing delivery opportunities;
- c) If funding cannot be found for (b) then alternative options for publicising contact numbers such as adverts in Parish magazines should be investigated;
- d) In order to support implementation of c) all Members should be surveyed in order to refresh the existing list of community publications available in their ward;
- e) Members should be advised of the information leaflets available and supplies provided upon request;
- f) An out of hours ansaphone facility should be included on the main City Council telephone number;
- g) The face to face support available for Hampshire Home Choice applicants should be reviewed particularly for those who do not have easy access to friends or relatives who can assist with the application process. This should include the possibility of commissioning the voluntary sector to provide such support;
- h) That Cabinet have very careful regard when allocating core grants to voluntary organisations to the contributions those organisations make towards assisting people at home (as they were undertaking work that the Council was unable to provide itself);
- i) The City Council should write to Hampshire County Council and request better promotion of the Village Agent scheme, particularly amongst District Councillors who should receive direct contact from the local volunteers;
- j) Further training should be offered to Members on the Hampshire County Council Trigger Tool and its use in assessing the home and fire safety needs of older persons;
- k) City Council services should be reminded to exploit every opportunity to provide face to face promotion and consultation particularly in the rural areas through village shows and fêtes;
- l) The City Council should investigate the use of community buildings for local decision making including planning consent applications which involve viewing sub committees.

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DETAIL:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting on 28 May 2012, The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) appointed an Informal Scrutiny Group (ISG) to look at Access to Services within the Market Towns and Rural areas. The topic had been suggested for consideration at an earlier meeting of the Committee in January.
- 1.2 The Members of the ISG were Councillors Evans (Chair), Cook, Verney, McClean and Mason. At the ISG's first meeting on 17 October 2012, the following terms of reference were agreed and are set out in paragraph 1.2 of Appendix 1
- 1.3 The programme of meetings, including details of the broad themes for each one is included within the ISG's final report at Appendix 1. The report summarises the main findings of the ISG, and sets out its recommendations for further consideration by The Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

2 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND CHANGE PLANS (RELEVANCE TO):

- 2.1 The subject of the ISG is directly relevant to delivery of the Access to Services priority of the Sustainable Community Strategy as well as supporting the customer service aims of the Effective and Efficiency outcome.

3. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 3.1 There are budget implications from some of the conclusions of the review which will need to be considered by Cabinet as part of the budget setting process either for 2013/14 or subsequent years. The main items area
 - a) Reintroduction of a Council newspaper/publication – the ISG is recommending an annual publication the cost of which will be approximately £15,000 including distribution.
 - b) Development of the Access Number card initiative. The ISG recommend that this is not pursued as a separate initiative but incorporated within a council newspaper. If this is not done then

production costs are estimated at £1200 with distribution costs dependant upon the method chosen. .

4. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

4.1 There are no significant risk management issues associated with this report

5. EQUALITIES

5.1 It is important that access to services is delivered in a way that does not disadvantage anyone living in the rural parts of the district and the ISG considered this aspect as well as the role of equality impact assessments in designing service delivery.

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Minutes of the ISG, held by the Democratic Services Team

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1: Final report of the Access to Services in Market Towns and Rural areas
ISG

FINAL REPORT

OF

**ACCESS TO SERVICES IN MARKET
TOWNS AND RURAL AREAS**

**ACCESS
ALL
AREAS**

1. Introduction

1.1 This report describes the conclusions of the City Council's Informal Scrutiny Group on Access to Services in Market Towns and Rural Areas. The ISG was established by The Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 26 May 2012 and held its first meeting on the 17th October 2012. The reason for the establishment of the ISG was a recognition that certain areas and client groups within the Winchester District may experience inequality in the provision of services for a number of reasons, namely

- a) Their geographical location/isolation
- b) The lack of sufficient public transport due to recent cuts in services as a result of budget reductions
- c) An over-reliance on the provision of some services solely through on-line facilities

1.2 The review was conducted against an agreed set of Terms of Reference as follows:

To review current arrangements for the access to services within the rural and market town areas across the district and consider ways in which this can be cost effectively improved where required.

