

**SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
RECORD OF EXECUTIVE / CHIEF OFFICER DECISION**

This form should be used to record key and other decisions made by individual Portfolio Holders and key decisions made by Chief Officers. The contact officer will ensure that the signed and completed form is given to Democratic Services as soon as reasonably practicable after the decision has been taken.

Unless permission has been obtained from the Chairman of Council and the Chairman of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee that this decision be treated as a matter of urgency under Rule 12.19 of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee Procedure Rules, this decision will come into force, and may then be implemented, on the expiry of five working days after the publication of the decision, unless called in under Rule 7 of the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules or Rule 12 of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee Procedure Rules.

Portfolio	Housing Portfolio Holder
Subject Matter	Pooling of Additional Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) Funding
Ward(s) Affected	None
Date Taken	Tuesday, 6 February 2018
Contact Officer	Julie Fletcher, Head of Housing Strategy 01954 713352 (julie.fletcher@scambs.gov.uk)
Date Published	Tuesday, 6 February 2018
Call-In Expiry	Tuesday, 13 February 2018
Key Decision?	No
In Forward Plan?	No
Urgent?	No

Purpose / Background
<p>The purpose of this decision is to approve the pooling of the additional DFG funding received by DCLG of £65,609 within the Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency area.</p> <p>The Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency (CHIA) is a shared service between South Cambridgeshire, Cambridge City and Huntingdonshire established in 2012. The CHIA service enables the partner councils to meet statutory duties under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 to award Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) assisting vulnerable people carry out essential adaptations to their homes.</p> <p>CHIA receives over 1,000 enquiries per year, and completes approximately 370 capital works, enabling capital budgets in the region of £3m per year to be spent. For the financial year 2017/18, the DFG budget for South Cambridgeshire is £660,000 - made up of £619,976 funding from the Better Care Fund and £40,824 through the use of Right to Buy receipts. To date, £390,897 has been spent, with a further £197,565 committed and £85,525 in the pipeline. It is unlikely that all of the committed/pipeline work will be completed within the financial year. Whilst it is difficult to pinpoint why there is a decrease in spend for South Cambridgeshire in 2017/18, it should be noted that there is not a backlog of cases within the CHIA, OT referrals are 12% lower than the previous year and that there have not been as many major works completed in the last year.</p> <p>On 1st December 2017, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) wrote to all local authorities informing them that an additional £42 million of capital funding for DFGs in 2017/18 had been made available. Local authorities were asked to confirm if they wished to receive further funding, with any unspent monies being re-allocated to an authority in greater need. The additional funding was primarily for DFGs, however where agreed locally a portion could be spent on wider social care capital projects. South Cambridgeshire District Council</p>

accepted the additional money on the proviso that the money could be pooled within the CHIA to maximise investment across the wider Cambridge area, or if possible identify wider social care capital projects within South Cambridgeshire.

On 19th January 2018, confirmation was received from DCLG for additional funding of £65,609 to be paid on 24th January 2018. As the demand for DFGs in Huntingdonshire outstrips the funding available it is proposed that, on this occasion, the additional funding be allocated to Huntingdonshire to help meet that deficit. This will ensure that the additional investment benefits residents within Cambridgeshire for the purposes of providing disabled facility grants.

Other proposals for spending the money were explored, such as a capital project to upgrade the CHIA IT system. However, it was felt that given the tight timescale to spend the money by 31st March 2018, it would not be beneficial to rush into a project without fully scoping out future requirements. It should also be noted that in accordance with the Shared Service Agreement, any operating loss or surplus is shared between the three authorities and can be used to help offset any costs associated with developing the agency. The CHIA will this year attract a much higher than expected income from fees due to the extra workload in Huntingdonshire and this will help balance the operating costs of the shared service. It is hoped that some of the other revenue capital projects, such as the upgrade of the IT system, could be funded in part from any operating surplus in 2017/18.

Another initiative considered was to help fund an upgrade of equipment in the communal kitchens of our sheltered schemes, but this was not possible as the money could not be spent on the Council's own stock.

Pooling the additional DFG funding within Huntingdonshire is made within the spirit of good partnership working and supporting the work of the CHIA as a joint service. It will ensure that funding is made available to the residents of Cambridgeshire rather than re-allocated elsewhere across the country.

Declaration(s) of Interest

Record below any relevant interest declared by any executive Member consulted or by an officer present in relation to the decision.

None

Dispensation(s)

In respect of any conflict(s) of interest declared above, record below any dispensation(s) granted by the Council's Standards Committee.

None

Consultation

Record below all parties consulted in relation to the decision.

None

Other Options Considered and Reasons for Rejection

Option 1: To spend the additional funding on a capital IT project to improve efficiency within the CHIA service.

Reason for Rejection: Given the tight timescale of two months, it was felt that this project should not be rushed and a wider review is needed to assess the future IT requirements of the CHIA, which should include both a review of software as well as equipment. Other funding streams may also be available in 2018/19 from any surplus within the CHIA operating costs.

Option 2: To spend the additional funding on a capital project to replace out of date equipment in the Council's sheltered communal rooms.

Reason for Rejection: The money is paid as a Section 31 capital grant and cannot be spent on

the Council's own stock.

Final decision	Reason(s)
To approve the allocation of the additional funding of £65,609 to Huntingdonshire District Council.	Passing the money to Huntingdonshire District Council will ensure that we can maximise investment in the wider Cambridge area. In doing so, this will show our commitment to working in partnership and supporting the CHIA service.

Signed	Name (CAPITALS)	Signature	Date
Portfolio Holder	Signed copy available upon request from Democratic Services (democratic.services@scambs.gov.uk)		
Chief Officer			

Further Information