

CABINET

DATE	16/06/2021
REPORT OF	Councillor Callum Proctor Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Housing and Tourism
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	Sharon Wroot, Executive Director, Environment, Economy and Resources
SUBJECT	Housing Related Support Award Recommendation
STATUS	Open with the exception of Appendix A which is exempt under paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972
FORWARD PLAN REF NO.	CB 06/21/02

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

The delivery of Housing Related Support (HRS) contributes to the Council's key outcomes of Sustainable Communities, Health, Wellbeing, Feel Safe and are Safe, by enabling access to safe and affordable housing options. HRS provides individuals and their families access to a range of support packages within the community to equip them to live independently and to secure and sustain long term housing within North East Lincolnshire. In addition, the support provided to older people promotes independent living in the community, reducing social isolation and the demand upon other public and welfare services, such as Adult and Children services. The accommodation and support packages provided through the delivery of HRS provides a best value in reducing the demand upon other public services across our communities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The HRS provides individuals and their families access to a range of support packages within the community to equip them to live independently and to secure and sustain long term housing within North East Lincolnshire.

The Council's current Housing Related Support contracts end on the 30th June 2021, with no option to extend. To ensure continuity of service provision, Cabinet approved the commencement of a procurement exercise on the 9th December 2020 for the replacement arrangements subject to Cabinet approval in connection with the award. A Light Touch Open procurement process has subsequently been delivered under the Light Touch Regime in compliance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. A summary of the outcome of the procurement exercise is contained in Appendix A.

The value of the whole life budget from 05/07/2021 to 04/07/2026, for the revised contract is £7,322,635.

Through contract efficiencies and robust monitoring procedures, the estimated saving over the 5 years of the contract is £550,000.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

1. approves the recommendation to award the framework to the preferred tenderers detailed in Appendix A.
2. delegates authority to the Executive Director, Environment, Economy and Resources, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Housing and Tourism to ensure that all necessary actions in relation to the award are carried out; and
3. authorises the Assistant Director Law, Governance and Assets (Monitoring Officer) to execute and complete all requisite legal documentation.

REASONS FOR DECISION

The decision allows the Council to award the framework for Housing Related Support for vulnerable single People, couples and families to the preferred tenderers identified in Appendix A and enter into call-off contracts with these tenderers for the provision of Housing Related Support to vulnerable single people, couples and families.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

- 1.1 The Council's current Housing Related Support (HRS) contracts were awarded in July 2016 and end on the 30th June 2021, with no option to extend.
- 1.2 Cabinet approved the commencement of the procurement of replacement arrangements on the 9th December 2020.
- 1.3 The aim of the HRS programme is to support individuals and families who are at risk of becoming homeless and provide support to prevent and relieve homelessness.
- 1.4 The HRS programme is currently split over nine contracts relating to the delivery of:
 1. Accommodation and floating support for offenders
 2. Accommodation based support for multi and complex needs
 3. Accommodation based support for over 25s
 4. Accommodation and floating support for victims of domestic abuse
 5. Accommodation based support for young people
 6. Floating support for young people
 7. Floating support for singles and families
 8. Floating support for older people
 9. Floating support for adults with mental health
- 1.5 Since delivery of current contracts commenced in 2016, a total of 7,695 referrals have been received to access support via HRS up to 31st March 2021. A total of 3,125 support plans have been successfully completed.

- 1.6 All of the current contracts are fully utilised all year round. All contracts are now at full capacity with some providers now being over subscribed to access HRS support. A total of 1,217 open support plans remain active and open to access HRS support as of 31st March 2021.
- 1.7 Despite the support being provided, the numbers of people presenting to the Council for housing advice and assistance has remained consistently high.
- 1.8 The Council continue to face increasing challenges to meet the needs and demands of those who recurringly present as homeless and have high or complex support needs.
- 1.9 Domestic abuse services have not been procured as part of this procurement exercise. They will instead be considered as part of the Council's new commissioning plan to ensure adherence to the new Domestic Abuse Safer Accommodation statutory duty.
- 1.10 The Council published the tender under the Light Touch Regime, using a Light Touch Open Process.
- 1.11 The opportunity was published on Find a Tender, Contracts Finder and YORtender.
- 1.12 The procurement was conducted in line with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.
- 1.13 Members have been provided with a summary of the outcome of the procurement exercise in Appendix A.

2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- 2.1 By commissioning services to meet the complex and intersecting needs of the client group and other vulnerable people it is envisaged this will impact positively to reduce instances of cyclical homelessness.
- 2.2 No human rights or equality and diversity issues are impacted.
- 2.3 The contracts currently deliver HRS across the Borough at competitive rates. Investment into this area has proven to reduce the demands, both physical and financial, on other local authority, social care and health services. Value for money has been tested through the running of the procurement process, and the preferred tenderers have been identified as the Most Economically Advantageous Tenderers.
- 2.4 The delivery of HRS across the borough enables the Council and its key partners to support our most vulnerable residents to access accommodation and support to prevent homelessness, rough sleeping and sofa-surfing. Additionally, the support provided is aimed to improve individual's financial resilience, supporting their ability and confidence in maintaining tenancy arrangements. Alongside the housing support being provided, providers are also offering and delivering support to improve individuals' health and wellbeing. This holistic approach is particularly important for those suffering social isolation and loneliness.
- 2.5 During the period in which Covid-19 restrictions were implemented, there was a directive from Central Government to accommodate and support

rough sleepers, classified as a vulnerable group, to ensure they were not left at risk of contracting the virus. Following the easing of lockdown arrangements, services have worked together to support those who were accommodated to ensure they did not return to rough sleeping. The information collected during this period has helped the Council to shape the future provision of HRS and develop further the holistic, person-centred approach to supporting those with complex needs, which we believe is important to prevent homelessness and reduce the demand on other public services and outlets.