The review to include the following areas:

- ***To consider how the City Council identifies the service needs of residents***
- ***To identify strengths and weaknesses of current service provision***
- ***To assess any disadvantage that people might experience because they live in the rural areas or market towns of the District***
- ***To explore innovative ways to remove the local barriers which prevent people from accessing services***

1.3 The ISG met on 5 occasions as follows

Meeting 1 - 17th October

Topic - Review initiation Meeting

- Review and agree ToR
- Agree dates and times of meetings
- **John Kelly, Research and Consultation Officer** Census population data

- Review results of the research survey
- **Dr Ian Barratt** - The role of Equality Impact Assessments and legal requirements for access to services

Meeting 2 - 5th November

Topic - The Role of Technology to access services

- **Paul Wood, Customer Service Manager** - Customer Insight and customer service excellence experience
- **Eleanor Davies, Head of Corporate Communications**
- **Hampshire Home Choice Case study**
Amber Russell, Tenancy Services Manager

Meeting 3 - 19th November

Topic - Experiences of other Organisations

- **Jenny Meadows Citizen's Advice Bureau**
- **Pat Reddin** ,rural police inspector, Hampshire Constabulary
- **Village Agent Case Study**
Yvette Christian, Age Concern Hampshire
Alan Edwards, Age Concern Hampshire
Alex Burn, Hampshire County Council
Lorraine Ronan, Winchester City Council

Meeting 4 - 6th December

Topic - Portfolio Holder and links to Transport ISG

- **Cllr Stephen Godfrey, Portfolio Holder for Finance & Administration**
- **Cllr Mike Read, Chair of Transport ISG**

Meeting 5 - 19th December

Topic - Conclusions and Final report preparation

2. The role of equality impact assessments

2.1 The ISG considered the role of the Equalities Act and how the City Council had to have "due regard" to equality issues in all its actions in order to

- Ensure there was no discrimination against groups covered by the Act;
- Promote equality and participation within communities;
- Promote relations between different groups in various communities.

2.2 In order to meet these aims Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) are used in addition to rural proofing. A recent example included the introduction of the

Choice Based Lettings system, where the assessment had highlighted that people with learning difficulties might not be able to operate the bidding system. Therefore, a system was introduced whereby carers were identified and given appropriate training to enable them to bid on behalf of their service users. Other examples were also considered as shown at Appendix A.

2.3 The ISG recognised that there could be difficulties caused by some residents having limited or no access to a computer and/or adequate broadband coverage and considered this further as part of a wider examination of the options for accessing services via the Customer Service Centre.

2.4 The wider issue of “rural proofing”, could only be addressed by providing the option of a Council officer to visit a resident in their home to assist them in accessing a particular service. A review of the availability of this facility was undertaken, the results of which are shown at Appendix B.

3. Population data

3.1 The ISG asked for a summary of data held by the City Council on the rural areas of the District in order that this could be used to inform the review. A variety of data was provided including the following

- Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010 (IMD)
- Car ownership
- Computer ownership and internet use

3.2 The IMD provides a relative measure of deprivation in small areas across England and the collective name for a group of 10 indices which all measure different aspects of deprivation.

3.3 One of the domains is the ‘Barriers to Housing & Services Domain’ which is a set of indicators includes ‘Geographical Barriers’ to access to services including:

- **Road distance to a GP surgery** - A measure of the mean distance to the closest GP surgery.
- **Road distance to a food shop** - A measure of the mean distance to the closest supermarket or general store.
- **Road distance to a primary school** - A measure of the mean distance to the closest primary school.
- **Road distance to a Post Office** - A measure of the mean distance to the closest post office or sub post office.

4. Communication and the role of technology

4.1 The ISG were advised that the City Council made sure that customer choice was available to enable customers to contact the Council by whichever means they were most comfortable with. Current methods relied on a combination of

access by telephone, in person at the City Offices, and via the Council's website.

