

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

25 February 2013

**Joint Report of the Director of Health and Housing and Cabinet Member for
Housing**

Part 1- Public

**Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken
by the Cabinet Member)**

1 UPDATE ON HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCY SERVICE

Summary

This report outlines the current position in relation to the contract for the Home Improvement Agency (HIA) service for West Kent. The contract was awarded by Kent County Council (KCC) to In Touch in October 2012.

1.1 Current position

- 1.1.1 During the summer of 2012 KCC undertook a tendering exercise for an HIA service across Kent, to be effective from 1 October 2012. Tendering was on the basis of a service specification which had been developed in consultation with the districts and boroughs; and for West Kent, prospective service providers were invited to tender for a contract that would deliver a service within Dartford, Gravesham, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells.
- 1.1.2 The procurement process included the development of a funding framework which would enable any district or borough to procure additional HIA-related services over and above those contained within the service specification, without undertaking a separate tendering exercise.
- 1.1.3 The view of this Council was that the service outlined in the specification reflected the service that had been provided previously; and which was also fit for purpose for the future. KCC were advised that provided the service could be delivered in accordance with the specification and at levels of activity which reflected the previous contract, then there would be no need for the Council to procure any additional services at its own cost.
- 1.1.4 The contracts to deliver the HIA service across Kent were won by In Touch (the previous provider of the West Kent service) in all but one borough, which is delivered in Swale by an in-house team.
- 1.1.5 Early discussions with In Touch during October 2012 revealed a clear expectation on their part that the agreed service specification could only be delivered if

additional funding from individual districts and boroughs was forthcoming. This was unexpected to say the least, since a maximum value for each contract had been clearly stated by KCC within the Invitation to Tender. Furthermore, it also became apparent at this point that the output levels for the contract had not been agreed at the time it was awarded, and consequently In Touch were unable to confirm what levels of activity could be expected. Both were issues of significant concern, and they have since been the subject of extensive discussions between officers of this Council, In Touch and KCC.

- 1.1.6 As a result, output levels for the contract are now being agreed between In Touch and KCC; and In Touch is clarifying exactly what in the way of a service it is able to provide without additional funding from the districts and boroughs.
- 1.1.7 This leaves the issue of whether the Council will need to make any further funding available, in order to ensure that this vital service is not compromised. Members will recall that for the previous three years, this Council has invested the sum of £45,000 has been invested annually in the HIA service for West Kent. Since the latest tendering exercise was based on a specification with which the Council was satisfied, there is no expectation that an investment of this level will be necessary. But a more modest annual contribution may be required in order to ensure the wellbeing of the older and vulnerable residents who depend on the HIA service.
- 1.1.8 The uncertainty surrounding the service specification and activity levels reflected in KCC's accepted tender lead us to believe it is essential that we are clear on what additional services if any, are required to be funded by this Council before committing any funding ourselves.

1.2 Legal Implications

- 1.2.1 If the Council makes a financial contribution to In Touch to secure delivery of the agreed service specification it will be necessary for the two parties to enter into a contract which clearly sets out services to be delivered and levels of output.

1.3 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.3.1 As explained in this report. Market testing of this service should ensure value for money should the Council consider making a financial contribution.

1.4 Risk Assessment

- 1.4.1 The HIA service provides a lifeline to older and vulnerable members of the community which could potentially be compromised.

1.5 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.5.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report

1.6 Recommendations

1.6.1 **CABINET** is **RECOMMENDED** to:

1.6.2 Delegate authority to the Director of Health and Housing, in consultation with the Director of Finance and Transformation and Cabinet Member for Housing, to determine what if any financial contribution is made to In Touch for HIA services, and ;

1.6.3 A further report be submitted on the outcome of these discussions to secure acceptable HIA services, including the consideration of alternative arrangements, should that prove necessary.

The Director of Health and Housing confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

contact: Janet Walton

Nil

John Batty
Director of Health and Housing

Councillor Jill Anderson
Cabinet Member for Housing

Screening for equality impacts:		
Question	Answer	Explanation of impacts
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	Yes	Older and vulnerable people may be disadvantaged by a lower than adequate level of service.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	Yes	The decision relates to ensuring that the service to older and vulnerable people is not compromised.
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		

In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.