

PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION RECORD

<p>Portfolio Holder: Leader & Portfolio Holder for Finance, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Licensing</p>	<p>Service: Communities/Housing/Environment/Leisure/ Planning</p>
<p>CMT Officer: Carol Pilson, Corporate Director and Monitoring Officer Dan Horn, Assistant Director</p>	<p>Delegated Power Being Exercised: Paragraph 3 – Responsibilities for Functions, Table 5, Paragraph 10</p>
<p>Subject of Decision: Interim Home Improvement Agency (HIA) Service</p> <p>The Council went out to procure a new HIA service to start April 23. However a following bidder feedback the procurement process was paused and further work was undertaken to support a competitive process. The existing service continued but the existing provider stated they could only continue until the end of September 23.</p> <p>The new tender for service went live on week commencing October 2nd.</p> <p>However without an emergency solution, there is going to be a gap in service to meet the legislative responsibilities the Council has regarding Disabled Facilities Grants.</p> <p>To mitigate this the Council approached the 2 providers who have expressed an interest last year to see if an interim arrangement could be found.</p> <p>One provider responded immediately and have agreed to take on the service in an emergency interim basis for the duration of the period we need before the new procured service goes live. The other provider at the time of writing this exemption has not responded to the call out but if they want to take on interim work this can be facilitated.</p> <p>The arrangement will be as currently delivered through our existing provider: <u>Undertaking clients' financial assessments for DFGs.</u></p> <p>This work is to assess how much a DFG client has to pay towards their adaptation works in advance of a formal DFG being received. It involves the client declaring all their income, savings and investment details on a FDC template form and having this input into the Government's assessment calculator for an outcome. FDC cannot currently do this work as we neither have the software or the training to accurately record which elements of the financial form are used or disregarded.</p> <p>This assessment is carried prior to a DFG as it streamlines the service and doesn't push clients down a route of applying for a DFG only then to be turned down because their contribution is assessed as too high, and no grant would be awarded.</p> <p><u>Feasibility requests:</u></p> <p>These are technical requests received from the Occupational Therapists (OTs) prior to a formal DFG being released to assess a property to determine if the works recommended for the client are feasible in construction terms. It's a very important assessment that directs as to whether works can be completed or not and if they can, whether it's reasonable and practical to do them when costs are then considered. This work and assessment must have high regards to Building and Planning Requirements, CDM Regulations, Party Wall Act and will involve architectural designs</p>	

and schedules of works being drawn up to determine that works are correct. This work cannot be undertaken by FDC.

Regular DFG applications:

This is routine works to develop an OT referral in a DFG application. This will involve completing all the Grant forms and legal paperwork. Undertaking any necessary site visits prior to works starting. Advising DFG customers on the terms and conditions of any grant award. Obtaining written estimates from qualified professional building contractors and service providers; formal instructions with the client and contractor on starts date, overseeing works on site, assessing any un-foreseen works and arranging estimates for these; completion of works, final site inspection and production of invoices to FDC for payment.

URGENT DFG cases:

As above but with fast tracking to ensure works are carried out as quickly as possible. Typically used for end-of-life cases.

Pathway Project cases.

Used to reduce the OT waiting lists in Fenland by using HIA trusted assessors (TA) or private OTs to assess routine and straightforward cases for DFG assessment instead of using the CCC OTs. This service comes with an additional OT /TA fee which is usually added to the fee determination of a DFG application or can be paid separately through a discretionary grant if the case cannot proceed for whatever reason.

Service Spend over exemption period

Potential spend over the next 6 months until start of new contract is circa £400K for the works resulting in potential fees to agencies of £100K.

Decision Taken:

Agreed to deliver an interim HIA service with up to 2 providers whilst the Council procures a new HIA service to commence by April 2024.

Reason for the Decisions:

Although this exemption is for a significant amount of spend the Council must have a service in place. As a tender exercise is underway this should mitigate any challenges. Officers have considered the risks which are outweighed by the emergency nature of this exemption which means services will continue for our most vulnerable residents.

Alternative Options Considered (if appropriate):

Do nothing and manage the delay period – the Council does not like this option as the risks of a lack of service to its elderly, disabled and vulnerable service users cannot be understated. Almost all rely on the HIA service to support them with the administrative, technical and management issues that come with complex disabled adaptation works. Delaying the processing of DFG applications runs the risk of the service user experiencing some kind of traumatic event at home which may cause harm and hospitalisation.

Background/Reports/Information considered and attached:

HIA service out to tender at the moment as set out in the link below.

[Home Improvement Agency Service - Find a Tender \(find-tender.service.gov.uk\)](https://find-tender.service.gov.uk)

Legal and Procurement Implications

Although this exemption is for a significant amount of spend we must have a service in place. As a tender exercise is underway this should mitigate any challenges. Officers have considered the risks which are outweighed by the emergency nature of this exemption which means services will continue for our most vulnerable residents. A procurement exemption form has been completed in accordance with paragraph 13.2 b of the Council's Code of Procurement. Due to the urgency, following discussion with the chairman of Overview and Scrutiny the 28-day notification period on the forward plan has also been waived to ensure we can minimise any delay in having a HIA service.

Financial Implications

All within existing budgets.

Portfolio Holder Signature
Leader & Portfolio Holder for Finance
Portfolio Holder for Housing and Licensing

Date:
12 October 2023

Please forward to Democratic Services upon completion

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**Date copy passed to 12 October 2023
Democratic Services**

**Implementation Date: 20 October 2023
(if not called-in)
(Allow 5 clear working days after publication
of decision)**

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