- 4.2 Visitors to the City Offices have remained virtually static over recent times, at approximately 1,000 customers per week. The City Council had also recently launched a free WCC smart phone app which enables customers to report a wide variety of issues (e.g. fly tipping, missed grass cutting). In rural areas where the broadband coverage was not so effective, the app could be used via smart phones.
- 4.3 Although the role of technology was acknowledged, the ISG had concerns that many elderly residents would not wish to contact the Council via this media. The ISG felt that the City Council may have an over reliance on the use of web based information and that this should be kept under close supervision so as to ensure that this did not disadvantage some client groups such as those in rural areas and the elderly. They were advised that other means of communication would remain available and that by offering alternative means, there was the potential to free up additional capacity to deal with these more traditional means of contact.
- 4.4 In terms of communicating with residents, the Council also utilised other free means of communicating its services via Twitter, Facebook and SMS text messaging. However, the ISG reinforced the importance of utilising Councillors as a means of communication with residents, including to ensure they were aware of new services (such as the app) and other issues, prior to the public being told.
- 4.5 The other more traditional means of communication were also considered, including the role of printed leaflets which increasingly were being made solely available via the website as a cost saving measure. The ISG identified the need to make sure that Members were aware of the information that existed so it could be passed onto those who relate better to this type of communication.
- 4.6 The ISG reviewed the value that 'Perspectives', the Council newspaper had had in distributing information on Council services to all parts of the District. This had been delivered to all households in the District but had been stopped as a cost-saving measure due to the £15,000 per edition to print and distribute it. Whilst advertisements could, potentially, be utilised to part fund publication, the officer time involved in securing advertising could be significant and it would be competing with other Council publications for advertising content.
- 4.7 The ISG suggested that the idea of a small credit card or postcard sized document with key telephone numbers for the Council distributed to all households be considered. Existing means of distribution such as the council tax annual billing letter could be used. Subsequent investigation confirmed production costs would be approximately £1200 plus any distribution costs.
- 4.8 The ISG concluded that there was the potential to combine the reintroduction of Perspectives with the provision of contact numbers through a 'cut out and keep' page within the publication so that the net cost of combining the 2 initiatives would be less than if they were introduced separately.

4.9 The ISG emphasised the potential value of the Perspectives publication as a means of communicating with communities at a time when this aspect was particularly important. It acknowledged that the previous frequency of the publication need not be reintroduced as this was unnecessary and less affordable. They therefore recommended an annual publication in June which amongst other things should focus on:

- a) The names and contact details for Councillors particularly those who had been newly elected;
- b) The current make up of the Council;
- c) The Council's achievements of the previous year;
- d) Plans and priorities for the forthcoming year;
- e) Key contact information including phone numbers and web addresses for not only for the City Council but also key partners such as WACA, CAB , etc

4.10 In order to further support the distribution of the contact details, the City Council could also use Parish magazines, community publications and E-newsletters to promote this information. The similar 'cut out and keep' style of article/advertisement produced for Perspectives could be used for this purpose to reduce the work involved. The ISG recommended that Members should be contacted to confirm the publications that residents relied upon in their ward.

4.11 Finally, it was confirmed that customers could leave a message on the Council's dedicated "bin line" phone number, any time of the day or night but it was not currently possible to leave a message when ringing the central customer care service centre telephone number outside of office hours. The ISG felt that this was an improvement that was worthy of implementation.

5. Hampshire Home Choice Case Study

5.1 The ISG decided to look at the Hampshire Home Choice Scheme as it had been subject to a previous equality impact assessment and was also solely a web based process.

5.2 They were advised that information was provided in a leaflet form user guide and also on the website: www.hampshirehomechoice.org.uk. The feasibility of a smart phone app was also being considered.

5.3 Any applicants from within vulnerable groups were encouraged to nominate someone else (e.g. a care worker, relative or friend) to place bids on their behalf. It was possible for applicants to use a property line to listen to details of available properties over the telephone, and also to place bids over the phone. There was an automated bidding system available if there was no other option.

5.4 There were insufficient staff resources within the Housing Team for officers to bid on a person's behalf. However, the ISG noted that if an applicant was able to come into the offices, officers would assist them, including those from the CSC centre on reception.

- 5.5 When the Home Choice scheme was initially launched, various voluntary groups with contact with potential applicants were given training on its operation in order to provide support.
- 5.6 The ISG emphasised the need for application processes to be kept as simple as possible in order to assist applicants. It was felt that in some instances, forms were unnecessarily over-complicated although in some cases this was the result of National requirements for their content rather than local determination. They also believed that there was a need to ensure there was enough opportunity for face to face contact with anyone who needed support with their application.

