

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter:	Cambs Home Improvement Agency – Performance Report and extension of shared service agreement
Meeting/Date:	Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Customers and Partnerships) – 7 th March 2019. Cabinet – 21 st March 2019
Executive Portfolio:	Councillor Ryan Fuller – Executive Councillor for Housing, Planning and Economic Development
Report by:	Andy Moffat, Head of Development
Ward(s) affected:	All

Executive Summary:

This report provides an update on the performance of the Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency (CHIA) and provides details of the proposed extension to the shared service agreement for the service.

The shared service operates across Huntingdonshire, South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City, and the agreement between these 3 Councils has been operating since 2012. It has overseen the provision of more than 2000 Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) for residents in Huntingdonshire during that time.

The CHIA Manager has recently implemented a performance improvement plan which has transformed the service and reduced the time taken to complete a DFG improving the service provided to customers.

The shared service agreement remains extensively unchanged but will be updated to take account of General Data Protection Regulation and ICT support now being provided by 3C ICT. It is recommended that the agreement should be extended for a further 3 years.

Recommendation:

That Cabinet agrees that the shared service agreement is extended for a further 3 years with authority delegated to the Head of Development in consultation with the portfolio holder for Housing, Planning and Economic Development to finalise the agreement.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the performance of Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency (CHIA) and to seek authorisation to extend the shared service agreement with CHIA for a further 3 years.

2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY/BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The shared service agreement has been operating since 2012 and each year Overview and Scrutiny Panel has been provided with an update on the performance of CHIA to ensure that it is operating effectively and providing a valuable service to residents in Huntingdonshire.
- 2.2 The current shared service agreement is due to expire on 31st March 2019 and Officers are seeking a mandate from Cabinet to extend the agreement.

3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED/ANALYSIS

- 3.1 HDC could choose not to renew the shared service agreement with the CHIA, but HDC will still have a duty to provide DFGs. If the contract is not extended, the number of DFG applications might decrease as residents have to submit applications, appoint contractors and oversee works themselves. It is more likely however that a third party will fill the void potentially charging higher fees than the CHIA and therefore further increasing the pressure on the Council's DFG budget.
- 3.2 Other options include returning the service in-house, which would not have the same economies of scale or resilience as the shared service, or extending the agreement for a different period of time.
- 3.3 For the last 2 years, the Government has made additional capital grant funding available for authorities who can confirm they can spend it in that same financial year. The shared service has enabled Huntingdonshire, South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City Councils to each receive their allocations and by agreement then use them to fund DFGs where there is the greatest need.

4. PERFORMANCE OF CAMBRIDGESHIRE HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCY

- 4.1 During the last full year (2017/18), CHIA assisted 9308 residents living in Huntingdonshire, South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge to enable them to stay in their homes. They oversaw the completion of 396 grant funded jobs and 7 non-grant funded jobs. They received 498 referrals from Occupational Therapists and supported residents to apply for 433 DFGs.
- 4.2 The performance of CHIA has improved since Autumn 2017 when a new manager was appointed and an improvement plan was introduced. The time taken to complete a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) has reduced considerably meaning that people are now receiving the support they need much sooner. The average time taken between the date of referral to practical completion for jobs less than £10K and more than £10K have reduced from over 40 weeks and 57 weeks respectively in Q4 of 2017/18 to 18 weeks and 36 weeks respectively in Q3 of 2018/19. A Lean review, new contracts and new pathway trials are all helping further improve the efficiency of the service.
- 4.3 The top 3 types of works in terms of numbers completed are level access showers, access works (door openers/ramps) and stairlifts.

4.4 The CHIA's customer base is wide ranging. DFGs help meet the needs of older people, physically disabled adults, those with learning disabilities, physically disabled children and ex service personnel.

4.5 The CHIA also referred customers to other services to receive support and assistance including the saferhomes handyperson service, fire safety checks, housing needs teams, welfare benefits advice, occupational therapists and adult care services.

5. SHARED SERVICE AGREEMENT

5.1 The existing shared service agreement has been in place for 3 years and is due to expire on 31st March 2019.

5.2 The CHIA is resilient and is operating with a small rolling revenue surplus despite the removal of revenue funding from Cambs County Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group.

5.3 The Head of Development is Huntingdonshire District Council's representative on the CHIA Board. The draft agreement remains extensively unchanged but has been updated to take account of General Data Protection Regulation and ICT support now being provided by 3C ICT.

6. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

6.1 The comments of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel will be included in this section prior to its consideration by the Cabinet.

7. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS

7.1 The CHIA is now performing well and is a valued service by customers. The percentage of customers who state that they are satisfied with the service provided is consistently in the 90%^s. In Q1 and Q2 of 2018/19 91% of the 46 who responded (a 46% response rate) stated that they were satisfied with the service provided.

7.2 As stated above, if the agreement is not extended and the service is not provided, the number of DFGs applications might decrease and fewer residents would be supported to continue to live safely in their homes, or more likely a third party will fill the void potentially charging higher fees than the HIA and therefore further increasing the pressure on the Council's DFG budget.

8. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN/TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

8.1 Cabinet is requested to delegate authority to the Head of Development to finalise the extension of the shared service agreement by 31st March 2019.

9. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND / OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

9.1 The Huntingdonshire Corporate Plan 2018-2022 includes a vision to 'support people to improve their health and wellbeing'. There is a performance indicator linked to this vision which is to monitor 'the average time between dates of referral for Disabled Facilities Grants to practical completion for minor jobs up to £10k'. One of the five themes in the Annual Governance Statement is Morbidity/Growing numbers of years of ill health – impacting on people's ability to be self-reliant and generating additional cost through support needs.

10. CONSULTATION

10.1 Consultation with CHIA Board has been ongoing.

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 3C Legal has confirmed that agreement is comprehensive with regard to risk and indemnities and the 3C Information Governance Team has also amended the document with regard to last year's changes to the General Data Protection Regulations.

12. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

12.1 The CHIA is funded by fee income – it charges 15% fees on all works completed – and a small revenue contribution by top-slicing the 3 Councils Better Care Fund allocations. No revenue funding is provided by HDC. The 15% fees is lower than in East Cambs (20%) and Fenland (27%) meaning the DFG budget can go further, and in Huntingdonshire it means the Council's capital contribution is less than would be the case if fees were higher. As set out above, if the agreement is not extended and the service is not provided, the number of DFGs applications and therefore grants might decrease, or more likely a third party will fill the void potentially charging higher fees than the HIA and therefore further increasing the pressure on the Council's DFG budget.

13. HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

12.1 The support provided by CHIA to residents enables them to remain living safely in their homes. Adaptations can reduce hospital admissions and delay moves into residential care.

14. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

14.1 The CHIA is operating effectively and is supporting hundreds of people every year to receive the adaptations they require in a cost effective way. It is recommended that Head of Development in consultation with the portfolio holder for Housing, Planning and Economic Development is delegated authority to extend the shared service agreement for a further 3 years. A 3 year period is considered appropriate as it provides a degree of certainty for the service whilst enabling the position to be reviewed in 3 years' times if circumstances change. The Agreement also enables any party to terminate the Agreement by giving notice – 6 months' notice if such notice is given between 1st April and 30th September, or terminating at the end of the next financial year if such notice is given between 1st October and 31st March.

15. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 – Draft shared service agreement

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