

Subject:	EK Services policies
Director/Head of Service:	David Reed, Strategic Director (as EK Services Client Officer) EK Services – Customer Delivery
Decision Issues:	These matters are within the authority of the Executive
Decision type:	Non-key
Classification:	This report is open to the public.
CCC Ward(s):	All
Summary:	<i>EK Services is developing common policies and procedures across all three partner Councils to help make the service as efficient as possible. To achieve this, combined policies have been developed across a number of operational areas.</i>
To Resolve:	To approve policies for use by EK Services

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1. Introduction

EK Services is developing common policies and procedures across all three partner Councils to help make the service as efficient as possible.

To achieve this, combined policies have been developed across a number of operational areas, adopting best practice from each of the three authorities.

Combined policies across the three locations will lead to higher quality, more consistent decision making and make the shared service less complex to manage and administer. This will help deliver the financial savings the service is expected to deliver.

2. Detail

The main policies that have been combined are as follows:

- Discretionary Housing Payments
- Discretionary Relief
- Insolvency & Charging Orders
- Local Housing Allowance safeguarding
- Prosecution and Sanctions

The policies are accompanied by a “changes summary” which provides details of how the combined policies differ from any individual Councils’ existing policies. Some (for example Insolvency & Charging Order) are brand new policies so they are not replacing any existing approach.

The policies build on existing good practice and the combined policies have taken the “best practice” from all current Canterbury/Dover/Thanet policies and procedures.

Equality Impact Assessments have been developed for all these policies and are available to view if requested. No adverse or negative impact has been identified in any of these policies.

The only significant issue as far as Canterbury is concerned has been the debate as to whether the process for determining business rate relief concessions should be delegated to EK Services officers or not. This matter was finally resolved by decision of the Executive on 27 July 2011 and the “Discretionary Relief” policy now sets out how EK Services officers will determine such applications on behalf of the council.

3. Relevant Council Policy/Strategies/Budgetary Documents

None.

4. Consultation planned or undertaken

Consultation has taken place with the client officers from each Council and management teams from each Council. Their comments and amendments have been considered as part of the final versions. Consultation has also taken place with Housing Options teams across the three Councils on those policies which directly affect their work.

5. Options available with reasons for suitability

1. Approve the combined policies as an essential move towards consistent decision making across the shared service. Staff will then approach the work in a consistent way regardless of where the customer lives.
2. Do not approve the combined policies which will lead to staff making decisions in multiple different ways across the shared service. This will lead to errors and confusion.

6. Reasons for supporting option recommended, with risk assessment

Option 1 is recommended. The success of the shared service relies on staff working to a common methodology and customers will have their cases/accounts dealt with in a similar way regardless of where they live in East Kent.

7. Implications

- (a) Financial Implications
None. EK Services will deal with the work in line with current budgets set.
- (b) Legal Implications
None.

Other implications

- (c) Staffing/resource
None.
- (d) Property Portfolio
None.
- (e) Environmental/Sustainability
None.
- (f) Planning/Building Regulations
None.
- (g) Human Rights issues
None.
- (h) Equalities
Equality Impact Assessments have been developed for all of these policies.
No negative impacts have been identified.
- (i) Crime and Disorder
None.
- (j) Biodiversity
None.
- (k) Safeguarding Children
None.
- (l) Energy efficiency
None.

8. Conclusions

The move towards combined policies and procedures is a natural evolution in the shared service. Drawing services together from different Councils is a complex business and if EK Services can work in a consistent manner across all locations then the task will be made that much easier. The combined policies have brought together existing “best practice” from all three Councils which will ultimately benefit all our customers.

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