6. Experience in Other Organisations

- 6.1 As part of their review the ISG wanted to hear about the experiences of other organisations including partners such as the CAB and the Police who would be dealing with similar issues for their own services.
- 6.2 The ISG recognised the importance of the role of other organisations (particularly in the voluntary sector) in filling gaps in service provision on issues such as financial advice to customers. This issue was very topical as many such organisations were facing cuts in the grant support they received from the City Council which was likely to have an impact upon the level of support they could offer. The ISG were concerned about the effect that such decisions would have on those who had difficulty accessing services.
- 6.3 CAB confirmed that it covered all the geographical areas being considered by the ISG. It was possible to contact them by telephone and receive advice this way. There were also plans to introduce a single telephone number next year which could automatically direct callers to their nearest centre.
- 6.4 CAB also offered home visits, although with reduced funding this had decreased from approximately 400 visits per year to about 12 as it was now only offered to those people who were unable to get to their doctors or do their own shopping. The CAB also responded to queries via emails or letter.
- 6.5 The CAB also had outreach offices in New Alresford, Bishops Waltham and Wickham although, increasingly, they were requesting local parish councils to offer funding for such offices.
- 6.6 In their experience volunteers did not wish to be placed at outreach offices where they would be expected to work alone. However, CAB was willing to share premises with other organisations, although this would need to be appropriate as it might raise some potential difficulties of perception of independence if sharing with, for example, the Police.
- 6.7 In terms of workload approximately 50% of the work of the CAB related to welfare, benefits and debt advice which linked directly to many of the Council's services. It was also anticipated that the withdrawal of the ability to

claim legal aid for many people from 1 April 2013 would result in a large increase in the number of users of the CAB.

- 6.8 **Hampshire Police** had undergone a number of restructures and changes in recent times, including the merger with East Hampshire and the closure of a number of police stations to the public in the rural areas (including at Alresford, Bishops Waltham and Twyford). An intercom facility was provided on the outside of the buildings which were closed to the public.
- 6.9 A non-urgent telephone service was available (the “101” number) whereby callers were guaranteed a call-back within 48 hours (assuming non-urgent). In addition, on-line services had been improved to enable a person to find named police officers to contact who covered their area. A diary service could be used whereby callers could request officers to visit them in their own homes or they could opt to visit a station and see a named officer.
- 6.10 The Police had also used co-location as an opportunity for remote access and had facilities at Colden Common Community Centre and Otterbourne Community Centre for police officers to hold surgeries. Bishops Waltham Police Station was open every Saturday morning and there was a “Beat Bus” which travelled around the area.
- 6.11 **Hampshire County Council** was running a Village Agent project following successful 15 month pilots. There were currently 18 Village Agents across the whole of Hampshire, with another 2 expected to start within the month. The aim was to appoint 45 Village Agents before July 2015.
- 6.12 The project recognised that older people (which they define as anyone over 55) increasingly wished to remain in their own homes for as long as possible and a key step to enable this was to provide relevant advice and reduce isolation. It was recognised that many older people preferred to receive information face-to-face and research had indicated that approximately 70% of older people do not use the internet.
- 6.13 The aim of the Village Agent service was to provide relevant information to older people in a user-friendly, light-touch way whereby people were sign-posted to the relevant service. Village Agents were volunteers who were asked to work between four and six hours per week. Funding for the project was guaranteed until July 2015.
- 6.14 The Village Agents training included the “trigger tool” training to identify issues requiring further action or advice in addition to Home Fire Safety training. The trigger tool provides a means of assessing the risks to older persons in their home including home and fire safety.
- 6.15 Village Agents could also apply for specific funding if they recognised the need for a project or event in their area (e.g. training on IT issues or a drop-in tea club). In addition, he confirmed that the Agents worked closely with PCSOs.
- 6.16 ISG Members were concerned about the level of awareness of the scheme. Whilst all Parish Councils had been contacted about the roll-out of the Village

Agent service, District Councillors were far less aware. It was particularly important to ensure that they were told when a Village Agent was appointed within their Ward in order that they could inform their constituents accordingly.

