

STATEMENT Phil Gait, Chair, Somerset Care & Repair

Thank you Chairman.

I am speaking as the Chair of B&NES Care and Repair and on behalf of the vulnerable residents of B&NES – as Chair, unlike most residents of B&NES, I know some details of the proposed West of England HIA and the likely impact it will have on the vulnerable residents of B&NES.

The paper before you paints a rosy, but unrealistic, picture of the benefits of one HIA for the four authorities in the West of England partnership.

I did ask the Wellbeing Policy and Development Scrutiny Panel in November to scrutinise this decision but they did not ask any detailed questions on their report before refusing to conduct such a review.

It is not possible for me to cover, in three minutes, the major issues in this paper and the questions that should be answered before you can be in a position to agree the recommendation. That is why, before this meeting, I asked each of you if you could contact any Cllrs that you know in Devon, Somerset and Gloucester to learn from their experience of their recent large HIA contract. I suggested Cllrs rather than Commissioners as some of these decision makers are still in a state of denial. I am sure that some of you will now know that, for example

- The Devon countywide HIA has collapsed, and as the local District agencies had disbanded there is now no HIA service in operation.
- South Somerset Scrutiny is investigating why their Handy Person service is providing less than half the contracted visits and why many of those visits are unsatisfactory.
- Gloucester City has reopened its Agency because of the number of complaints and the poor quality service from the new provider
- In Mendip the local Agency is undertaking a great number of grant works because the new provider cannot cope with the volume of work. In this case the local Authority are paying twice for the same service – is this economies of scale?

There may be successful large HIAs in compact urban areas, but the above indicates that the model proposed by the consultant from Foundations will not work in the West of England.

Why is there no mention of the experience of these counties in your report tonight?

The option to procure separate provision is rejected in section 9.2 because it is “unlikely to deliver value for money improvements that accrue from working collaboratively”.

If you investigate this, as I have mentioned above, you will see that the WoE HIA is unlikely to deliver value for money improvements as well.

However, I believe that working collaboratively with an organisation, such as B&NES Care and Repair, which has a proven track record for excellent service to customers, a proven track record for obtaining grants to help vulnerable residents in other ways (such as the Radstock Garden project) and innovative approaches to delivering cost effective services will continue to deliver value for money. (As an aside, I must mention that this includes working with Norton Radstock College to help them with their apprenticeship schemes)

I ask you to reject the recommendation before you tonight. Thank you for listening.