

# **North Somerset Council**

## **REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE**

**DATE OF MEETING: 20/10/2021**

**SUBJECT OF REPORT: COMMISSIONING PLAN FOR THE PROVISION OF IN-HOME LIFTS**

**TOWN OR PARISH: N/A**

**OFFICER/MEMBER PRESENTING: EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ADULT SERVICES, HEALTH AND HOUSING / DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND REGULATORY SERVICES**

**KEY DECISION: YES**

**REASON: THE TOTAL VALUE OF THIS CONTRACT AWARD IS OVER £500,000**

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the commissioning plan is approved

### **1. SUMMARY OF REPORT**

The proposal is to procure a contract to deliver in house lifts (stair lifts, through floor lifts, platform lifts and step lifts) in North Somerset, in support of the Disabled Facilities Grant programme.

The Disabled Facilities Grant delivers housing adaptations, enabling elderly and disabled residents remain living safely and independent in their own homes. These adaptations in the main provide access both to the property and to essential facilities within the property. The provision of access is often provided through installation of a stair lift, through floor lift or similar.

The grant process is prescribed in law which usually requires two estimates to accompany each application unless the local authority otherwise direct. Good practice guidance encourages councils to use tendered contracts to improve the customer journey for applicants.

There is considerable operational advantage to the council and applicants when using a contract approach. It simplifies the process by enabling streamlined delivery and a competitive price through formal procurement, delivering value for money.

The current contract, which has run successfully in North Somerset since 2012 terminates in February 2022.

The proposal is to continue operating the contract through the established in-house agency for delivering adaptations.

The estimated value over the lifetime of the contract would be around £1,750,000; based on a contract length in the region of 5 years, with an optional 2-year extension.

## **2. POLICY**

The Corporate Plan sets out the council's vision and overall priorities; this commissioning plan will support the delivery of the Health and Wellbeing, and Quality Places objectives. A contract to deliver bathing adaptations helps disabled residents with essential adaptations to remain independent at home.

In the draft Housing Strategy 2022 -2027 (currently out to consultation) a key challenge is making the best use of current housing and help older and disabled residents stay independent in their own homes, through adaptations.

## **3. DETAILS**

The Council assists elderly and disabled people to remain living safely and independently in their own homes through the provision of a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFGs). This is a mandatory, means tested, grant which can fund a range of adaptations in people's homes, including the installation of stairlifts, through floor lifts, step lifts and other similar lifting devices.

Since February 2012 the council, through a contract with Handicare have provided these lifts as part of their Disabled Facilities Grant programme. This contract has operated successfully since commencement but expires in February 2022.

The use of a procured contract provides advantages to the customer and the council. A single contractor visit is required to carry out the technical survey and provide one quote, in accordance with a tendered price. This reduces disruption to the customer, allows a fast, efficient streamlined service, and secures value for money.

Other advantages include:

- Solely North Somerset tender
- Contract performance indicators can be structured to improve delivery
- Social Value opportunities can be locally focused
- Supported through in-house agency arrangement
- Benefits of technical innovation in the sector can be realised and any savings captured.
- Strong emphasis on quality particularly customer journey and satisfaction
- The benefits from the Equipment & Demonstration Centre can be incorporated into the process to fast-track works.

A report commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Care recently published strongly recommends Councils adopt this approach and encourages the use of framework

agreements and schedules of rates to streamline and speed up the DFG process. The report highlights the importance of timely solutions to support more people to stay independent at home for longer

The proposal is to tender for a new contract to maximise opportunities to further streamline the process, achieve efficiencies and provide value for money.

A Procurement Plan will be produced to include the technical details, contract type selection and compliance, price/quality weighting, market testing analysis, environmental and social value requirements. The final plan will be agreed with the Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing.

The length of contract will be for a period of 5 years, with an option to extend for a further 2 years.

### **Timeline for procurement**

August 2021 - Market Engagement (completed under evaluation)  
20th October 2021 – Executive Report - Commissioning Plan approval  
End October 2021 - Procurement Plan  
November 2021 - Advert/Tender released  
Mid Dec - Tenders returned  
Jan-2022 - Tender Evaluation  
Jan -2022 - Contract Award Report  
Feb 2022 - Contract Start

## **4. CONSULTATION**

Market engagement was conducted through a Prior Information Notice Questionnaire, which received 12 responses and enabled us to gauge the level of interest in this opportunity. It also helped inform the Council's commissioning intentions and inform service specification development.

Consultation is proceeding with:

- Disabled / Older person representative groups
- Occupational Therapists (Internal - Adult Social Services and Disabled Children's Team)
- External stakeholders e.g. Alliance Homes

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

### **Costs and funding**

The value of this contract is in the region of £250,000 per annum which will be met from the Better Care Fund (DFG) annual allocation.

The value over the lifetime of the contract would be in the region of £1,750,000.

The procurement plan will be designed to produce a fixed price quotation for each installation through a contract. The price will be fixed for at least the first year of the contract and subject to inflationary price increases thereafter. The proposal will support in-house agency service and contribute to income generation through this service.

## **6. LEGAL POWERS AND IMPLICATIONS**

The Disabled Facilities Grants is a mandatory grant, introduced by the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. Good practice guidance encourages Local Authorities to use procured contracts to help streamline and speed up service delivery. The procurement plan and draft contract will be prepared in conjunction with the Councils Legal Service.

## **7. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

Consideration of the climate impact and the potential to reduce carbon emissions, will be considered as part of the development of the Service Specification and detailed in the Procurement Plan.

Preference will be given to tenders where a clear process for reuse and/or recycling of lifts is detailed. A benefit of one provider reduces the travel costs associated with multiple providers making home visits to provide an estimate.

## **8. RISK MANAGEMENT**

The key risks to fulfilling the proposed commissioning plan include:

1. **The ongoing impact of the COVID19 pandemic** – The uncertainty of pandemic may have an impact on being able to deliver installations in peoples homes. The impact can be minimised by developing robust risk assessments and through good communication between the contractor and client.
2. **Brexit** – Brexit is currently having a negative impact on both supply and delivery within the sector, this impact will need to be managed and minimised by the contractor.
3. Any residual risks will be addressed through the procurement plan.

## **9. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

Have you undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment? No

An impact assessment will be completed as part of the Procurement Plan but the approach proposed should only result in positive outcomes for disabled people.

## **10. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

The provision of disabled adaptations supports a number of corporate strategies and maintaining independence is a key part of the draft Housing Strategy for 2022 – 2027 (currently out to consultation)

## **11. OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

The current contract expires in February 2022; and cannot be extended further.

If the contract expires and we do nothing - applicants (elderly & disabled) would be required to submit two estimates for the necessary work which would increase the time and disruption to the household. Such an approach would conflict with good practice and any advantage to streamline the process would be lost, impacting on the customer journey.

## **AUTHOR**

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## **APPENDICES**

None

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Independent Review of the Disabled Facilities Grant – Commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Care

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/762920/Independent\\_Review\\_of\\_the\\_Disabled\\_Facilities\\_Grant.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/762920/Independent_Review_of_the_Disabled_Facilities_Grant.pdf)

Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, Sections 19 – 24.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/53/part/I/chapter/I/crossheading/disabled-facilities-grants>