

To: City Executive Board

Date: 9 July 2015

Report of: Executive Director

Title of Report: Home Improvement Agency Contract 2015-18

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report:

The Council provides a Home Improvement Agency that is part funded through a contract with Oxfordshire County Council. The Home Improvement Agency provides services to enable disabled and elderly people to remain living in their own homes. The value of the contract to the Council will be in excess of £500k over the 5 years of the contract and as a result City Executive Board approval is required to sign the contract.

Key decision: Yes

Executive lead member: Councillor Scott Seamons

Policy Framework: Meeting Housing Need, Strong Active Communities

Recommendation(s): That City Executive Board grant delegated authority to the Executive Director of Regeneration and Housing, in consultation with the Head of Financial Services and Head of Law and Governance to enter into an appropriate contract for the provision of a Home Improvement Agency.

Appendices to report

Appendix 1 Services to be provided by Home Improvement Agency

Appendix 2 Finance Schedule

Appendix 3 Risk Register

Appendix 4 Equalities Impact Assessment

Background

1. Under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 the Council has a mandatory duty to provide disabled facilities grants

(DFG). Unless it is for a disabled child, the DFG is means tested and is to allow for the provision of adaptations to people's homes to reduce both the need for people to relocate to facilities which provide full time care and to reduce the amount of additional care needed. Referrals for DFGs come via Oxfordshire County Council's Occupational Therapists.

2. The Council complies with its statutory duty to provide DFGs via a Home Improvement Agency (HIA) which is part funded by Oxfordshire County Council and delivers a package of services dedicated to helping older people, people with disabilities, and vulnerable people to live in safety and with dignity in their own homes. The enhanced services include a Small Repairs Technician, a Home from Hospital service and a Caseworker to liaise with DFG applicants during the process, help them navigate the benefits system and to carry out home safety and security checks.
3. Oxfordshire County Council provides funding for the HIA because it is fully aligned with their role of providing social care for adults and vulnerable groups and the enhanced services it delivers saves money by preventing falls and earlier admissions into care and enabling people to get home from hospital as soon as possible. Similar contracts are being offered to all the district councils in Oxfordshire.
4. In its current form the HIA contract was first awarded by the County Council in 2008 and has subsequently been renewed several times. The County Council now wish to renew the HIA contract and to extend the services that it delivers.
5. The proposal is for a three year contract with an option to renew for a further two years.
6. The County Council want to include minor works required under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Act 1970, e.g. ramps and handrails. These works were previously carried out by a private contractor and the County Council now want the Council to arrange to have the works carried out on their behalf. In addition the County Council have an obligation to maintain a number of stairlifts and they want the Council to make suitable arrangements to ensure their maintenance.
7. Previously the contract has been signed by the Director or the Head of Service, but the inclusion of minor works combined with the proposed length of the contract mean that its value is likely to exceed the £500k threshold in the Financial Rules. This is primarily because it has been estimated that the value of the minor works could be in the region of £100k p.a. depending on the number and type of referrals.
8. The full specification is attached as appendix 1.
9. Negotiations regarding the contract are underway and no significant difficulties are anticipated.

Legal Issues

10. Any legal issues and the relevant legislation are covered in the preceding paragraphs. The proposed draft contract has been viewed by Law and Governance and no immediate issues were noted.

Financial Issues

11. All additional costs and staffing resource required to deliver the work generated by managing the minor works referrals and lift maintenance will be recovered in the contract. To provide support for processing the additional minor works grants it is proposed to increase staffing resource, in line with the increase in income. The estimated values for the contract are attached as appendix 2.

Environmental Impact

12. There will be no environmental impact.

Level of Risk

13. Attached as appendix 3. The level of risk is low.

Equalities Impact

14. Attached as appendix 4. There will only be impact in the event of the recommendation not being approved.

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