



CABINET

15TH OCTOBER 2015

AGENDA ITEM (13)

HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCY - FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS

Accountable Member	Councillor Mrs. SL Jepson Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing
Accountable Officer	Christine Gore Shared Strategic Director 01285 623000 christine.gore@cotswold.gov.uk

Purpose of Report	To seek direction with regard to future arrangements for the Home Improvement Agency service
Recommendation(s)	<p>(a) That the contents of the report be noted;</p> <p>(b) that the Council continues to fund an interim service for up to 14 months from when the contract with the existing provider ends on 31st May 2016;</p> <p>(c) that a waiver to the contract procedure rules be granted for the extension of the current service for up to 14 months;</p> <p>(d) that the Council continues to be a partner in the Gloucestershire procurement process for a new Home Improvement Agency service;</p> <p>(e) that the Cabinet delegates authority to the Strategic Director, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing, to agree the terms and cost of the extension of the current service within the district for the interim period;</p> <p>(f) that the Strategic Shared Director, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing, be authorised to agree to the appointment of a new contractor and sign the legal contracts.</p>
Reason(s) for Recommendation(s)	<p>The recommendations are required in order to:</p> <p>(i) ensure that the Council is in compliance with the Procurement rules and regulations;</p> <p>(ii) provide and secure an effective and efficient Home Improvement Agency service in the Cotswold District for the benefit of residents.</p>

Ward(s) Affected	All
Key Decision	Yes

Recommendation to Council	No
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Financial Implications	The cost of the Home Improvement Agency services to the Council is currently £75,600 annually, which is funded through the Capital Programme.
Legal and Human Rights Implications	The contract documents for the new Home Improvement Service will be agreed by the Council's Legal Team.
Environmental and Sustainability Implications	None
Human Resource Implications	None
Key Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to maintain a service to vulnerable residents from 1st April 2016; • delays in the procurement process; • other Gloucestershire partners failing to join the County-wide procurement process, which may affect the viability of the service; • failure to appoint a suitable contractor to deliver a County-wide Home Improvement Service, if the procurement process does not attract a new provider; • disruption to the delivery of services currently provided by changing to a new provider.

Equalities Analysis	No effect on protected groups identified
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Related Decisions	Cabinet, 13 th August 2009 - Home Improvement Agency County-wide Procurement (Minute CAB.64)
Background Documents	None
Appendices	None

Performance Management Follow Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Quarterly performance statistics will be monitored (ii) Budgets will be monitored
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Options for Joint Working	Service provision is based on joint/partnership working across Gloucestershire
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Background Information	
1.	<u>General/Historical</u>
1.1	The Home Improvement Agency (HIA) service provides support for elderly, vulnerable and disabled people to maintain their independence and remain in their own homes. It helps to deliver the priorities within the Housing Plan 2012-16, as well as Better Care Fund targets. The current HIA contract expires on 31 st May 2016.

1.2 Originally, each District within Gloucestershire had its own agency provision. In 1994, this Council worked in partnership with Anchor Trust through Staying Put (the Agency) to provide support, across the whole of the Cotswold District, to the elderly and/or disabled in undertaking repairs, improvements or adaptations and to promote independent living, including Disabled Facilities Grant work.

1.3 The service evolved as further funding became available through Gloucestershire County Council for other support services, including benefits advice, seeking external funding from charities, securing loans and much more. This funding was eventually included within the Supporting People (SP) funding, administered through the County Council, which has been subject to cuts in recent years.

1.4 The Staying Put service continued via retender and contract extensions. In 2009, the Cabinet agreed to join a County-wide partnership to tender for the future delivery of the service - the principle being that working in partnership across the county would achieve greater value for money and ensure equality of opportunity for future service users regardless of their location in the County.

1.5 A final extension of the Anchor Trust contract was agreed until the new structure for the County-wide 'Gloucestershire Home Improvement Agency' service was approved and a tender process completed in 2011.

2. The Current HIA Service

2.1 The Gloucestershire HIA services are currently provided through a commercial organisation 'Safe at Home' (MEARS). The HIA contract is managed by the County Council and overseen by a steering group comprising the County and District Councils, and Clinical Commissioning Group.

