

## **Divisions Affected -**

### **Cabinet Member for Public Health & Inequalities**

**4 July 2023**

### **Housing and Health Single point of contact service. Report by Corporate Director for Public Health & Wellbeing**

## **RECOMMENDATION**

1. **The Cabinet Member is RECOMMENDED to**
  - a) Approve the commission of the Housing and Health Single Point of Contact (HSPoC) via the appropriate procurement route to the value of £520,000 over four years and up to £1.5 million.
  - b) delegate authority to the Director of Public Health in consultation with the Head of Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer to award and complete the contract for the Housing and Health Single Point of Contact as referred to in this report following the conclusion of a procurement exercise pursuant to the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

## **Executive Summary**

2. Good housing is a wider determinant and enabler of good health. Housing that is poorly equipped to cope with extremes of temperature and with poor energy efficiency is a cross cutting agenda which includes housing and the environment, related to global warming and air quality, indoor and outdoor. Poor housing conditions are often experienced by those with low income and as a result are an agenda that cuts across County Council Directorates, the City and District Councils and the NHS
3. NICE guidance (NG6)<sup>1</sup> recommends the commissioning of a single point of contact for housing condition related issues. A telephone advice service (Better Housing Better Health) has been running for over ten years, with the addition of home visit support being added to the offer in the past two years as part of a pilot project.
4. The service was provided through a grant, funded in partnership with the District and City Councils. The newer home visiting service being jointly funded between Health and the County Council as a contract. The contract and grants are due to expire on the 28<sup>th</sup> October 2023 and in line with contract procedure rules to continue the service, the service needs to be procured.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng6>

5. The Public Health Divisional Leadership Team have agreed to continue the funding of the service, in partnership with the City and District Councils, for a further two years. The core service will be for £60,000 to cover telephone advice and a further £70,000 for home visits. The contract also includes provision for an increase in capacity of telephone advice and home visits, as well as other supplementary services.
6. **Business Need** – Fuel poverty affects the most vulnerable in society and widens health inequalities. It is proposed for the HSPoC to aspire to meet 5% of need based on the predicted 2023 Fuel Poverty rate. The core funding proposed will provide capacity to support approximately 2.5% of the fuel poor residents in Oxfordshire. The remaining 2.5% of need will be met by exploring other funding sources. The contract will be designed to be flexible to the changing funding opportunities.
7. **Strategic Commissioning Priorities** – the service would contribute to six of the County Councils strategic priorities and also the objectives of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
  - Put action to address the climate emergency at the heart of our work. The service would be tackling poor energy efficiency and contribute to carbon reduction.
  - Tackle inequalities in Oxfordshire. Poor quality housing affects certain groups more than others, widening health inequalities.
  - Prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents. Quality housing underpins good health.
  - Support carers and the social care system. Those most vulnerable to poor housing are likely to need support from carers and the social care system.
  - Create opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential. Poor housing negatively impacts children's outcomes.
  - Work with local businesses and partners for environmental, economic and social benefit. Reducing poor quality housing which is energy inefficient will benefit the environment and involves working with a wide range of partners, such as the NHS and the VCSE sector.
8. The Commercial Case includes the result of a market testing and public and stakeholder survey. The market testing event saw at least five organisations interested in the scheme. The current provider was interested in the tender and positive about the draft specification and financial envelope outlined. The other organisations were telephone contact centres without the energy efficiency and home visiting experience. The public and professional survey had extensive coverage from social media advertising and newsletters. Feedback showed there was a need for a service, related to cold and damp homes and residents needing support to source help to resolve issues in their homes.

## Procurement and Contract Overview

9. The OCC procurement route has comprised a single stage process advertised in OJEU under the 'Light Touch Regime' of the new Public Procurement Regulations. It used the Council's e-tendering portal, organisations were invited to tender for the provision of the service.
10. In order to meet the need to manage the Council's Procurement rules and service provision, the tender must go out by the end of April 2023 in order to have an operational service running for the 29<sup>th</sup> October 2023. The tender went out on the 28<sup>th</sup> April 2023 and closes on the 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2023. Evaluation of tenders are scheduled to be completed during the week commencing 19<sup>th</sup> June 2023 and clarification interviews in the week of the 26<sup>th</sup> June 2023.
11. A paper recommending the preferred supplier is to be presented during early July, with the standstill period of ten days and signing of the contract to be completed by the end of July. This allows three months for any new provider to set up the service and for the current provider to transition clients across to the new provider and establish functional contacts with referral partners.