7. Discussion with Portfolio Holder

- 7.1 Before coming to any final conclusions the ISG sought the views of the Portfolio Holder for Finance & Administration. The discussion focused on the current means of accessing the City Council's services and the means of communicating with residents. The ISG were particularly concerned to make sure that some groups of the community were not excluded from accessing services or information because of their lack of internet access.
- 7.2 The option of reinstating a District-wide Council publication was discussed including whether there were alternative means by which information could be disseminated, for example to Council tenants via "Houseproud", the County Council's own magazine or free newspapers. The ISG confirmed that the Council had decided against deferring the cost of publication by including advertisements because of the officer time involved in securing advertisers.
- 7.3 The Portfolio Holder supported the suggestion for the Council to produce some form of telephone contact card, to include useful telephone numbers for both the City Council and other relevant organisations (for example, the Citizens Advice Bureau). He highlighted that the any staff that had been trained on the "trigger tool" initiative were provided with relevant telephone numbers to pass on to residents. In addition, the Village Agents would also have this information.
- 7.4 "Trigger tool" training had been offered to all City Councillors (which was now available on-line) and the ISG recommended that Councillors be reminded about this initiative.
- 7.5 In terms of access to the City Council, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that the Council had already aimed to simplify contact methods, with the introduction of the Customer Service Centre (CSC) telephone number and the Waste Line. Within the next six months the aim was for the CSC to become a problem-solving unit.
- 7.6 The ISG shared its concerns about the accessibility of the Hampshire Home Choice scheme for housing allocation particularly for older people with no access to the internet. The Portfolio Holder felt that the City Council would probably not be the first point of contact for some elderly and vulnerable people seeking new housing, as they would have already been seen by health or adult services, which had access to advocacy services. However, the ISG emphasised that this was not always the case and it was important to ensure that everyone had access.
- 7.7 The future level of grants for key clients, such as the CAB, was discussed and the ISG were advised that no further reduction over and above that which had already been advised was proposed. However, the previous Portfolio Holder

had contacted the CAB last year to advise that it should expect a 5% reduction in grant levels both in 2012/13 and 2013/14.

- 7.8 The Portfolio Holder considered the ISG view that although making Council information available on-line was a welcome development, it was important to ensure there were other means of access available. They were advised that research into the level of IT usage in older people had indicated that 1 in 7 were regularly users of IT services, although this figure dropped to 1 in 30 when an older person became in need of care services.
8. Options for local decision making
- 8.1 The ISG considered the possibility of addressing the difficulties of accessibility to services and decision making processes by using local facilities based in the communities affected. Some of this work already took place through consultation events on proposals such as housing developments but the ISG was of the view that this could be extended to include the actual decision making process.
- 8.2 One example of how this could be done was the planning process which in some cases required a viewing sub committee after which Members had to return to Winchester to complete the decision making stage. It was felt that using local facilities such as village halls or community centres would improve access to the democratic process, particularly for those who had poor access to public transport as was often the case in the more rural parts of the District.
9. Links to ISG on Rural Transport
- 9.1 The ISG also took the opportunity to discuss their conclusions with the Chair of the ISG on rural transport as there were clear links between the 2 issues. They were advised that the ISG had considered the role and importance of providing good public transport links to the rural areas and were considering the following issues within their recommendations..
- 9.2 **Funding** – that the City Council should support some transport schemes including: the Winchester Dial a ride; the Winchester Park and Ride; the newly introduced Winchester Evening Bus and some other community transport schemes some on an ongoing basis and some as one off contributions to help kick start initiatives.
- 9.3 **Partnerships** - there is potential to work with the Community Groups and the County Council in developing and promoting community transport schemes using the newly formulated Transport Tool Kit. A recent good example is the new Community Bus service for Southwick and Boarhunt . Promotion of the development of Community Car Share Schemes would form part of this approach.
- 9.4 **Subsidies** - bus operators and the County Council could merge commercial and subsidised services, with the effect of using a subsidiary to divert a commercial service through a nearby under-served village or area.

