
**DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT POLICY AND CONTRACT AWARD
HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCY**

**Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor Veronica Copeland,
Adult Social Care and Housing Portfolio**

Responsible Director - Murray Rose, Director of People

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek Cabinet approval for the award of contract for the provision of a Home Improvement Agency.
2. To seek Cabinet approval to implement the Disabled Facilities Grant Policy with immediate effect.

Summary

3. At their meeting held on the 1st of July 2013, Cabinet agreed the strategic procurement of a Home Improvement Agency to deliver Care and Repair Services.
4. The individual tender submissions were evaluated by a panel consisting of Council Officers from Commissioning, Contracting Procurement and Occupational Therapy Teams.
5. In accordance with the Procurement Strategy for this tender, submissions were evaluated on a 30% price and 70% quality ratio.
6. The Evaluation Panel recommends the award of contracts to the highest scoring Tenderer as set out in paragraph 25 of this report.
7. A formal policy is required to determine how the disabled facilities grant is implemented. Public consultation was carried out on the draft Policy between 11th September and 23rd October 2013.
8. An Equalities Impact Assessment was carried out on the impact of the Proposed Policy, the conclusions of which are outlined in paragraph 28. The Equalities Impact Assessment is attached as **Appendix 1**.

Recommendation

9. It is recommended that :-
- (a) Cabinet approve the Evaluation Panel's recommendation to award the contract as detailed in paragraph 25 of this report.
 - (b) Cabinet approve the Disabled Facilities Grant Policy (**Appendix2**) for immediate implementation.

Reasons

10. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:-
- (a) In accordance with the agreed selection criteria, the tender process identified this organisation as the most suitable contractor to achieve the outcomes identified within the service specification.
 - (b) The draft Policy clarifies and formalises existing practice.

Murray Rose
Director of Services for People

Background Papers

Cabinet Report: Review of Home Improvement Service – July 2013

Cheryl Simmons / Jeanette Crompton: Extension 6063/2327

S17 Crime and Disorder	This decision will not have an impact on Crime and Disorder
Health and Well Being	This decision will help to ensure that the current support is in place to ensure people can continue to remain living independently as possible in their own homes
Carbon Impact	This decision will not have an impact on Sustainability.
Diversity	This decision will not have an impact on Diversity
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	Those with assessed eligible needs for Adult and Children's Social Care
Budget and Policy Framework	This decision is within the current framework
Key Decision	Yes
Urgent Decision	No
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The services procured contribute to delivery of the Community Strategy – People are healthy and supported
Efficiency	Evaluating the tenders on a 70/30% ratio will ensure both efficiency and quality.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

Brief background to report

11. The provision of a Home Improvement Agency covers 3 elements:
 - (a) Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's) – Statutory
 - (b) General Advice and Information (includes Statutory Category 1 Safety Checks)
 - (c) Financial Assistance Loans – Non-Statutory.
12. A Handyperson Service (previously a 4th element of the current Home Improvement Agency contract) was decommissioned at the end of September 2013.
13. The existing contract with Four Housing (Formally known as Three Rivers Housing) expires on 31st March 2014.
14. Current practice for the administration of Disabled Facilities Grant follows best practice guidance but it was identified as part of the service review that no formal Policy exists.
15. The Council holds delegated powers under the Housing Grant Construction and Regeneration Act (HGCRA), to award Disabled Facilities Grants, and therefore a formal Policy and clear decision making process was required.
16. Over recent months a number of applications for Disabled Facilities Grant have fallen outside the above best practice guidance and have required the Local Authority to apply delegated powers to reach a decision. In addition evidence shows there is an increase in the number of applications for the grant and therefore a formal policy is required, not only to determine the application process but also to ensure that grant approvals are made based upon need and risk to independence rather than length of time on the list.
17. The procurement strategy for the new service model was approved at the March 2013 meeting of Cabinet.
18. The tender was advertised through the North East Purchasing Organisation (NEPO) Portal.

Evaluation of Tenders

19. An open tender exercise was undertaken. The Business Questionnaire was evaluated as the first part of this process and tenders were required to meet the standards in order to move onto the second stage of the evaluation.
20. Out of the 3 Tenderers who submitted a bid all were successful in the first stage of the process and their bids were then evaluated as detailed below.

21. Tenderers were asked to submit a methodology statement, for the 70% quality score in respect of the following areas:-
- (a) Fulfilment of service requirement (30 Points)
 - (b) Partnership Working (5 Points)
 - (c) Service Implementation (15 Points)
 - (d) Complaints Case Study (5 Points)
 - (e) Performance Management and Quality Assurance (10 Points)
 - (f) Appointment of Sub-contractors (20 points)
 - (g) Workforce and Service responsiveness (15 points) (70% of the score)
22. The remaining 30% of the score was allocated depending upon the price submitted.
23. A financial audit will be undertaken on the successful tender following Cabinet approval.
24. Tenderers were required to sign a Health and Safety declaration as well as completing the Health and Safety questionnaire appropriate to their organisation, unless they were accredited for health and safety with recognised bodies. Darlington Borough Council Health and Safety Unit will review this documentation to confirm compliance following Cabinet approval.
25. The scores awarded were as follows:

Contractor	Score
Contractor A	39.04%
Contractor B	75.50%
Contractor C	74.02%

26. The following recommendation is made to Cabinet in relation to the Home Improvement Agency Tender:
- The contract be awarded to Contractor B at a cost of £65,000 per annum core cost and 8% fee on completed works per annum. This contractor was the highest scoring Contractor on the aggregated scores for quality of service and on price. The contract will commence on 1 April 2014.
27. As part of the tendering process all tenderers were required to produce a service implementation plan which will be monitored closely by officers to support a smooth service transition. This will include;
- (a) Any changes in relation to TUPE
 - (b) Individual transfer of DFG applicants to the new provider
 - (c) As part of the service implementation process working groups will be established for key officers, stakeholders, and service providers to support a seamless service implementation.
28. A draft communication plan has been developed to inform key stakeholders of the planned changes.

Equalities Considerations

29. In order to consider the impact of the draft policy proposals on those applying for or likely to apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant in the future, an Equality Impact Assessment was commenced at the same time as the consultation. This builds on the previous EIA included in the Cabinet report of 1 July 2013 which considered the optional positive and negative impacts of a waiting list system with priority given to urgent applications for a DFG.
30. No further impacts were received during this extended consultation period. This may be attributed to the fact that all previous comments were acknowledged and reflected in the revised draft policy. The final draft policy is contained in **Appendix 2.**

Consultation

31. The consultation period commenced on 3 May 2013 and ran until 23 October 2013. Letters were sent to a sample of individuals who had used the Handyperson service, and all individuals who had applied for a Disabled Facilities Grant in the past 12 months. Individuals were invited to complete and return a questionnaire regarding the key principles within the draft policy and the proposed service model. The questionnaire also allowed for individuals to identify any potential negative / positive impacts.
32. The engagement methodology was supplemented by written requests to the local voluntary organisations representing the key potentially impacted protected characteristics groups of Older and Disabled People to invite a response on behalf of their members.
33. Occupational Therapists also distributed copies of impact assessment forms with accompanying pre-paid envelopes to individuals that they visited during the consultation period.
34. In addition, the draft Disabled Facilities Grants Policy and the information on the proposals were made available for comment on the Council's Website.