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10 October 2017

To: Councillor Lynda Harford, Portfolio Holder

Kevin Cuffley
Jose Hales

Hazel Smith

Scrutiny Monitor
Scrutiny Monitor and Opposition
Spokesman
Opposition Spokesman

Dear Sir / Madam

You are invited to attend the next meeting of **HOUSING PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S MEETING**, which will be held in **SWANSLEY ROOM A, GROUND FLOOR** at South Cambridgeshire Hall on **WEDNESDAY, 18 OCTOBER 2017** at **3.30 p.m.**

Yours faithfully
Beverly Agass
Chief Executive

Requests for a large print agenda must be received at least 48 hours before the meeting.

AGENDA		PAGES
1. Declarations of Interest		
2. Minutes of Previous Meeting The Portfolio Holder is asked to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2017 as a correct record.		1 - 2
3. Review of the Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency		3 - 10
4. Disabled Facilities Grants and the Joint Housing Adaptations Agreement		11 - 14
5. Affordable Homes Service Plan 2018/19		15 - 18
6. Tenant Participation Group		
7. Date of next meeting For the Portfolio Holder to consider future meeting dates.		

OUR LONG-TERM VISION

South Cambridgeshire will continue to be the best place to live, work and study in the country. Our district will demonstrate impressive and sustainable economic growth. Our residents will have a superb quality of life in an exceptionally beautiful, rural and green environment.

OUR VALUES

We will demonstrate our corporate values in all our actions. These are:

- Working Together
- Integrity
- Dynamism
- Innovation

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR VISITORS TO SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE HALL

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Agenda Item 2

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Housing Portfolio Holder's Meeting held on
Wednesday, 13 September 2017 at 4.30 p.m.

Portfolio Holder: Lynda Harford

Councillors in attendance:

Opposition spokesmen: Hazel Smith

Also in attendance: Tony Orgee

Officers:

Julie Fletcher	Head of Housing Strategy
Anita Goddard	Housing Operational Services Manager
Stephen Hills	Director of Housing
Peter Moston	Resident Involvement Team Leader
Ian Senior	Democratic Services Officer

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Housing Portfolio Holder signed, as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2017.

3. TENANT LED SCRUTINY REVIEW OF SHELTERED COMMUNAL ROOMS

The Housing Portfolio Holder considered a report on the Tenant Scrutiny Panel's recommendations and proposed Action Plan contained in its Paper entitled *A Review of Sheltered Housing Communal Rooms*, attached to the officer report as Appendices A and B.

The Scrutiny Panel's presentation had been delivered prior to the Portfolio Holder meeting taking place.

The Portfolio Holder said that the Scrutiny Panel's recommendations would now be considered in detail by a Working Group consisting of Councillors, South Cambridgeshire District Council officers, and residents. Councillor Hazel Smith expressed a desire to serve on the Working Group, and the Housing Portfolio Holder was pleased to welcome her as a Group member.

In response to a question from Councillor Smith, the Resident Involvement Team Leader clarified the guidelines for charging for use of communal rooms, and the role played by Parish Councils. There were likely to be different community uses at different communal rooms.

Councillor Smith referred to work being facilitated by Councillor Sue Ellington, intended to identify and tackle social isolation.

The Housing Portfolio Holder **endorsed** the Scrutiny Report of the Sheltered Housing Communal Rooms (Appendix A of the report from the Tenant Scrutiny Panel) and agreed to the measures set out in the Action Plan (Appendix B).

4. TENANT PARTICIPATION GROUP

The Housing Portfolio Holder noted that that the Tenant Participation Group would not be holding meetings in January or August 2018.

5. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Housing Portfolio Holder meeting will take place on Wednesday 18 October 2017, starting at 3.30pm.

The Meeting ended at 4.55 p.m.



REPORT TO: Housing Portfolio Holder
LEAD OFFICER: Director of Housing

19 October 2017

Review of Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the review of the Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency (CHIA) and to seek approval from the Housing Portfolio Holder as to the next steps in terms of the operation of the CHIA.
2. This is not a key decision but forms part of the process of Council decision making with regard to financial arrangements for 2018/19 and it was first published in the August 2017 Forward Plan.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that the Portfolio Holder:
 - a) Approves:
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
 - b) Recommends to Council:
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 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.

Reasons for Recommendations

4. 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.