2.2 MEARS provides information, signposting and practical help with housing repairs, improvements, renovations and adaptations and a handy-person and small repairs service. In terms of major adaptations (funded by disabled facilities grants), MEARS provides a service for the client from the application stage to the completion of the works. Between April 2012 and Quarter 3 of 2015, there have been 919 interventions which have assisted households with minor adaptations or the provision of equipment.

2.3 The current annual funding contributions are shown in the table below:-

Safe At Home Funding			
Financial Year	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Districts	£252,236	£252,236	£252,236
of which:			
CBC	31,900	31,900	31,900
CDC	75,600	75,600	75,600
FoD	36,000	36,000	36,000
GC	19,736	19,736	19,736
SDC	44,000	44,000	44,000
TBC	45,000	45,000	45,000
GCC (Fixed)	£524,971	£524,976	£524,976
GHT	£17,370	£17,370	£17,370
CCG (Fixed)	£118,310	£118,310	£118,310
CCG (Top ups)	£0	£53,020	£55,908
CCG Totals	£118,310	£171,330	£174,218
Totals	£912,892	£965,912	£968,800

2.4 There is a large disparity between the levels of funding contributed by each District Council, with this Council's contribution of £75,600 per annum being the highest.

2.5 The contributions were based on historic outputs. However, the benefits now received by the Districts from having an agency are perceived to be at a similar level across the County.

3. The County-wide Tendering Process

3.1 The current contract was competitively tendered by Gloucestershire County Council as the lead authority. The contract allowed for an extension for 2 years to the end of May 2016, so cannot be further extended.

3.2 On behalf of the partnership, the County Council is in the process of reviewing the procurement of the HIA service across Gloucestershire.

3.3 A draft specification has been circulated for a new Safe at Home service to the Gloucestershire District Councils.

3.4 Strategic Directors across Gloucestershire were of the view that there was insufficient information/evidence to fully evaluate the proposed draft specification. There has been a delay in the procurement process whilst this information has been obtained.

3.5 The Council is now being asked to grant the current service provider a direct award for up to 14 months. If this is agreed, it is expected that GCC will continue to be the lead authority. This will ensure that vulnerable people within the district are not left without the service. During that period, the partners will have time to agree a procurement process, contract and partnership agreement for a replacement service having tested the market; or to make arrangements to terminate the current service in a managed way. If a new service is to be procured, 14 months is regarded as the most realistic timescale for completing the process.

3.5 In accordance with the Contract Procedure Rule 6.2 a waiver will be required for the interim service due to the following exceptional circumstances:

- the service is of a specialised nature
- there is no satisfactory alternative
- it is in the Council's best interest to continue with the service provider until the appointment of a new contractor

4. Funding

4.1 It is essential that this Council's contribution to the overall funding of the service is determined on a fair reasoned and equitable basis.

4.2 Gloucestershire County Council has developed a formula to calculate the contribution from each District Council, and the calculation is based on:

- the number of people age 65 and above and
- the number of recipients of disability related benefits/allowances aged 60 and above.

4.3 This Council's financial contribution is proposed to reduce from £75,600 to £37,823.31 for the newly procured service. The figure is subject to confirmation by the Finance Team at Gloucestershire County Council.

4.4 If some of the existing partners decide not to participate in the procurement of a new service, it is possible new partners could be approached to minimise the effect on costs to the remaining partners.

4.5 The HIA partnership should also be encouraged to explore options for increasing the financial sustainability of the HIA service. This could include:

- maximising self-funding, e.g. equity release and other financial models;
- working with registered providers to make best use of adapted homes.

4.6 The Council's financial contribution during the extension period will be based on the proposed future contribution of £37,823.31 per annum, and not the current £75,600 per annum.

4.7 The Cabinet is also requested to delegate authority to the Strategic Director, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing, to agree the precise terms and cost of the extension of the service within the district for the period until August 2017. This will mitigate the risk of any of the existing partners deciding not to extend the current service for the specified period.

5. Monitoring and Reporting

5.1 Continued funding should be subject to regular reporting on outcomes to Strategic Directors at District Council level.

5.2 The delivery of the contract will also be monitored by the Supporting People Core Strategy Group attended by strategic Housing Officers. Strategic overview is within the remit of the Supporting People Partnership Board, whose members include Strategic Housing Managers and elected Members.

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