2.6 The revised contract changes will offer an opportunity to provide:

- Consistent, preventative housing related support
- Dedicated support time
- Increased communication between Providers and the Authority
- Improved data and information to inform commissioning in future
- A consistent approach to matching client needs and most suitable Provider
- Consistent quality of support and accommodation across all providers
- Simplified information sharing - one information sharing agreement that all Providers must sign and adhere to.
- Reduced housing benefit expenditure to non-Registered Providers of accommodation

Improved outcomes, with specified milestones tracked and recorded, and robust support plans in place

3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

3.1 Not award

To not award would result in the delivery of HRS ceasing, with no planning or preparations in place to ensure ongoing support is provided to those who currently access both accommodation and floating support packages funded via HRS. This would lead to a significant increase in the number of people approaching the Council for further assistance in relation to their housing and independence needs, potentially also resulting in some people losing tenancies, placing them at increased risk of becoming homeless. Additionally, by removing floating support arrangements a significant number of households may quickly reach crisis point, requiring the involvement and support of welfare and public services. We would anticipate an increase in sofa-surfing and rough sleeping across the borough.

3.2 Explore options to extend the current contract

The current contract is due to cease on 30th June 2021. As it will be 5 years since the last HRS programme was procured, the needs of those accessing HRS have continued to change over the delivery of programme. Thus, the current specifications for service delivery are not meeting the needs of those who need support. There are no contract extensions available as the procured contractual term was 5 years, to extend beyond this is against Procurement legislation and would leave the Council open to legal challenge.

3.3 Explore options to deliver an in-house programme

The Council does not have the resources to deliver an internal programme of HRS. Additionally, the time and resources required to develop an in-house programme is not achievable.

3.4 Explore options to terminate delivery of programme

The Council has maintained its commitment in funding the support offered to individuals to access HRS. The removal of such a programme across the Borough would create a significant increase in demand on services in the public and welfare sectors for those most in need. Removing the HRS would remove the frontline face to face / direct services for those residents who may be at risk of heading into crisis. HRS's frontline service reduces demand and the cost burden on key council services, including Adult and Children Services. Removal or significant reduction in HRS funding would also add additional pressures on the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector, who deal with debt, budgeting, health, welfare, education and housing issues, which are already stretched due to current levels of demand.

4. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 There are some positive and potential negative reputational implications for the Council in relation to changing the specification for those receiving support, particularly older people.

Anyone, regardless of age, will continue to be supported under the new contracts if they require housing related support to maintain or access and secure accommodation. The Council is conscious that the older age group (60+) formerly received support in sheltered schemes by their social landlord and, when this ceased, the contract arrangement was set up to provide support via HRS floating support services.

In many cases it is not housing related support that older people require, so we have arranged to grant local organisations funding to provide befriending services. Officers will ensure issues of loneliness and isolation are considered at transition from the current service, and anyone in need of these types of services will be supported by Officers to access them.

4.2 The revised contract changes will deliver improved outcomes for clients and be available to anyone requiring housing related support from the age of 16+

5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 The recommendations outlined within the report and Appendix A will support the Council's key financial objective to shift our financial resource, to support delivery of the Council's vision.

5.2 Through contract efficiencies and robust monitoring procedures, the estimated saving over the 5 years of the support contracts is £550,000; £150,000 in-year saving and £100,000 yearly, years 2 - 4.

5.3 The delivery of the contracts will continually promote a change in culture and lifestyle behaviour, and as the right conditions are being created and the environment changes, then the numbers of those in need should reduce.

- The HRS contracts will be funded through the Council Core Budget as part of the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

- There will be no effect on revenue and capital expenditure.
- There is no call on Council reserves.
- Value for money will be demonstrated by reduced numbers of those who face repeat homelessness and improved social capital. By focusing on those vulnerable people most in need of support, pressure and demand on other Council and partner statutory services will reduce.
- By insisting that any accommodation Providers are/or commit to become Registered Providers over the next 2 years, there is an anticipated saving of up to £450,000 per annum in housing benefit subsidy recovery.

6. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 To enable HRS to be delivered across the borough, there is a need for support workers to travel to people's homes and for those accessing support to travel to provider sessions, where hosted within the community. A variety of transportation methods are used including the use of personal cars, bikes, public transport, and walking.
- 6.2 As part of the HRS delivery providers support and encourage clients to access and use public transport to build their independence skills. Where health and wellbeing are highlighted as a key area requiring support, plans are also developed to encourage clients to walk and cycle to appointments they have within the borough.
- 6.3 Where clients are accommodated within shared housing or hostel settings, providers have continued to develop their recycling programmes and raise awareness with client groups regarding the importance of recycling and how to recycle properly, in line with local collections.
- 6.4 Providers will ensure potential thermal comfort issues are reported to the Home Improvement Team and appropriate action taken, where required to improve the energy efficiency of the dwelling.

7. CONSULTATION WITH SCRUTINY

- 7.1 Portfolio holder briefing carried out, no scrutiny implications.
- 7.2 Briefing undertaken with Communities Scrutiny Panel Chair on 23rd April 2021

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The procurement exercise helps ensure the Council achieves best value for money in its provision of services. The cost of the contracts will be met from within the existing service budget envelope.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The above report and recommendations are consistent with the will of Cabinet in

that on 9th December 2020 Cabinet approved the procurement exercise as outlined, subject to award being reserved to Cabinet.

10. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct HR implications contained within this report

11. WARD IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Housing Related Support can be accessed across the borough impacting upon all wards.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1 [Cabinet report 9th December 2020](#).

13. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

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