

**Report of:** Colin Moss/Rob McCartney

**Report to:** Neil Evans, Director of Resources and Housing

**Date:** 10th May 2017

**Subject:** To approve the use of the Council's current private modular ramp company to install ramps to public sector properties for the period up to the re-procurement of this contract.

Are specific electoral wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

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## Summary of main issues

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1. To allow Easiaccess (modular ramp company) on a temporary basis, to extend their remit of providing ramps in the private sector, to include fitting ramps in public sector properties and the Civic Estate pending the completion of the future procurement exercise later this year.
2. This proposal will make a saving in the order of £124,000 over the next 12 months.
3. As Easiaccess provide a comprehensive delivery service there will be a large staff resource saving over the current procedure of designing, drawing up and provision of concrete ramps.
4. If the proposal is accepted this will increase the amount of ramps that will be re-cycled by the company which will result in further savings and increase the 'lettability' of vacant Council dwellings.

5. The process of allowing a single company to control the whole delivery service provides a much improved 'customer experience' for our disabled clients.

### **Recommendations**

6. To approve the use of Easiaccess to provide ramps to our public sector properties and the Civic Estate until the future ramp procurement exercise is completed later this year.

## 1.0 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 A recent review has identified that a significant amount of money could be saved by installing modular ramps in the public sector instead of the concrete ones currently constructed.

## 2.0 Background information

- 2.1 A review of public adaptations has recently been completed by Health & Housing in an attempt to identify where savings can be made to reduce expenditure. The review has concluded that savings could be made from a combination of:

- Increasing the number of disabled Council tenants that are re-housed into properties with existing adaptations (or that are more suitable) rather than provide adaptations in their existing home.
- Explore ways in which the costs of providing adaptations can be reduced.

- 2.2 The review has identified a number of areas where costs could potentially be reduced. One of the quickest wins was around the provision of installing ramped access to properties. In the private sector, Health and Housing have been delivering modular ramps over a number of years by their procured private contractor, Easiaccess from Gateshead.

Health & Housing procured this agreement with Easiaccess in September 2011 and they have been working with the Council since this time installing modular ramps to private homes. The company also run a buoyant re-cycling programme in Leeds where ramps that are not required any longer are removed, refurbished and re-instated at a fraction of the cost against new. It is also intended that this service will also be used on an "as needed" basis for the non-housing Civic Estate (other Council owned buildings).

- 2.3 The benefits of moving to routinely installing modular ramps over concrete ones are multi-fold:

- 42% average price difference in 2016/17: £2203 per ramp.
- Ordinarily installed in one working day whilst average for concrete ramp installation is five working days.
- Installation not dependent on weather.
- Relatively straightforward installation process/skill set required.
- Buoyant re-use programme in private sector that can be extended to council housing.
- Promote flexibility in the re-letting of properties with modular ramps easily removed, stored and re-cycled by the contractor.
- Easiaccess provides comprehensive survey, design, installation and re-cycle programme giving the Council and Disabled applicant, quotes, plans and isometric drawings of ramp prior to installation.

The life-span of modular ramps is 20-25 years and concrete ramps 25-30 years and so no immediate time benefit to installing concrete ramps. Concerns have been raised that modular ramps could get stolen. No theft has ever occurred of a modular ramp in private housing and, given there are no solely council housing estates in the city; therefore this is unlikely to be an issue.

- 2.4 The current process for providing ramps to the public sector involves a survey, design, schedule and drawings drafted by Health & Housing's surveyors being sent to LBS. LBS in turn, sub-contract this work out to private contractors to install concrete ramps and then invoice Health & Housing on completion.

- 2.5 The average cost of installing a concrete ramp during 2016/17 has been £5,222 while the average cost of installation of modular ramps in the same period has been £3,019. Giving a cost saving of £2,203 per ramp (42% average price difference).  
The number of concrete ramps installed this year was 184. If modular ramps had been fitted this would have made an efficiency saving of £405,352 (£2203 x 184) adjusted to £385,084 to allow for 95% modular and 5% concrete to account for the few occasions when modular ramps can't be fitted.  
These efficiency savings are based on supplying new ramps on each installation but as the Council re-cycles more ramps the potential savings will increase.