Background

Legislative and Strategic Context

5. The HIA 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 subject to qualifying conditions. The HIA service also assists people to maintain, repair and improve their homes to make them safe and suitable. Discretionary Repairs Assistance Grants or loans help owner occupiers and private tenants with repairing responsibility to carry out essential repairs to their homes.

6. The service contributes to the delivery of the Council's Housing Strategy and the local response to major national policy shifts to more closely integrate health, social care and housing services in the Care Act 2014 and Cambridgeshire's Better Care Fund priorities. This includes the Cambridgeshire HWB Strategy, Cambridgeshire Older Persons Strategy and Cambridgeshire Social Care outcomes.
7. In Cambridgeshire, the number of older people is forecast to rise steadily until at least 2021. Older people are in good health but the number of frail older people is increasing especially people aged 85 or over. The Cambridgeshire JSNA (Joint Strategic Needs Assessment) Summary Report 2014/15 reports that nearly 17,000 people over 65 years (16.8%) are likely to be frail. In Cambridgeshire in 2011/12 there were 2,650 emergency admissions for injury due to falls in the over 65's (7.7% of admissions). The number of people of all ages living with a disability is expected to increase including children, adults with a physical disability, learning disability, visual impairment, hearing impairment or a disability on the autistic spectrum.

Establishment of the shared service

8. The shared service is currently operating as a partnership between Cambridge City Council, South Cambridgeshire DC and Huntingdonshire DC and was established in 2012. It is known collectively as Cambs HIA (CHIA). The reasons for setting up the shared service were:
 - To achieve cost savings and delivery of value for money
 - To improve the resilience of the service
 - To provide a platform for improving the overall service
 - To provide a platform for extending the service in the future.
9. The shared service was required by the County Council Supporting People team who wanted to reduce and rationalise the number of contracts they managed. Whilst Fenland DC and East Cambridgeshire DC had their own DFG arrangements in place at the time of the shared service being established it was agreed that both councils should consider joining Cambs HIA at a future point.

Considerations

Current Service Operation

10. CHIA has a draft 3 year Business Plan (2015 to 2019), with the mission to:
"To support disabled and vulnerable people of all ages to improve their living conditions and quality of life by enabling them to remain living independently and safely in their home."
11. CHIA works with people of all ages, who may be living with complex conditions or are terminally ill. It also works with people living in housing conditions in need of maintenance, repair or improvement and also offers a wide range of information and have an extensive network of contacts about useful services. CHIA work on individual, bespoke projects; mainly with people who own or privately rent their homes.

12. Adaptations to housing association homes in Huntingdonshire are generally carried out via CHIA, who also carry out a small number of projects for housing associations in the rest of our area. CHIA is not involved in works to council owned homes in Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire as these are carried out directly by the relevant local authority.

Current performance

13. CHIA receives over 1,000 enquiries per year, and complete approximately 370 capital works, enabling capital budgets in the region of £3m per year to be spent.
14. Capital budgets are sufficient to meet needs in City and South Cambridgeshire, primarily because of their continued funding of discretionary grants. There is a potential shortfall in capital funding in Huntingdonshire that needs to be considered by the HIA Board.
15. The annual revenue cost of CHIA is £544k. Consideration of the cost of other HIAs in the country suggests this is broadly in line. 45% is funded by revenue grants from the County Council and CCG, and 55% from fees and self-funders. Even with the revenue grant funding, CHIA is only marginally viable having made a small operating loss of £7k in the last year.

Current and Emerging Issues Facing the CHIA

16. There are a number of issues facing the CHIA that need to be addressed. These are:
17. **Better Care Fund Strategic Direction and County Council Review of DFG**
The Cambridgeshire BCF Plan recognises the challenges that arise from the increasing population and increased longevity. This means that there will be more people in need in the future and yet there are less public sector resources available. Therefore the BCF sets a direction whereby communities are supported to help themselves for as long as possible.
18. Within the strategic framework of the BCF, a countywide Review of DFGs was completed in October 2016. The recommendations have implications for policy, funding and operational aspects of the service. A report is being considered by the Housing Portfolio Holder on 18th October 2017 on proposals for developing a countywide Adaptations Policy and a request to make some interim flexibility within the existing policy and budget to provide for 'top up' funding on DFGs.
19. **Operational Issues**
There have been operational issues within the CHIA which have had an impact on performance. To some extent, service provision in the CHIA still reflects the legacy of the previous districtwide HIAs. Performance differs across the CHIA operating area and falls below the service standards achieved in other HIAs. There has been a long-winded review of contractual arrangements which, after almost 2 years, has not been concluded and there have been significant delays to cases as a result of onerous administrative processes including CDM. The CHIA Manager left the organisation at the beginning of April 2017 and an Interim Manager has been appointed. To support this work, the CHIA Board commissioned an independent review of the CHIA, the

findings of which are summarised in this report. A focussed Improvement Plan has now been devised and is being implemented with an immediate positive impact.

