

Report to: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 6th November 2023

Report Title: Tender for Home Adaptation Support Service Contract

Report By: Chris Hancock, Head of Housing

Purpose of Report

To inform Cabinet of the requirement to re-tender for a Home Adaptation Support Service (HASS) to support adaptations funded by Disabled Facilities Grants

Recommendation(s)

1. To request agreement from Cabinet, in line with the delegation of authority and procurement rules, to go out to tender to secure a new home adaptation support service.
2. To request delegated authority to award the contract to the successful bidding party, following due process, to the Head of Housing

1. Overview of the Home Adaptation Support Service

- 1.1 The Council administer the process for Disabled Facilities Grants, which is a duty under The Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. These grants are for the purposes of making adaptations to eligible applicants homes, so they are able to live safely and as independently as possible, for as long as they wish to.
- 1.2 As part of the grant application and approval process, the applicant is required to provide three quotes for the eligible works (based on the recommendations of adaptations needed from the Occupational Therapist), complete an application form, and provide other supporting evidence such as financial information (the grant is means tested). On approval of a grant, it would then be for the applicant to oversee the works themselves and in order to receive final payment, provide evidence to the Council that the works meet building regulation requirements, planning regulations (if needed) and all certification certificates e.g., electrical safety installation is provided. Only works that relate directly to the recommended adaptations made by the Occupational Therapist are eligible for approval and payment.

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- 1.3 Whilst some applicants may feel able and want to go through this process themselves, many do not and seek support from the Council as to how they can meet these requirements. There is no duty on the Council to provide or facilitate this service, with the legislation only requiring the Council to process and administer applications for the grant funding.
- 1.4 However, it is recognised that facilitating a service that provides support can make the process a lot less stressful for applicants, at a time when they are coping with changes in their health and circumstances. The Disabled Facilities Grant Delivery – Guidance for Local Authorities in England https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6245b9ac8fa8f527744f0683/DFG_Guidance.pdf states that it is considered good practice to offer the services of a home improvement agency service to support a disabled person and their family through the often complicated process of carrying out major building works.
- 1.5 A HASS will arrange the sourcing of tradespeople and schedule of works and costs, the oversight of the adaptations work and ensuring appropriate completion and sign off at the end of the project. In addition, they are there to liaise with applicants throughout the process, answering any queries or addressing any concerns an applicant may have.
- 1.6 The alternative to this would be, the applicant would have to arrange and oversee all of this activity themselves. The potential risk for applicants who may not be confident to do this is, they end up with works that take longer to complete and may not meet the requirements of the original recommendations. Ultimately resulting in the adaptations not being suitable for their needs or in line with the reason the grant received approval.

2. Demands on the Service

- 2.1 Hastings Borough Council have for a number of years used the services of a HASS. The commissioning of this has been led by Hastings Borough Council but in coordination with Rother District Council.
- 2.2 The contract with our current provider is due to end on 31st March 2024, having run for a period of 3 years. This was a two-year contract with the option to extend for a further year into 2023/2024, which was taken up.
- 2.3 In order to continue to provide a service of this nature from 1st April 2024, the Council is required to go out to tender for a new service provider. This gives us the opportunity to review the specification and requirements for the service and ensure that it remains fit for purpose for the next 2-3 years.
- 2.4 Demand for DFG's continues to grow both in terms of the core needs of our residents and through the widening of the discretionary use of DFG funding under our updated financial assistance policy.

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- 2.5 The revised specification will be taking account of these factors and ensuring that key performance indicators on service delivery times, installation, and completion of works and customer service are strengthened to ensure that applicants who decide to use the HASS, have their adaptations delivered in a reasonable timeframe and without undue delay. Contract review points will be included to ensure performance against key performance indicators are being met.
- 2.6 It will also include requirements to utilise the services of local tradespeople as far as possible and that all activities are focused on ensuring they are reducing carbon emission, and are aligned with the Council aims of having a positive impact on addressing the climate emergency being faced.
- 2.7 The Housing Renewal Manager will be working with the support of the procurement hub and the legal team on a specification for tender and revised terms and conditions.

