

HOUSING PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S MEETING

WEDNESDAY, 18 OCTOBER 2017

DECISIONS

Set out below is a summary of the decisions taken at the Housing Portfolio Holder's Meeting held on Wednesday, 18 October 2017. Decisions made by the Portfolio Holder will be subject to call-in. Recommendations made to the Cabinet or to the Council are not subject to call-in. The wording used does not necessarily reflect the actual wording that will appear in the minutes.

If you have any queries about any matters referred to in this decision sheet please contact Victoria Wallace.

1 REVIEW OF THE CAMBRIDGESHIRE HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCY

The Housing Portfolio Holder:

- a) Approved Option A: to lobby the County Council as part of a collective appeal from the local authorities, to try and negotiate a different settlement.
- b) Recommended Option C to Council: to review the fees charged by the Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency (CHIA) with a view that the HIA should be self sustaining. This would require fees to be increased from their current 15% to at least 18%, the exact level of fee to be determined in consultation with the County Council in time for the Council's budget setting meeting in February 2018.

Other Options Considered:

Option	Officer notes
Option A: To lobby the County Council, as part of a collective appeal from the local authorities, to try and negotiate a different settlement? AND/OR	This process has commenced but will take time to complete. An interim financial option is still require for 2018/19 while these discussions take place.
Option B: Look to reduce the indirect costs associated with the running of the CHIA, such as IT, office and management. In doing this, it would have a financial impact on the general fund for the Council. AND/OR	Operational issues are being identified by the Interim Manager but these are unlikely to provide a big enough contribution to the shortfall.
Option C: To review the fees charged by the CHIA with the view that the HIA should be self sustaining. This would require fees to be increased by almost double and would impact on the amount charged to self funders and also reducing the number of DFGs that could be undertaken. AND/OR	<p>This provides the most immediate way of providing a viable financial position for the coming year and other council HIAs already have higher fee rates than the 15% currently charged.</p> <p>For those who qualify for a full DFG this will not impact upon on them personally but as noted by the consultant it reduces the overall amount of money available to carry out works and there may be an increase in the waiting list by the end of the year.</p> <p>For self funders they may feel that the fee rate is too high and will chose not to use the service. This is already an option and some people already chose not use the CHIA.</p>

	For these reasons although an increase in fees would provide a financial cushion for the 2018/19 year a different solution that did not rely upon a large fee increase would be an objective to seek during discussions with the County Council.
Option D: To top slice the BCF by £199k to cover the funding deficit enabling fees to remain at a reasonable level. Although this is the preferred option highlighted in the CHIA Review Report, it may not be possible to use the BCF allocation in this way due to it being for capital expenditure and not revenue. OR	The County Council may choose to do this as a way of being able to provide revenue funding for a further year and will seek their own accounting advice but this is not an option open to the district councils. A top slice of capital grant also has the effect of reducing the overall amount of grant available to spend on the adaptations needed.
Option E: Plan for an exit strategy to disband the Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency and revert back to the Council's mandatory obligations of administering grants. This would mean a scaled back service which no longer offered the help and support to deliver disabled facility grants.	The potentially damaging effects of reducing the service in this way have not been fully explored or measured and this option is not therefore recommended whilst other options to sustain a service are still being explored.

Reason For Decision: Increasing the fees as a temporary measure would allow the service to remain financially viable so that further discussions can take place with the County Council and ensure that a sustainable and good quality service is offered to local people with disabilities.

2. **DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS AND THE JOINT HOUSING ADAPTATIONS AGREEMENT**

The Portfolio Holder:

- a) Approved the Joint Housing Adaptations Agreement that provides a framework from which the districts will work towards developing a Joint Adaptations Policy (Option A).
- b) Approved as an interim before the Joint Policy is agreed, the flexibility within the Council's existing policies to provide for 'top up' funding where necessary and subject to available funding (Option B).

Other Options Considered:

Option A – To approve the Joint Housing Adaptations Agreement that provides a framework from which the districts will work towards developing a Joint Adaptations Policy	Reasons for Approval – This proposal is in line with the Health & Wellbeing Strategy to support older people to be independent, safe and well, creating a safe environment and working together effectively. It also aligns with the aims and aspirations of the Better Care Fund. A Joint Policy will provide consistency across the districts and the flexibility to enhance services where funding is available
Option B – To approve, as an interim before the Joint Policy is agreed, to allow the flexibility within the Council's	Reasons for Approval: Given the additional funding provided through the BCF for DFGs, it is not anticipated that the Council will be

existing policies to provide for 'top up' funding where necessary and subject to available funding.	required to contribute any additional funds.
Option C – To reject the proposals within the Housing Adaptations Agreement	Reasons for Refusal: This would not be in the spirit of the wider remit of the Better Care Fund and Health & Wellbeing Board.
Option D – To refuse the interim arrangements proposed regarding the flexibility within existing policies to use the DFG Allocation to top up DFGs where necessary.	Reasons for Refusal: This proposal should not impact on the District Council. Alternative sources of funding would be sought where possible and the increase in the BCF should facilitate any additional expenditure in the year 2017/18.

Reason For Decision: The joint Housing Adaptations Agreement has been prepared as part of the overall country wide review of the Disabled Facilities Grants and is in line with the aims and aspirations of the Better Care Fund.

3. **AFFORDABLE HOMES SERVICE PLAN 2018/19**

The Housing Portfolio Holder endorsed the actions identified in the Affordable Homes Draft Service Plan 2018/19.

Other Options Considered: The Portfolio Holder was requested to consider the proposed actions and to suggest changes or additions where required.

Reason For Decision: A list of service projects needs to be agreed in the autumn to enable service and financial planning to be put in place for effective delivery from April 2018. The proposed list represents a continuation of key projects already underway and a series of new projects designed to take forward key developments identified in previous years work and to further enhance the service to customers. The final version of the Service Plan will be presented to the Portfolio Holder in March 2018.