20. **Changes to Capital Budgets**

Whilst there is an uplift in the Districts' capital DFG allocation from the Better Care Fund (BCF), this has led a number of Councils to withdraw or reduce the amount of capital they previously invested in DFGs. This means that the increased investment from Government via the BCF will not necessarily result in enhanced service delivery.

21. **Changes to Revenue Budgets**

Health and social care commissioners do not perceive that the CHIA has the capacity to deliver on wider BCF objectives. They have withdrawn their revenue funding to reinvest it elsewhere on the basis that the focus of CHIA in processing grant-funded work is providing for a District Council function. Effective from April 2018, this has destabilised the revenue funding base of CHIA leaving a deficit of £233k which is 45% of CHIA's income.

Conversations have been reopened with the County Council to explore the potential to defer this cut for a further 12 months; however, the CCG funding will be removed which will require some adjustment to fee levels.

Summary of Independent Consultant findings

22. Within the CHIA Review report, the consultant has highlighted the following issues for consideration:

Revenue Funding

23. There are opportunities for CHIA to cut costs by making operational improvements, and for District Councils to channel additional resources into CHIA, for example by funding indirect costs like IT, office and management and redirecting resources accordingly. There is significant opportunity for CHIA to diversify operations and increase income by doing private work for self-funders. In previous years, this has generated £30k income but can be expanded (subject to resources).

24. From 2018/19 onwards, the CHIA will be totally reliant upon fee income. To cover costs with fees at 15%, a capital budget of £4.3m is needed which is £1.6m more than current planned budgets. Capital budgets are £2,715,000, enabling CHIA to earn £345k at 15% leaving a £199k deficit. To cover costs fees need to be increased to 27% meaning less grants can be funded from the capital budget, and increasing the risk that customers will not use the CHIA.

25. It may be possible to top slice the BCF by £199k to cover the funding deficit, enabling fees to remain at 15%. This option strikes the best balance offering a degree of financial stability for the CHIA whilst keeping fees at a reasonable level. The loss of CHIA would leave a significant gap in the commissioning pathway and needs to be avoided and if no alternative revenue funding agreement can be reached amongst housing, health and social care partners, then this is the recommended funding strategy for the future of CHIA.

26. Funding the CHIA entirely from the BCF (directly and / or from fees) will lead to a shortfall in the number of grants that can be funded, most acutely in Huntingdonshire where over 100 less grants can be funded (equivalent of £700k capital).
27. It is highly unusual for HIAs to be funded from fees alone and no HIA outside of Cambridgeshire has currently been identified in this position. East Cambridgeshire and Fenland HIAs will be charging fees of 25% and 30% respectively. It is recommended that housing, health and social care colleagues should collectively reconsider this position and review the resources (capital and revenue) that are being invested. East Cambridgeshire District Council has indicated that they are interested in engaging in these discussions with the potential to join the CHIA which may also improve the overall financial viability of the service.

Future Delivery of CHIA

28. The consultants report considers the future options for the CHIA and appraises these through a SWOT Analysis. The recommended option for continued delivery of the service is to remodel and reposition CHIA addressing the current operational and funding challenges, or to investigate further the opportunity to merge the CHIA with other aligned services such as OTs, handyperson etc. The latter option would involve significant organisational change and would take time to implement. It is not something that can be achieved quickly.
29. In the short term it is therefore necessary to reposition the CHIA to respond to current challenges. An improvement plan is needed which should be tightly managed. CHIA should also look to diversify their activities in respect of self-funders which holds potential for additional income generation for CHIA. Further diversification into other HIA related services such as Handyperson, housing advice, telecare etc. seem ambitious at the current time given CHIA's current operational challenges. However if CHIA were to prove themselves as an effective and efficient organisation delivering preventative services to a significant population then this will improve their reputation among partners and they will inevitably be in a stronger position to bid for future opportunities.

