

**CABINET – 18 MARCH 2025****LIGHTBULB SERVICE BUSINESS CASE****REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES****PART A****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of the report is to advise the Cabinet regarding the Lightbulb Business Case and request a further extension to the Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Blaby District Council, which hosts the Lightbulb Service in Leicestershire, to enable the Lightbulb Partnership to continue.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that:
 - a) The latest position regarding the Lightbulb Business Case be noted;
 - b) The response from the district councils regarding the proposed transfer of the Minor Adaptations Service delivered by the Adults and Communities Department into the Lightbulb Service be noted;
 - c) A further extension of the Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Blaby District Council for the continued delegation of statutory functions from the County Council to the Lightbulb Service be agreed.

Reasons for Recommendations

3. The County Council's SLA with Blaby District Council allows a level of delegation of statutory functions of the Local Authority for assessment and provision of services to Blaby District Council as part of the Lightbulb Service. The original agreement was due to expire on 31 March 2024. In March 2024, the Cabinet agreed to extend the SLA for a further 12 months, to allow for the conclusion of the review of the partnership and agreement to be reached on the new Business Case.
4. At the Lightbulb Executive Board meeting held on 24 February 2025, the district councils announced that in light of the recent Government announcements regarding local government reorganisation and devolution, they had taken the decision not to proceed with the implementation of the Business Case. Their view was that with the anticipated changes in the structure of local government

in Leicestershire, it was best to continue with the existing Lightbulb Service structure until the position was clearer. In the interim, it is planned to pilot the caseworker model during 2025/26 and partners have agreed to additional top slicing of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) for this.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

5. The extension to the SLA with Blaby District Council ceases on 31 March 2025.
6. The Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report on 4 November 2024 and its comments are set out in paragraph 38 below. In light of subsequent developments this report will be circulated to members of the Committee for their views.
7. The Lightbulb Partnership's original timetable was for the new model to be in place for delivery from 1 April 2025. As this is now delayed, the district councils have proposed an interim budget for 2025/26.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

8. On 10 October 2017, the Cabinet agreed the delegation of Adult Social Care functions to be undertaken under the Lightbulb Service pathway to Blaby District Council.
9. The Lightbulb Service went live and was rolled out to all Leicestershire districts in October 2017 and the SLA was due to be refreshed and signed in April 2024 when the SLA expired (March 2024).
10. On 19 December 2023, the Cabinet noted the review of the Lightbulb Service and draft Business Case for Lightbulb Partnership arrangements for 2024-2026 and approved the 'All in' option, providing for the continuation of the partnership with full involvement from all Councils including Charnwood Borough Council which had previously adopted a hybrid approach. It was agreed that a further report would be submitted to the Cabinet in the event of a lack of consensus from the Partnership authorities on the implementation of the 'All in' option.
11. On 26 March 2024, the Cabinet agreed to extend the existing Partnership for a further 12 months (to 31 March 2025), to allow for the completion of the Business Case.

Resource Implications

12. The budget for the County Council's Lightbulb contribution in 2024/25 was £512,000. The required contribution requested by the Lightbulb Partnership for 2024/25 was £599,000 for 2024/25 due to significantly increased back-office costs added by Blaby District Council, which left a shortfall of £87,000.
13. In the absence of agreement to a new service model, an interim budget for 2025/26 is proposed and for a 12-month pilot to fund the case workers and an additional DFG delivery project lead post using top sliced DFG funding. The

revised budget for the County Council in 2025/26 is £633,000, with a separate additional £29,000 payment for an administrative post that the County Council funds by longstanding agreement.

14. Blaby District Council, which hosts Lightbulb, has revised its budget for 2025/26.
15. The County Council will be required to increase its annual contribution as it has previously done, to fund annual inflationary costs relating to pay award increases and equipment costs. These are normally funded from the County Council's inflation contingency.
16. The Director of Corporate Resources and Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on the contents of this report.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

17. This report will be circulated to all members of the County Council.

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PART B

Background

18. The Lightbulb Service provides an integrated housing offer focused on health and wellbeing outcomes, such as maximising independence in the home and preventing falls.
19. This brings together a range of practical housing support into a single service providing a proactive, targeted approach via health and social care professionals. The model allows for early assessment and triage of housing issues. Lightbulb operates a hub and spoke model with a central hub and integrated locality Lightbulb teams in each district council area (excepting Charnwood) offering:
 - Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs).
 - Wider Housing support needs (warmth, energy, home security).
 - Housing related health and wellbeing (Assistive Technology, falls prevention).
 - Planning for the future (Housing options).
 - Housing related information and advice.
20. The Lightbulb Service model is considered best practice and recently featured in a Kings Fund report “Driving better health outcomes through integrated care systems – The role of District Councils” and is often visited by other areas which wish to introduce something similar in their locality.
21. The Lightbulb Service has been recognised with three awards, named 'Best Collaborative Working Initiative' by the Association for Public Service Excellence and Commended at the Home Improvement Agency Awards. It was also named best Public Partnership at the 2018 Local Government Chronicle Awards.
22. Creation of Lightbulb has enabled the partner authorities to move away from a historically fragmented set of services and develop an integrated housing offer focused on health and well-being. It is now considered a crucial element of the Countywide prevention offer.