- 9.5 **Parish Councils** - There maybe a role for Parish Councils be invited to work closely with bus companies to update bus timetable information and availability of bus and community services.
- 9.6 **Ticketing** - The County Council should be asked if the proposed integrated ticketing service (the Solent Travel Card) could be extended to serve the Winchester District. Members also noted the benefits of customers being able to buy tickets in advance of getting on buses, particularly at popular stops.
10. Final recommendations
- 10.1 In drawing up its final recommendations the ISG agreed that it should focus on the following matters:
- (i) The need to ensure that all services and information were available to all in various formats in order to ensure equal access;
 - (ii) The use of a variety of media to inform residents of the work of the City Council;.
 - (iii) A focus on the role of District Councillors in helping residents access information and services.
- 10.2 Based on these criteria the ISG concluded that the following recommendations should be put forward in order to improve access to services in the Market Towns and Rural Areas:
- a) The City Council should reintroduce some form of annual printed publication for distribution to all households in the District including an investigation into the potential for offsetting costs through advertising or partner contributions;
 - b) If the annual printed publication is not adopted then the contact numbers card proposal should be implemented and distribution arranged through existing delivery opportunities;
 - c) If funding cannot be found for (b) then alternative options for publicising contact numbers such as adverts in Parish magazines should be investigated.
 - d) In order to support implementation of c) all Members should be surveyed in order to refresh the existing list of community publications available in their ward.
 - e) Members should be advised of the information leaflets available and supplies provided upon request.
 - f) An out of hours ansaphone facility should be included on the main City Council telephone number.
 - g) The face to face support available for Hampshire Home Choice applicants should be reviewed particularly for those who do not have easy access to friends or relatives who can assist with the application process. This should

include the possibility of commissioning the voluntary sector to provide such support.

- h) That Cabinet have very careful regard when allocating core grants to voluntary organisations to the contributions those organisations make towards assisting people at home (as they were undertaking work that the Council was unable to provide itself);
- i) The City Council should write to Hampshire County Council and request better promotion of the Village Agent scheme particularly amongst District Councillors who should receive direct contact from the local volunteers.
- j) Further training should be offered to Members on the Hampshire County Council Trigger Tool and its use in assessing the home and fire safety needs of older persons. .
- k) City Council services should be reminded to exploit every opportunity to provide face to face promotion and consultation particularly in the rural areas through village shows and fêtes.
- l) The City Council should investigate the use of community buildings for local decision making including planning consent applications which involve viewing sub committees.

COUNCIL TEAM/SERVICE	TYPE OF HOME VISIT OFFERED
Building Control	Building Control offer home visits to discuss building work
Housing Services	<p>All Housing teams offer home visits to residents who cannot get into the City Offices. For all tenants, we make it clear in our Handbook and when giving general advice that officers will visit residents rather than expect them to come to City Offices. The list of examples are extensive, but include:</p> <p>Housing Managers – Rent and arrears, advice re tenancy issues, viewing properties, ASB, potential to downsize, assisting to complete Hampshire Homechoice forms, estate issues, etc. Tenant Involvement – Visits to encourage participation</p> <p>Surveyors – Repairs, heating, condensation, energy efficiency, fencing, estate maintenance, etc</p> <p>Older Persons Support Officers – Support planning, welfare checks, coordinating social activities, etc. Out of hours responding to emergencies.</p>
Historic Environment	<p>As a matter of course, we visit properties to look at the implications of alteration proposals when they affect listed buildings and other buildings in conservation areas, many of which are in the villages and countryside. This is not in aid particularly of people who can't get into the offices or have no IT capacity, but simply because all buildings are different and need a bespoke degree of consideration. It is rare that we come across people who can't access our service in one form or another, but because we travel out to buildings</p>

	<p>anyway, we would try to facilitate a meeting on site if that is a better way of treating the enquiry and if we are particularly requested to do so.</p>
Access and Infrastructure	<p>No home visits from us as such but we do go and meet people who have specific traffic or parking issues.</p>
Benefits	<p>The Benefits Service offers home visits (on a very limited basis – only one morning a week) to benefits customers who are unable to come into the offices for a variety of reasons (e.g. disabled, elderly).</p>
Health and Community Wellbeing	<p>Village Agents can provide home visits to vulnerable older people – although it's not a WCC service. Lorraine Ronan works closely with her HCC and Age Concern Hampshire colleagues to maintain the link with our own VISA programme (which is essentially the urban version of the Village Agent scheme).</p>
Planning Management	<p>Planning Management does undertake site visits in the case of all planning applications and when investigating enforcement complaints. This may also involve visiting affected neighbours (not just the application site/land being complained about); including those who ask for a case officer to look from their property, but this is at the case officer's discretion. They will not always look from neighbouring properties.</p>