Options

The independent consultants report identifies the following options:

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.

<p>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>	<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> <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.</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>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 snot an option open to the district councils.</p> <p>A top slice of capital grant also has the effect of reducing the overall amount of grant available pot to spend on the adaptations needed.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>

Implications

30. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered: -

Financial

31. The withdrawal of the County Council and CCG revenue funding will have a significant impact on the ability to operate a viable Home Improvement Agency and without direct action will impact on the service provided and budget overspend from the three local authorities involved.

Staffing

32. Unless a viable solution is found to the operation of the CHIA, this will have staff implications in terms of a reducing budget and the ability to maintain staff.

Risk Management

33. The financial and staffing risks are noted above and mitigations proposed. There is also a service delivery risk in not being able to meet the needs of people with disabilities living in the area if the service is not able to continue. These risks have not been quantified at the point of writing this report as work is being undertaken with our partners and with the County Council to find a sustainable solution.

Effect on Strategic Aims

Aim 1 – Living Well

34. Supporting our communities to remain in good health whilst continuing to protect the natural and built environment.

Report Author: Stephen Hills – Housing Director
Telephone: (01954) 713412

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REPORT TO: Housing Portfolio Holder
LEAD OFFICER: Director of Housing

19 October 2017

Disabled Facilities Grants and the Joint Housing Adaptations Agreement

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Housing Portfolio Holder with an update as to the countywide review of Disabled Facilities Grants and to seek approval of the joint Housing Adaptation Agreement proposed by Cambridgeshire County Council.
2. This is not a key decision but has been brought before the Housing Portfolio Holder for formal approval of the joint Housing Adaptations Agreement.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that the Portfolio Holder approves:

Option A – To approve the Joint Housing Adaptations Agreement (Appendix A) that provides a framework from which the districts will work towards developing a Joint Adaptations Policy.

Option B – To approve, 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.

Reasons for Recommendations

4. The joint Housing Adaptations Agreement has been prepared as part of the overall countywide review of the use of Disabled Facilities Grants and is in line with the aims and aspirations of the Better Care Fund.

Background

5. The funding for Disabled Facilities Grants and other Grants was historically awarded to the district housing authorities directly from the Department of Communities and Local Government. In 2008/09 the Government extended the scope of the Regulatory Reform Order (2002) to broaden the use of the DFG Capital Allocation. This allowed authorities to use the capital allocation on other types of adaptations, repairs and assistance.
6. For South Cambridgeshire, the DFG Capital Allocation continues to be spent on mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants, with the Council funding their RRO initiatives through separate capital funding which includes a Discretionary DFG (relocation grants & hospital discharge) and Home Repairs Assistance Grant (such as boiler replacement, electrical works, etc)..

7. In 2014 the Government recognised the contribution good, accessible, warm and safe housing makes to improved health and social care outcomes and passed the DFG Allocation capital funding to the Department of Health to be included in the Better Care Fund. This was then passed down to the housing authorities by the County Council as required by BCF regulation.
8. Since 2015, the allocation for DFG's through the Better Care Fund has increased, with a further anticipated increase in 2018/19. The table below sets out the funding provided to facilitate DFGs and other grants over the last three years.

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
BCF Allocation	£312,241	£566,013	£619,976
SCDC Contribution	£347,759	£93,987	£40,824
Overall DFG Budget	£660,000	£660,000	£660,000
DFG Spend	£663,223	£561,804	£216,555 (to date)
Discretionary SCDC Grant	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000
Spend	£212	£1,606	£1,375 (to date)
Home Repairs Assistance Grant	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000
Spend	£72,102	£67,625	£7,676 (to date)

9. The table above illustrates how the contribution SCDC has made towards DFGs has reduced over the two years following the increase in the BCF allocation. There may well be a future case for maintaining the Council's contribution to enhance service delivery but this is dependent on the outcome of the Home Improvement Agency Review which is currently being undertaken. In 2016/17, the Council was underspent on DFGs which could be attributed to various factors such as the HIA focusing capacity in other Districts, delay in referrals from Occupational Health, potential fall in demand, etc.