Current issue for consideration

Lightbulb Business Case Renewal

23. The current Lightbulb model is formed of three service areas, namely:

Central Hub	Operated by Blaby District Council
Locality Hubs (6)	Consistent offer for district councils - one offer delivered outside of the Lightbulb Service (Charnwood)
A triaging system	Operated through the County Council providing the 'front door'

24. Blaby District Council commenced work on a revised Business Case during 2023, presenting proposals for the development of Lightbulb from 2024 onwards. Its work was originally split into four phases which are set out in the table below:

Phase 1 April- November 2024	Review the Lightbulb Service model including consideration of the findings of Charnwood /North West Leicestershire Councils Foundation reports
Phase 2 October 2024-March 2025	Consider incorporation of Minor Adaptations into the Lightbulb Service (Leicestershire County Council lead)
Phase 3 May 2025- March 2026	Review pilots and Regulatory Reform Order (RRO)
Phase 4 September-October 2026	Review fully integrated service

25. Phase 1 of the Business Case was completed in September 2024; this recommended the All-In option and was supported by all of the district councils. This approach would bring Charnwood Borough Council fully into the Lightbulb model, and with the addition of new caseworkers into the model, aimed to improve the customer experience for people during the major adaptations process.
26. For the County Council, the All-In option resulted in a significant increase in cost, with its contribution rising from £494,000 in 2023/24 to £648,000 in 2025/26. Officers' view of the Business Case for Phase 1 was that the strategic and economic cases were accepted and supported, but that the financial case could not be accepted due to the increased cost burden. It was expected that some of this cost increase could be offset with the inclusion of the County Council's Minor Adaptations Service into the Lightbulb Partnership model.
27. Therefore, the position taken was that the County Council's support for the All-In option was contingent on the premise that the Minor Adaptations Service is included within the Lightbulb delivery model with a clear agreement that partners fund the service on the same basis as the overall Lightbulb financial share. Work then started on the Minor Adaptations transfer, which was Phase 2 of the overall Lightbulb Business Case.

Minor Adaptations Business Case

28. The transfer of the remaining functions that sit within the County Council's Minor Adaptations Service to Lightbulb would provide for an end-to-end single pathway for all adaptations regardless of cost and nature. The minor adaptations that are commonly provided are grab rails, additional stair rails, key safes, half steps, ramps and external railing. Most works require a carpenter/joiner or builder to install or less frequently can be plumbing or electrical, such as replacing taps with lever taps or installing additional lighting for people with a visual impairment. There is a contract framework in place and

the annual spend in 2023/24 was £493,000. There are obvious benefits for Leicestershire residents in Lightbulb becoming a one-stop shop for covering everything from both minor adaptations through to major work. DFG budget regulations will allow for aspects of this service to be funded through the grant allocation.

29. The County Council believes that if incorporated in the Lightbulb Partnership, the funding for this service should be shared on the same basis as other aspects of the partnership, which means that the County Council would share the framework costs on the same 46%:54% basis, with the expectation that the district councils would use top sliced DFG funding for their share.
30. The Minor Adaptations Business Case, appended to this report, was completed during the Autumn of 2024 and shared with Lightbulb Executive Board members in January 2025. It was recommended that a pilot scheme progressed the transfer and integration of Minor Adaptations and Ceiling Track Hoists into the Lightbulb model.
31. The integration of Minor Adaptations Service into the Lightbulb Model provides system-wide benefits including a simplified journey for customers, improved co-ordination across different housing services and resource optimisation. A pilot period allows time to plan and test delivery models, ensuring that the service is delivered in the most effective and efficient way. The Lightbulb Partnership has run a number of pilots using top sliced DFG funding and it is experienced at delivery using this method.
32. The Lightbulb Executive Board considered the Minor Adaptations Business Case at its meeting on 24 February 2025. Whilst the principle and reasons for the transfer were supported, the Board did not accept the finance model or the top slicing of DFG for this purpose. Therefore, the County Council's preferred option is unable to progress further at this stage.

Lightbulb Business Case – Current position

33. Following the publication in December of the Government's White Paper on English Devolution, the district councils have halted further progress on the Business Case and are no longer seeking a decision from the County Council on the options.
34. The district councils have instead chosen to continue with the existing model of service delivery for 2025/26, during which they expect the future model of local government within Leicestershire will be made clearer. In the interim, they have proposed a 12-month pilot to fund the case workers and an additional DFG delivery project lead post using top sliced DFG funding, subject to final agreement from each individual district council partner.
35. DFG funding allocations were increased by Government during 2024/25 by £667,000 on a one-off basis and the allocation for 2025/26 is £5.5m, an increase from £4.85m in the current year. These increases mean that the

district councils have additional funds available for the pilot but have notably chosen not to use these for the transfer in of Minor Adaptations.