## Financial Implications

12. The Contract is for 2 years, plus a further two years as an optional extension.
13. The total value of the core contract will be £130,000, excluding VAT per annum. The Public Health grant will cover £80,000 per year for 2 years. The balance of £50,000 will be funded by the City and Districts, £10,000 each per annum for 2 years.
14. The additional services or capacity will only be provided where funding is available in the public health budget or from other sources. The additional service options may have the value of approximately £240,000 a year.
15. The approximate total value across the full four-year life of the contract, could therefore be up to £1,480,000.
16. The figure of approximately £1,500,000 is based on possible typical level of funds being made available from other sources, in addition to the existing core funding (£130,000). Historically, in 2022 £210,000 of funds were allocated from the Councils Emergency Welfare Budget and in 2023 a further £240,000 has been allocated to this scheme. Other funding sources based on the pilot project between 2021 and 2023 included £50,000 for 12 months from the Better Care Fund, the then Clinical Commissioning Group, now Integrated Care Board and the governments COVID Outbreak Management Fund totalling £150,000.

Comments checked by:

Stephen Rowles, Assistant Finance Business Partner, Team: Adults and Public Health BP Team Email: Stephen.Rowles@Oxfordshire.gov.uk (Finance)

## Legal Implications

17. It is intended that the services will be procured competitively in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules. Provided commissioners comply with such rules, there are no legal implications in the proposed course of action.

Comments checked by:

Jonathan Pool, Solicitor, Contracts (Legal Services)

[jonathan.pool@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:jonathan.pool@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

### Staff Implications

18. The service will be contract managed within existing staffing and funded out of the Public Health grant. The Healthy Place Shaping Team will carry out the procurement process (within programme allocations already agreed), with the support of partners. Procurement and Legal staff time will also be required to complete the procurement to the tight timescales of service commencement on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

### Equality & Inclusion Implications

19. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed. Any eligibility criteria introduced to manage excess demand will focus on households with
- Low/no income
  - Those with health condition
  - Those with a child under 16 in the first instance and those under 5 in the second instance. Or a combination of the above if demand continues to outstrip capacity.

### Sustainability Implications

20. The provision of the service will contribute to the Councils Climate ambitions. The service is aimed at reducing energy usage and directing people to available grants for energy efficiency measures such as cavity wall and loft insulation.

### Risk Management

21. The table below outlines the risks, mitigations and benefits and opportunities

<b>Risks and mitigations (shown in italics)</b>	<b>Benefits and opportunities</b>
<p>Public Health is seen as owning this agenda due to leading the procurement process. May risk funding dropping away at the end of 2 years.</p> <p><i>Partnership agreement drawn up with current partners and comprehensive communication with other partners is maintained.</i></p>	<p>Public health is able to raise its profile on cross cutting agendas and its response to the cost of living crisis.</p>
<p>It may not be possible to secure the commitment of all the Districts and City Councils to commit to the same amount of funding, for the same length of time, for the same type of offer, beyond two years.</p>	<p>The service provides a platform for highlighting the importance of housing as a determinant of health and creates an opportunity for not widening any inequalities in an otherwise affluent County.</p>

<p><i>Continued high quality involvement and engagement with District and City Councils during the lifetime of the contract.</i></p>	
<p>The Districts and City Councils may subsequently pull out of any multi year agreement.</p> <p><i>Partnership agreement with City and District Councils to be drawn up to be explicit about the nature of their contribution to the procurement.</i></p> <p><i>The Contract is written in a way to allow the reduction of service in the event of reduction in funding available.</i></p>	<p>Public health is recognised as showing leadership in addressing the wider determinants of health and climate change.</p>
<p>It is unknown as to whether the Better Care Fund, Integrated Care Board, Adult Social Care, Environment &amp; Place, government or charitable funds would financially commit to the service (and to what value and for how long).</p> <p><i>Funding for a core service has been secured for 4 years and the contract has been written to allow for additional activity to be undertaken dependent on additional funds being secured.</i></p>	<p>Appealing to a variety of agendas may secure more funding and achieve greater reach, impact and stability in the future.</p>
<p>There may be restrictive and poorly aligned terms and conditions related to government grants and charitable funds to contribute to the Single Point of Contact.</p> <p><i>There is scope to vary the contract if necessary to adjust to any restrictions.</i></p>	<p>The service supports delivery of a number of OCC's strategic priorities as well as addressing the needs of NHS services to reduce demand for acute care</p>
<p>Substantial Public Health staff time is required to secure agreement through to completion. Opportunity costs on other agendas.</p> <p><i>Improving the quality of housing conditions will support delivery of OCC's strategic objectives; as such this needs to be a priority.</i></p>	

## Consultations

22. Communication has been ongoing with the following stakeholders.

- Between City and Districts as core partners, through a monthly Steering Group meeting
- With Adult Social Care and Better Care Fund holders
- With the Integrated Care Board.

### Key Dates / Next Steps

23. The Tendering exercise must be completed by 28<sup>th</sup> July 2023 to allow any new provider to adequately prepare for a service start date of 29<sup>th</sup> October 2023.
24. As this is a key decision and delegated decision steps will be taken to secure appropriate approvals with the council throughout the process including Finance, Procurement and Legal approval.

### NAME

Ansaf Azhar, Director of Public Health and Community Safety

Contact Officer: Rosie Rowe, Head of Healthy Place Shaping,  
[Rosie.rowe@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Rosie.rowe@oxfordshire.gov.uk)  
15<sup>th</sup> June 2023