



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Name and date of Committee	EXECUTIVE – 15 JANUARY 2025
Subject	HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCY FUNDING AGREEMENT RENEWAL
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Rachel Crouch, Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities Email: Rachel.crouch@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Susan Hughes, Business Manager Support and Advice and Designated Safeguarding Lead email: susan.hughes@publicagroup.uk
Report author	Paula Massey, Enabling Manager and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead email: paula.massey@publicagroup.uk
Summary/Purpose	To seek the Executive's approval to extend the Home Improvement Agency Funding Agreement with Oxfordshire County Council for a further 2 years and continue to provide the service for residents in our communities from 1 st April 2025.
Annexes	Annex A – Existing Funding Agreement
Recommendation(s)	That the Executive resolves to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agree to extend the existing Home Improvement Agency Funding Agreement with Oxfordshire County Council for a further 2 years• Agree to request a 2% increase in funds to cover increased costs
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Putting Residents First• A Good Quality of Life for All• Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	YES
Exempt	NO

Consultees/ Consultation	
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** The current Home Improvement Agency (HIA) Funding Agreement has been in place since April 2022 and expires end of March 2025.
- 1.2** Oxfordshire County Council wish to extend the current agreement for a period of 2 years to cover financial years 2025-2026 and 2026-2027.
- 1.3** The 2-year extension should enable Oxfordshire County Council to undertake a full review of the service need and provision.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** Home Improvement Projects are commissioned 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. Full details can be found in Annex A, page 15.
- 2.2** The Council has been directly delivering the HIA project to its residents on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council for over 10 years.
- 2.3** Oxfordshire County Council has similar funding agreements in place with Oxford City, Cherwell and South and Vale Councils.
- 2.4** The original HIA agreement included the provision of a Handyman service. Following an internal review, it was deemed that this was not cost effective for the Council, therefore on 21 October 2020, the Council gave notice to Oxfordshire County Council that would cease to provide that element of the agreement. The funding was adjusted accordingly.
- 2.5** Prior to 2019, there were two posts covering Disabled Facilities Grant and Home Improvement Agency work, now there is one person who covers work for both - Disabled Facilities Grant, HIA Officer.
- 2.6** The Home Improvement Agency minor adaptations work in parallel to the statutory Disabled Facilities Grant Service (major adaptations), also delivered by the Council. These are for adaptations over £1,000, must be through an Occupational Therapist Referral and are Means Tested.

3. THE HIA PROJECT

- 3.1** The aim of the HIA project is to enable those Oxfordshire Residents in need of support to maintain their independence, health and well-being at home for the foreseeable future. This applies to individuals of any age.
- 3.2** The project is achieved through the repair, adaptation of Residents' homes, including the provision of equipment/aids to daily living that may help maintain or restore independence, safety and quality of living.
- 3.3** Activities provided under the agreement: facilitation of adaptation; repairs, maintenance, preventative initiatives; providing information and advice on accessing adaptations privately;

as required including support for funding options; signpost or refer to appropriate community-based projects.

- 3.4 Installation of Key Safes to support hospital discharge cases are key to assisting the NHS to free up bed spaces and enable residents to move safely back into their own homes.
- 3.5 Following an approved referral from a Health Professional for minor works, these works shall be up to the value of £1,000 (or any future set limit by Oxfordshire County Council).
- 3.6 Minor adaptations or improvements, could include, but not exclusive, be of the following: Fitting handrails, stair-rails; grab rails; wall-fixed shower seats; re-hanging doors.
- 3.7 Minor adaptations are non-means tested.
- 3.8 Volume of residents supported to remain living independently in their own homes:

Financial Year	Minor Works	Key Safe	Total
20-21	89	120	209
21-22	138	98	236
22-23	141	101	242
23-24	121	113	234
24-25 to date	111	83	194
Annual Average	120	103	223

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

4.1 Hand service provision back to OCC

- There would be a financial implication for West Oxfordshire District Council.
- There could be a delay in service provision whilst OCC set up the required resource.
- There could be a negative impact on local suppliers should OCC move work to more region-based suppliers.
- There will still be a requirement of the post to deliver the Disabled Facilities Grants, which is a Mandatory service for the Council.
- Reputational risk for the Council.
- *Would not achieve all of the desired outcomes.*

4.2 Cease service provision

- This would leave residents at risk.
- Hospital discharges would be delayed having a knock-on effect to the NHS.
- There will still be a requirement of the post to deliver the Disabled Facilities Grants, which is a Mandatory service for the Council.
- Reputational risk for the Council.
- *Would not achieve desired outcomes.*

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The project is funded as follows:

Financial Year	Contract Income	Minor Works Expenditure	HIA System Expenditure	Admin Costs	Total Expenditure
2022-23	£137,500	£68,904	£2,000	£36,433	£107,337
2023-24	£141,750	£72,213	£2,000	£39,600	£113,813
2024-25	£146,286	£76,450	£2,000	£42,992	£121,442
2025-26	£149,211	£77,979	£2,060	£44,282	£124,321
2026-27	£152,195	£79,538	£2,122	£45,201	£126,861

6.2 A 2% uplift in the Agreement Funding is proposed in line with CPI inflation, to be requested from OCC to cover increase in future costs.

7 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no significant legal implications associated with this report.

7.2 The agreement, with the intention of establishing a collaboration for the parties' to deliver community Housing Improvement Services in West Oxfordshire pursuant to their respective powers and duties including, but not limited to, those under The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970.

7.3 The agreement will include provisions so the Council may leave the agreement by serving written notice to the other parties.

8 RISK ASSESSMENT

8.1 There are no significant risks associated with extending the current agreement for a further 2 years.

8.2 There would be medium risk associated by handing the service back to Oxfordshire County Council as could place residents at risk whilst they work to introduce the service provision themselves and have reputational impact for the Council.

8.3 There could be high risk in ceasing the service with no alternative measures in place. Residents would be placed at risk and there would be reputational risk for the Council.

9 CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Extending the current funding agreement will have no significant impact on climate and ecological implications.

(END)