3. Economic/Financial Implications

- 3.1 The costs of providing the HASS are funded through the DFG budget via the approval of a grant to the applicant.
- 3.2 Where an applicant requests to use the services of the HASS, a fee for this service is included in the DFG application that they make and is considered as part of the overall approval process and grant funding required for that applicant.
- 3.3 This is equitable to applicants who decide not to use the services of a HASS but may seek the services of a project manager / surveyor to oversee any eligible works. Applicants who follow this route would also be able to include these as eligible costs in the DFG application they are making.
- 3.4 The HASS service is provided at no direct cost to the Council as it is funded through the DFG grant awarded to each applicant. The administration of the DFG under the legislation is a statutory function and is a duty of the authority to provide.
- 3.5 In terms of the demand for a HASS service the following figures for the last couple of years indicate its use by residents of Hastings and St Leonards. It shows that the vast majority of applicants prefer to use the services of a HASS as opposed to having to make their own arrangements.

Year	No of adaptations completed in properties overall	Total Budget spent of adaptations	No of adaptations completed by current service providers	Value of work completed by current HASS providers
April 2023 to September 2023	59 adaptations in 37 properties	£479,565.58	45 adaptations in 25 properties	£415,590.67
22/23	154 Adaptations in 96 properties	£1,209,836.81	138 Adaptations in 79 properties	£1,125,921.81
21/22	119 Adaptations in 81 properties	£826,832.43	103 Adaptations in 65 properties	£767,277.19

3.6 The HASS service over the period of the current contract of April 2021 to September 2023 has cost £249,706 in total fees to applicants, with an estimated further £50,000 in potential fees to the end of the financial year. (paid by DFG grant). The total sum for Hastings being estimated at £299,706 excluding VAT.

3.7 The HASS service to Rother District Council over the period of the current contract (including an estimate to the end of this financial year) is estimated at £352,199 excluding VAT.

3.8 This means the total value of the contract based on previous activity will be in the region of £651,816 excluding VAT. Under the Contract Procedure (Procurement) Rules this is a Type D contract and therefore must comply with the tendering process for these types of contract.

3.9 The fee structure currently used for the application of fees is based on a % of the overall costs of works. The higher the value of the works, the lower the % of the fee charged. These fee bandings will also be reviewed as part of the contract to ensure best value for money.

3.10 We are keen to proceed with the tender process as soon as possible to allow the widest reach and opportunity for suitable providers to make a timely application to tender. It is hoped this will benefit the council in terms a choice of applicants and enable us to select a suitable provider in good time ready for the 1st April 2024. It should be noted that the risk of not achieving this will result in the council not being able to provide this support to DFG applicants, who will have to administer the process themselves, until a suitable provider is in place.

4. Environmental Issues

- 4.1 As mentioned above, the specification and tender documents will require those tendering to demonstrate how all of their procedures are supporting the reduction in carbon emissions.
- 4.2 This includes their procurement practices and the products and services provided both by themselves and the tradespeople they are overseeing. Using local tradespeople and supporting local businesses, skills, and training as far as possible is also a requirement of the specification.

5. Equalities and Community Cohesiveness

- 5.1 The overriding objective of the DFG is to allow residents the ability to remain living in their home, as safely and independently as possible, for as long as they wish to do so. Adaptations facilitate not only the ability for residents to move around and function in their home more easily, but they also provide easier access to the community. For example, by facilitating ramped access outside the property, widening front doors for wheelchair access and external stair lifts etc. Making the community more accessible for applicants is an important part of both their physical and mental wellbeing.
- 5.2 The provision of a HASS service allows those DFG applicants who may not be able, or do not feel confident enough to arrange their own adaptations work to use the services of an organisation that can do this for them. This helps remove the barriers they may otherwise face in completing a DFG application and providing the supporting information required, as well as overseeing the adaptations works for grants that are approved. This makes the DFG as accessible as it can be to anyone who wishes to apply.

Timetable of Next Steps

1. Please include a list of key actions and the scheduled dates for these:

Action	Key milestone	Due date (provisional)	Responsible
Raise procurement request / legal		Completed	Housing Renewal Manager
Agreement of final draft of contract, specification, and tender documents		Early November 2023	Housing Renewal Manager
Release tender documents		Subject to approval but	Housing Renewal Manager

		aiming for mid November	
Acceptance of Tender		January - February 2024	Housing Renewal Manager
Start of new Contract		1 st April 2024	Housing Renewal Manager

Wards Affected

All

Implications

Relevant project tools applied? **Yes/No**

Have you checked this report for plain English and readability? **Yes/No**

Climate change implications considered. **Yes/No**

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness - Yes

Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17) - No

Risk Management - No

Environmental Issues - Yes

Economic/Financial Implications – Yes

Human Rights Act - No

Organisational Consequences - No

Local People's Views - No

Anti-Poverty - Yes

Additional Information

Officer to Contact

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