Considerations

10. The inclusion of the DFG Capital Allocation within the BCF has given a new focus for health and social care to work more closely with housing. It was agreed by the five district housing authorities, the County Council and the CCG to carry out a review of DFGs and adaptations in Cambridgeshire led by the County Council as a project within the Older People's Accommodation Strategy. The review was initiated in early 2016 at the same time as the Government announced a significant increase in the DFG Capital Allocation. In Cambridgeshire this meant an increase in capital allocation from £1.9m to £3.4m. The DFG Review was completed in September 2016 and resulted in three key findings:
- New services are needed that consider people's needs in context, including early conversations around housing options including and planning for the longer term.
 - Existing services will need to adapt to support a growing population
 - Funding arrangements across the system will need to change to support a shift in focus

11. A key recommendation of the Review was to develop a joint policy across the partners to allow the more flexible use of the increased DFG Capital Allocation in line with the BCF focusing on delivering health priorities and outcomes. The allocation cannot be spent more flexibly without the adoption of a Policy.
12. The Council is actively working with key stakeholders including the five district authorities to formulate a joint policy which will provide consistency and enable the flexibility where funds allow.
13. The Joint Housing Adaptations Agreement provides a framework from which the districts will work towards developing a Joint Policy. The Agreement proposes that any new policy should make provision for the following elements:

New Joint Policy	Existing SCDC Policy
Mandatory DFG – with a recommendation to fast-track standard adaptations	Mandatory DFG
Top Up Grant	Not available
Disabled Persons Relocations Grants	Available through Discretionary DFG
Special Purpose Grants	Mostly available through Home Repairs Assistance

14. The provision of a top up grant within the new policy would be an additional element to the grants offered at present by the Council. In some cases the cost of works eligible for a Disabled Facilities Grant amounts to more than the maximum amount of grant (currently £30,000). In other cases the applicant is liable under the means test to make a contribution. The County Council and some district housing authorities have previously provided top-up grants or loans in certain circumstances in order to provide funds to enable the works to go ahead and therefore meet client's need. Currently the Council will seek alternative methods for topping up the fund, such as charitable organisations, crowd funding, county council. Given the additional funding through the BCF the Housing Adaptations Agreement is seeking agreement that the district councils would make provision from the DFG Capital Allocation for Top-up Grants or loans, and that the County Council's Social Care responsibility towards meeting the needs of vulnerable households will be included, but with the decisions being made locally by the district councils. The detail of the element of the Policy will be jointly agreed between the district partners and the County Council.
15. It is anticipated that the new Joint Policy will be completed by April 2018 for approval by the Housing Portfolio Holder.
16. In the meantime, the Housing Portfolio Holder is asked to consider the approval to use the Better Care Fund Allocation for DFGs to support Top Up Grants should the need arise between now and the implementation of the new Joint Policy, subject to funding being available.
17. As the Council received an additional £53,963 from the BCF in 2017/18, It is not anticipated that South Cambridgeshire District Council would be required to contribute further funds to the budget. As an average, the cost of top up grants funded by the County Council have amounted to circa £20,000 per annum per district.

Options

<p>Option A – To approve the Joint Housing Adaptations Agreement (Appendix A) that provides a framework from which the districts will work towards developing a Joint Adaptations Policy</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>A Joint Policy will provide consistency across the districts and the flexibility to enhance services where funding is available</p>
<p>Option B – To approve, as an interim before the Joint Policy is agreed, to allow the flexibility within the Council’s existing policies to provide for ‘top up’ funding where necessary and subject to available funding.</p>	<p>Reasons for Approval: Given the additional funding provided through the BCF for DFGs, it is not anticipated that the Council will be required to contribute any additional funds.</p>
<p>Option C – To reject the proposals within the Housing Adaptations Agreement</p>	<p>Reasons for Refusal: This would not be in the spirit of the wider remit of the Better Care Fund and Health & Wellbeing Board.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>

Implications

18. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered: -

There are no significant implications.

Effect on Strategic Aims

Aim 1 – Living Well

19. Supporting our communities to remain in good health whilst continuing to protect the natural and built environment.

Background Papers

Cambridgeshire Health & Wellbeing Strategy – (p.18 & p.30)

Report Author: Julie Fletcher – Head of Housing Strategy
Telephone: (01954) 713352

Agenda Item 5

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Housing Portfolio Holder

19 October 2017

AUTHOR/S: Director of Housing

AFFORDABLE HOMES DRAFT SERVICE PLAN 2018/19

Purpose

1. To provide the Housing Portfolio Holder with an update on the revised Affordable Homes Service Plan for 2018/19
2. This is not a key decision

Recommendations

3. That the Housing Portfolio Holder endorses the service plan actions identified in this report and suggests additions to or amendments to these service plan actions if required.

