

Divisions Affected – N/A

CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE

19 September 2023

Partnership Agreement with Cherwell District Council, Oxford City and West Oxfordshire District Council for the Provision of Home Improvement Agency

Report by Corporate Director of Adult Services

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Cabinet Member is RECOMMENDED to** approve the individual funding partnership agreements with Oxfordshire County Council (the council) and Cherwell District Council (CDC), Oxford City Council (OCC) and West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) for the provision of Home Improvement Agency (HIA).

Executive Summary

2. The partnership agreements for the provision of Home Improvement Agency (HIA) supports the requirement for a statutory service to implement Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) in Cherwell, Oxford City and West Oxfordshire.
3. The HIA service facilitates with the repair, adaptation, and improvement of Resident's homes for, so that the person who meet the required criteria can remain in their own home in a safe, secure, and accessible environment. The HIA service provides information, advice, and guidance for home adaptations, keeping safe at home and grants available which may help them with home improvements. The HIA service supports with facilitating hospital discharges and where possible preventing or reducing hospital admissions.
4. The local housing authorities in the city and district councils manage the DFG which are allocated by central government. The HIA services for Oxford City, West Oxfordshire and Cherwell are delivered in-house in the city and district councils.
5. Disabled Facilities Grants are available for people of all ages who meet the required criteria to help them live in their own home in a safe, secure, in and accessible environment.

6. The partnership agreements for provision of HIA services with CDC, OCC, and WODC are for a three-year period with an option to extend for a further two years.

7. Decision table

Board	Date	Decision
Adult Social Care Directorate Leadership Team	24 January 2022	Agreed
Key decision at Cabinet	19 September 2023	

8. This recommendation was approved by Adult Social Care Directorate Leadership Team on 24 January 2022 and enacted from 01 April 2022. As part of a recent review of decision making it has been identified that this is a Key Decision in line with Oxfordshire County Council’s Constitution and so is presented for ratification by Cabinet.

Exempt Information

9. Not applicable.

Background

10. The Home Improvement Agency (HIA) service aims to enable Oxfordshire Residents who meets the required criteria to maintain their independence, health, and wellbeing at home for the foreseeable future. This is achieved through the repair, adaptation, and improvement of Resident’s homes, so that the person can remain in their own home in a safe, secure, and accessible environment.
11. There is a statutory responsibility upon the council to deliver the service. The service enables people to remain safe and independent within their own homes for longer, which in turn reduces demand for more expensive health and social care intervention.
12. The service is delivered as part of broader Health and Social Care and Housing pathways to support people in the community. As such they are governed by a framework of national legislation, policy, and guidance. The partnership arrangements support a number of key roles including the provision of Housing Occupational Therapists funded from the DFG by several of the district councils. This supports a seamless approach to service provision where assessment and allocation of DFG considers the individual’s wider housing and care needs in developing a person-centred plan to home adaptation to support independence. In the Oxfordshire Better Care Fund 2023-25, the council and partners identified the need further to develop the links between housing, care and health and the partnership agreements for the HIA are a key part of these relationships.
13. The HIA service project incorporates other areas and objectives alongside those mentioned in paragraph 10 including

- information, advice, and guidance
- supporting hospital discharges where appropriate
- preventing or reducing hospital admissions
- accessing other associated grants available to help maintain people’s health and wellbeing within their own home

Corporate Policies and Priorities

14. The partnership agreements with CDC, OCC and WODC for the provision of HIA service aligns with the following local priorities
 - a. Oxfordshire County Council’s Corporate Plan 2023-2025 includes prioritising the health and wellbeing of residents, support carers and social care system, and partnership working.
 - b. The Oxfordshire Way.
 - c. Oxfordshire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-2023
 - d. Better Care Fund (BCF)

Financial Implications

15. The partnership agreements for provision of HIA services with CDC, OCC, and WODC include fixed annual funding for the three-year period from 2022 to 2025. It should be noted that the funding may be subject to an annual inflationary uplift as specified within the partnership agreement.
16. The below table sets out the financial details in relation to the recommendation.

	Funding: 2022/23
Cherwell District Council	£144,000
Oxford City Council	£160,000
West Oxfordshire District Council	£138,000

17. The funding allocated for the partnership agreements was agreed by Adult Social Care Directorate Leadership Team in a paper submitted 24 January 2022 by the Interim Deputy Director for Housing. It should be noted that funding is allocated for all aspects of the project within the HIA service specification.

Comments checked by:

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Legal Implications

18. It is the intention to enter into individual grant funding agreements between the council and each of CDC, OCC and WODC (“the districts”). Each of the districts provide the home improvement agency services in-house and the council’s

funding is a contribution to the costs of such service. The council would argue that the grant funding agreements are therefore not service contracts under the Public Contract Regulations 2015 (as amended).

Comments checked by:

Jonathan Pool, Solicitor, Jonathan.Pool@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Staff Implications

19. The partnership agreements are with CDC, OCC, and WODC for the provision of HIA services. Therefore, there is no impact on the council's workforce as a result of the recommendation.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

20. The equality and inclusion implications have been considered. The partnership agreements for the provision of HIA services supports all people with protected characteristics who meet the required criteria.

Sustainability Implications

21. The partnership agreements have no direct impact on sustainability. However, the provision of HIA services aligns with Oxfordshire County Council strategic plan 2022 – 2025. This sets out the vision to lead positive change by working in partnership to make Oxfordshire a greener, fairer, and healthier county

Risk Management

22. The partnership agreements include an agreed specification for the delivery and expectations of the HIA Services which includes statutory requirements. Any changes to the service delivery within the specification would need to be agreed between the individual partner (CDC, OCC, WODC) and the council.
23. There are minimal risks to the recommendations which are mitigated through business continuity plans and partnership working.
24. Not agreeing to the recommendations may have a negative impact on the provision and delivery of services which are a statutory requirement. There is a risk of people who may be vulnerable not being able to access appropriate services to help repair, adapt or improve their homes. Therefore, impacting on them being able to live in a safe, secure, and accessible environment.

Consultations

25. In relation to the funding allocated in the partnership agreements, the council previously consulted with the city and district councils following a report to Adult Social Care DLT on 20 December 2021. That exercise covered a wider scope than the HIA Partnership Agreement but informed the development of the current agreement.

NAME

Karen Fuller, Interim Corporate Director for Adult Social Care

Annex: Nil.

Background papers: Nil.

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