

SUBJECT:	<i>Proposed Builders Partnership Scheme</i>
REPORT OF:	<i>Sustainable Development portfolio - Councillor Peter Martin</i>
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	<i>Peter Beckford Head of Sustainable Development</i>
REPORT AUTHOR	<i>Caroline Hunter, 01895 837345, caroline.hunter@southbucks.gov.uk</i>
WARD/S AFFECTED	<i>Not applicable</i>

1. Purpose of Report

To seek authority to set up a pilot scheme to provide Building Control customers in Chiltern and South Bucks with information about builders who carry out their business in a legitimate and proper manner.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That a Builders Partnership Scheme be implemented in Chiltern and South Bucks for an initial 2 year period with a review after one year of operation.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

Residents frequently contact Building Control requesting advice and guidance when choosing a builder. Building Control already have a partnership scheme with architects and engineers and the proposed builders scheme will compliment this, in addition to leaflets and information on the Council's website. A two year pilot is proposed initially with a review after one year of operation, in order to assess the cost-effectiveness of the scheme.

4. Content of Report

- 4.1 Residents contact the Building Control Team to request advice and guidance about choosing a builder. Whilst Building Control can provide advice to residents under an existing partnership scheme with architects and engineers, currently they are not able provide similar advice about builders.
- 4.2 Partnership schemes for builders are being run successfully by other authorities. Your officers looked at a scheme set up by Central Beds Council which has been running for nearly two years. This scheme is free to join and Central Beds believe their Building Control department saves money as the quality of work improves and less time is spent dealing with non-compliant work and customer problems. They also advise that the time spent running the scheme is minimal once it is set up and highly recommend the scheme as not only improving the quality of building work and reducing time spent by surveyors on enforcement issues but also raising the profile of the Council's Building Control department. The feedback from homeowners has also been very positive.
- 4.3 It is proposed that a Builders Partnership Scheme is introduced in Chiltern and South Bucks on a 2 year pilot basis with a review after one year of operation. Entry to the scheme will initially (for the pilot period) be by invitation from the Building Control

Service on the submission of an application form (Appendix A). Central Beds used this approach and initially invited 40 builders who then promoted and advertise the scheme via the website, stickers and word of mouth. The Building Control team will work with the Communications Team on how to launch/advertise the scheme.

- 4.4 The proposed Terms and Conditions are in Appendix A. Officers believe that this will help meet the needs of our customers/residents and will raise the profile of the Council with customers.

5. Consultation

A Working Group consisting of two of the Principal Building Control Surveyors and six builders was set up to discuss proposals for this scheme. This was helpful in giving a valuable insight into what our customers need from Building Control. Below is a summary of the conclusions reached:-

- i. All members of the Working Group were in favour of a Builders Partnership Scheme.
- ii. It was considered to be a positive approach by Building Control to improve the standard of construction work in the area.
- iii. All members of the Group believed it would assist the public with employing good quality legitimate builders and avoid unwanted situations with 'cowboy builders'.
- iv. It was agreed that in order for the scheme to be a success and have integrity the admittance criteria must be adhered to strictly. Builders who are not meeting the criteria could bring disrepute to the scheme, and this would affect the reputation of the Building Control Department and the other builders in the scheme.
- v. All in the Working Group agreed to have their details on the Council websites, with links to their website and stickers advertising the scheme on their vans/trucks (proposed sticker at Appendix B).
- vi. It was agreed that the scheme should be introduced on as a pilot for two years and that the Working Group should meet annually to discuss how the scheme is working.

6. Options

The Council could decide not to introduce the Scheme as proposed but the opportunity to drive up standards of building work in the District and enable Building Control officers to use their time more efficiently and effectively could be lost.

7. Corporate Implications

- 7.1 Financial - It is proposed that the scheme will be free during the pilot period of two years. This will then be reviewed and if the scheme is continued an administration fee can be set. Officers would be in a position to analyse the costs and benefits and make a recommendation on fees based on two years' experience. The initial costs include stickers for builders to put on their vans, which can be met from within existing budgets. The scheme will be email based for communication to eliminate postage and printing costs.

8. Links to Council Policy Objectives

To support the efficient delivery of services and meet customer needs

9. Next Steps

If approval is given a pilot Builders Partnership Scheme would go live in April 2016.

Background Papers:	None other than referred to in the report.
-------------------------------	--