Reasons for recommendations

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.

Background

4. The existing Affordable Homes Service Plan includes a number of service plan projects intended to run over a two or three year timeframe. This is therefore a refresh of the service plan designed mainly to introduce new service plan actions to address external challenges.
5. The Affordable Homes service plan differs to other service plans within the Council as it is closely linked to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan. The introduction of the self financing regime for council housing from April 2012 means that a separate 30 year HRA Business Plan is in place from 2012/13 onwards.
6. There is also a linked Asset Management Strategy that sets out the Council's approach to managing its homes and other properties, which also covers a 30 year period. Arising from the Asset Management Strategy, the Five Year Housing Maintenance Plan sets out the planned expenditure to maintain the Council's homes and forms part of the HRA Business Plan.
7. The service plan is set in the context of the overarching Housing Strategy 2018 - 2024, which in turn is related to the sub regional housing strategy and the Combined Authority Housing Strategy. None of these related strategies are currently complete but the Housing Portfolio Holder received an Interim Housing Strategy Statement at the Portfolio Holder meeting in March 2017.

Considerations

8. The service plan addresses the key Councils key aims and actions from the Corporate Plan 2016 - 2020, as well as projects contained within the Business Efficiency and Improvement Plan.
9. Government policy changes such as the reduction in rents, changes to welfare benefits and the proposal to sell council houses to pay for the extension of the Right to Buy to housing associations also require specific activity to model the impacts and to identify possible mitigations for both the Council and for the Council's tenants.

Options

10. The Portfolio Holder is requested to consider these proposed actions and to suggest changes or additions where required.

Table 1 Proposed Service Plan themes 2017 -18

	Topic	Budget implication	Notes	Lead Officer
1	Housing Strategy 2018 - 2023	No extra budget required	Process of review underway but will be completed in 2018 to allow time for details of new Government policy changes to be firmed up and for work to be completed to align the strategy with Cambridge City.	Julie Fletcher
2	Community impact & community safety	Depends on outcome of communal room review Establishment of new health & safety compliance officer	Implementation of Communal Room Review Health & safety internal review (HRA)	Anita Goddard
3	Homelessness mitigation	Extra budget of £200k requested in financial planning process	Implementation project to deliver requirements of Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. A range of activities to be considered to try and offset the worst of the impacts of policy on homelessness as identified by the new homelessness strategy. To include consideration of an extra hostel or similar provision. Implementation project for new Shire Homes service. To ensure that project is kept under close scrutiny during first full 12 months of operation including ensuring appropriate support is in place to deal with arising issues.	Heather Wood & Sue Carter

4	Housing & planning policy review and updates	No extra budget required	Work closely with Planning to update the Affordable Housing Special Planning Document following expected adoption of new Local Plan. Consideration to be given to planning arrangements needed to support self build, Community Land Trusts and modern methods of construction.	Julie Fletcher
5	CA housing delivery	Budget to come from CA	Partnership project to deliver new affordable homes across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough	Stephen Hills
6	Options for new housing delivery	No extra budget required at this stage	Project to review and consolidate the Council's arrangements for delivering new build homes including., the HRA programme, innovative GF schemes, self build and work within the HDA	Gill Anderton

Implications

11. Financial

There are financial dimensions to all of these projects but there is no significant new funding required at this stage other than that indicated in table 1 for homelessness duties. Any formal request for resources will be made through the Council's financial approval route.

12. Legal

A number of these projects will require specialist input from our legal services.

13. Staffing

There are no specific staffing requirements arising from these projects at this stage.

14. Risk Management

Risk logs will be developed for each project.

15. Equality and Diversity

Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out on each policy change as it is developed.

Consultations (including the Youth Council)

16. The final version of the service plan will be produced with the help of the Tenant Participation Group and the Youth Council.

Effect on Strategic Aims

17. The Affordable Homes service plan is important for all three of the Council's main strategic aims.

Conclusions / Summary

18. Table 1, contains a draft service plan actions list that will be incorporated within the final form of the Affordable Homes service plan to be brought back to the Housing Portfolio Holder in March 2017.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

None

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