### **3.0 Main issues**

#### **Reason for contracts procedure rules waiver**

- 3.1 The savings made in financial terms and the increased future 'lettability' of Council homes, as detailed above, makes the use of modular ramps a very attractive proposition. In line with CPR 3.1.4, LBS have been approached regarding installing modular ramps but they do not have the resource or expertise to carry out this work using their direct labour force.
- 3.2 Health & Housing's last agreement in the private sector with Easiaccess ran out in 2014 and has been extended by PPPU to run until the contract for modular ramps could be re-let. For a number of reasons the procurement of all of the contracts for the private sector adaptations has been delayed but has now been timetabled across 2017. The Bathing and General Build tendering process is almost completed with the contract due to start in April 2017. The procurement of stairlifts/specialist lifts followed by ramps for both private and public sectors is currently underway and it is envisaged that the new ramp contracts should be completed by November/December 2017.
- 3.3 The proposal is to use Easiaccess, with immediate effect, to extend their service to provide modular ramps to public sector properties until November/December this year when the formal re-procurement of a modular ramp contractor will be completed. This will enable savings to be made immediately and the large amount of Leeds re-cycled stock will become available for Council housing straightaway. The company have confirmed that they can extend their service in Leeds across the public sector without any drop in service or standard without any notice lead-in.
- 3.4 There isn't any realistic way of being able to open this work to competitive tender due to the short time periods involved.
- 3.5 Easiaccess have been contacted and could take up the installation of ramps in the public sector immediately without any drop in the standard and quality of service to the Council. The current schedule of rates agreed between LCC and Easiaccess was agreed in 2011 and has been held at this price. Easiaccess have confirmed that they will work to this schedule of rates for all ramps until the conclusion of the Council's re-procurement of the modular ramp contract later this year. A copy of the schedule of rates agreed in 2011 is attached to this report under Section 7 - Background Information.

#### **Consequences if the proposed action is not approved**

- 3.6 If the proposal is not approved:

- The savings made by installing modular ramps instead of concrete will be lost. If the procurement exercise is completed by the end of March 2018 the savings made to Public adaptations budget will be £124,000.
- The Council will continue to install concrete ramps in public properties which will continue to adversely affect the 'lettability' of the property when it becomes vacant.

## **4.0 Corporate considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and engagement**

- 4.1.1 Easiaccess have been contacted and the Director of the company has visited the Health & Housing Manager to confirm the viability of the proposal from their company's perspective.
- 4.1.2 Throughout the current contractor 'arrangement' period, Easiaccess performance and service has been continuously measured very favourably against the relevant KPIs.

The most recent Easiaccess customer satisfaction returns are as follows:

- 98% thought the contractor was polite and considerate.
- 98% thought the contractor took good care while working in/on their property.
- 100% of clients thought the work was carried out to a good standard.
- 93% were happy with the contractor's time keeping.
- 93% thought that overall the time taken by the contractor to undertake was reasonable

### **4.2 Equality and diversity/cohesion and integration**

- 4.2.1 Easiaccess design and provide bespoke access solutions from small threshold solutions to larger metal access ramps. They have over 20 years' experience in specialist adaptation work and have nurtured a good working relationship with occupational therapists, charities, councils, housing associations and private clients in the Leeds area. They are sympathetic to client's needs and aspirations and are experienced in working with and providing a bespoke quality service for people with impairments.

### **4.3 Council policies and best council plan**

- 4.3.1 The effective delivery of adaptation services contributes to the Leeds City Priority Plan theme of making Leeds the best city for health and wellbeing. The delivery of adaptation services contributes to the priority to 'Support more people to live safely in their own homes' and the headline indicator to 'Increase the proportion of people with long-term conditions to feel supported to be independent and to manage their condition'. Adaptation services are delivered for children and therefore contribute to the Leeds City Priority Plan theme of making Leeds the best city for children and young people. The delivery of adaptation services contributes to the priority to 'Help children live in safe and supportive families'.

## **4.4 Resources and value for money**

4.4.1 The financial gains from this proposal have been outlined in point 2.5 and 3.6 above.

As Easiaccess carry out a comprehensive design and installation service, there is a large Health & Housing resource saving as there is no requirement for a detailed measure, survey and drawing that is required by LBS to provide a concrete ramp.

## **4.5 Legal implications, access to information and call-in**

4.5.1 The current agreement between Easiaccess and Leeds City Council does not constitute a public contract as defined in the Public Contracts Regulations 2006. This position has been affirmed by the Procurement Unit.

In order to achieve the financial gains, it is necessary to extend their agreement for a temporary period until the future procurement exercise can be completed later this year. The decision to enter into a temporary agreement with Easiaccess does not represent a major or a key decision and is not subject to call in. Nevertheless, it is believed appropriate that the decision to enter into the agreement with Easiaccess is taken through the delegated waiver process to ensure that the decision taken is transparent and accountable.

## **4.6 Risk management**

4.6.1 Whilst a formal contractual arrangement will not be established between Easiaccess and the Council, Health & Housing will continue to carry out proactive and intensive monitoring of the company to ensure that private and public applicants receive a high quality service and value for money is delivered. Failure to deliver a high quality service could result in the Council terminating its agreement with the contractor.

## **5.0 Conclusions**

5.1 In the next financial year (2017/18) it is necessary to explore ways in which expenditure on adaptations can be reduced. To supply modular ramps in the public sector on a temporary basis will make a financial saving estimated at £124,000 and make numerous resource savings at operational level.

## **6.0 Recommendations**

6.1 The Director of Resources and Housing is recommended to approve the waiver of the following contracts procedure rule(s):

*Contracts procedure rules no 9.1 and 9.2 – high value procurements\**

## **7.0 Background documents**

7.1 Easiaccess schedule of rates for modular ramp components. April 2011.