

Report of: Head of Oxford City Homes

To: City Executive Board

Date: 23 July 2008 **Item No:**

Title of Report: Aids and Adaptations for Disabled Persons – Funding Shortfall

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To seek approval for increasing the Aids and adaptations budget to enable the existing waiting list to be reduced.

Key decision: Yes

Board Member: Councillor Ed Turner.

Report Approved by:-

Legal: Jeremy King
Finance: David Higgins

Policy Framework: Maintaining a balanced housing supply, promoting social inclusion and improving quality of life.

Recommendation(s):

1. To increase the HRA Capital budget for aids and adaptation works by £370,000 to enable a reduction in the current waiting list .
2. To vire £370,000 from projected underspend within the HRA Capital budget.

Background –

1. Expenditure on adaptation work for the disabled has escalated over the last few years. This work typically covers grab rails, over-bath showers, ramps and, in a few cases, extensions. The Capital Budget for 2008/09 is £528,000 and the current waiting list currently holds 75 referrals from the Occupational Therapists (OTs) for major works, such as level access showers. In addition, the HRA planned maintenance budget has £165,000 allocated for minor works such as grab rails which are turned around quickly. On average, 10-15 referrals are received each month.

2. At their meeting in February 2008, Executive Board approved the recommendation to employ a part-time OT but although the report indicated the financial pressures that were on the service, formal proposals to address these pressures were not included.
3. Ongoing discussions with the County Council have resulted in the County agreeing to joint fund the OT post and they will manage the sickness and holiday absences by providing cover for those periods. The County will also provide on-going training and supervision, although the OT will be based at Oxford City Homes. The Service Level Agreement, formalising these proposals, has not yet been finalised but it will be in the near future.
4. The previous report in February of this year went into considerable detail on the Aids and Adaptations scheme, particularly around the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) and Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act (CSDPA) and consequently that detail will not be included in this report.

Options

5. The options are -
 - a) To provide additional funds to complete all of those works on the waiting list in this financial year and take full advantage of having an in-house OT.
 - b) To provide additional funds over a number of years to gradually reduce the waiting list.
 - c) To retain the current funding levels which will ultimately extend the waiting list and effectively mean that tenants will wait for over a year for the works. It will also cancel out any advantages gained from having an in-house OT.

Proposals

6. The proposal is to adopt option (a) above and provide additional Capital funding for the Aids and Adaptation scheme in order to reduce the waiting list for major works within one year. This will meet disabled tenants' needs and considerably improve their quality of life.
7. There are currently 75 referrals on the waiting list and, based upon average prices recently tendered, it is estimated that an additional sum of £370,000 will be needed to complete these. The existing budget for this year will be exhausted by funding those already programmed and all new referrals in the year.
8. It is proposed that the "waiting list" works will be competitively tendered for in accordance with the Council's Constitution and that they will be completed within this financial year. The existing programmed works and works referred during the rest of this

financial year will be carried out by the Oxford City Homes in-house team.

Financial implications

9. Based upon recent tendered prices it is estimated that an additional sum of £370,000 is required to fund the proposal.
10. This sum can be found from within existing 2008/09 Capital budgets. A total of 47 tenants have, for various reasons, refused decent homes works to date and this number is certain to rise before the 31 December 2010 Decent Homes deadline. Under the Governments guidelines, these properties are classed as decent until they become a void. Based upon average costs of £8,000 per property this gives a predicted "saving" of £376,000 on predicted decent homes costs.
11. It is proposed to invite competitive tenders for these works and because of the type and time-scale of the project, it is not proposed to enter into a partnership arrangement.

Legal Implications

12. In accordance with the Councils Constitution, competitive tenders will be sought. Contractors will be selected using the Constructionline database.
13. There is no statutory duty on Oxford City Council to fund aids and adaptations work.

Consultation

14. Tenants, via the Housing Advisory Panel, will be consulted on the proposals at their meeting on 16th July 2008.

Environmental implications

15. The installation of showers will result in the use of less water for bathing. Power showers are never installed for that same reason. Where at all possible, thermostatic mixer showers fed from the hot water system are used, rather than using instantaneous electric showers.

**Name and contact details of authors: Bruce Thompson, tel: 335445, extn 3645. Email bthompson@oxford.gov.uk
Chris Pyle, tel; 335411, extn 3611, Email: cpyle@oxford.gov.uk**

Background papers: Capital & Planned Maintenance programmes.