36. Whilst the County Council receives the Disabled Facilities Grant and passports this to district authorities based on nationally determined allocations, the utilisation of the grant is inconsistent across the seven district authorities and is not fully utilised to meet the need across the County area. Some district councils fully spend the grant and have unmet need in their areas, whilst others do not spend the entirety of their allocation. It is apparent that the current governance is not allowing the Lightbulb Service to operate effectively since it does not allow the allocation of funding on a strategic basis to meet population needs across the County footprint.
37. The proposed position of the Lightbulb Service in 2025/26 is essentially a continuation of the existing service model until the future of local government in Leicestershire becomes clearer.

Comments of the Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

38. The Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report on 4 November 2024 which provided an update on the Lightbulb Service and advised on potential options arising from the Business Case review undertaken by Blaby District Council. This was obviously prior to the decision to halt implementation of the Business Case.
39. Members discussed the review phases, and the revised business case presented by Blaby District Council which sought to address strategic, economic, commercial, financial and management aspects of the project, and noting the options set out within the report.
40. Members raised concern that the existing agreement would finish at the end of March 2025, and the new arrangements needed to be in place before then, questioning if there was some way to continue the current agreement if this proved necessary. There was further concern that with increased overhead costs, and the Chancellor's recent budget announcement of increased National Insurance, there would be an adverse impact on providers.
41. The Committee noted that whilst there was further work to be done, there was a willingness from partners to remain committed to the project partnership, which was to be welcomed.

Conclusion

42. Phase 1 of the Lightbulb Business Case was completed by Blaby District Council and shared with partners in September 2024. The recommended option was termed the All-In model, with Charnwood Borough Council fully included and the addition of new caseworkers into the model, which aimed to improve the customer experience for people during the major adaptations process. This option was supported by all of the district councils, it was planned

they would fund the new posts by capitalising their costs and paying from DFG funding.

43. Phase 2 of the Lightbulb Business Case, led by the County Council, focused on the transfer of the Minor Adaptations Service from the County Council to be integrated within the Lightbulb model. This contributes to the goal of a fully integrated housing service for residents of Leicestershire. This would lead to improved customer experience and service delivery. Access to services would be streamlined with a centralised service point for all housing needs, reducing confusion and improving ease of access for both residents and referring professionals. Integrating the Minor Adaptations Service will also allow for better co-ordination across services enabling timely, targeted, and holistic interventions, and leading to improved customer satisfaction and outcomes.
44. The Council's proposal is that the funding for the Minor Adaptations Service should be shared on the same basis as other aspects of the partnership, the Council currently contributes 46% of Lightbulb's costs, which would offset the proposed cost increase in the budget resulting from the All-In option.
45. The Minor Adaptations Business Case was shared with members of the Lightbulb Executive Board on 24 January 2025 and was discussed at the Board meeting on 24 February 2025. Partners were supportive of Minor Adaptations transferring into Lightbulb, but agreement was not reached on the finance model proposed, which was that the district councils would fund a 54% share of the cost using DFG. There was no agreement from the district councils to fund any aspect of the Minor Adaptations Service, despite this being permissible according to DFG regulations. The transfer of the Minor Adaptations Service cannot now be progressed.
46. Lightbulb brings together, through one point of contact, a range of support such as major adaptations, energy advice, home safety and home maintenance to help people stay safe and independent. Before Lightbulb, housing services were too fragmented.
47. However, whilst major adaptations are integrated across the partnership, minor adaptations remain with the County Council and are not delivered through the integrated partnership. This separation of process and pathway is inefficient and creates duplication and inconsistency in approach for members of the public.
48. In addition, the partnership suffers from inefficient use of resources and additional bureaucracy through a need to monitor activity, cross charge organisations and maintain complex cross organisational governance arrangements which would be removed through development of a single unitary structure of local government.
49. The process of designing and delivering an integrated service currently requires agreement from all seven district councils through seven separate governance processes – a time-consuming and challenging process. Barriers to information

sharing add to this and also mean there are missed opportunities when planning services. Simplified governance arrangements would remove these barriers, speeding up the delivery of integrated services.

50. The two-tier structure of local government and the split in functions between the tiers causes confusion for some members of the public. Simplifying the structure would improve their experience in terms of accessing services, querying issues and speeding up transactions.
51. The SLA which underpins the Lightbulb Partnership will require a further extension and approval from the Cabinet is sought to progress this.

Equality Implications

52. The current arrangements have Equality Impact Assessments in place and the final Business Case will include a refresh of all appropriate Impact Assessments.

Human Rights Implications

53. There are no human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Partnership Working and Associated Issues

54. Lightbulb brings together resources within local Councils and works collaboratively with NHS partners to ensure people can get the right level and type of support at the right time to help prevent, delay or reduce the need for on-going support and maximise their independence.
55. DFGs are funded through the Better Care Fund and managed within Lightbulb to encourage areas to think strategically about the use of home adaptations and technologies to support people in their own homes and to take a joined-up approach to improve outcomes across health, social care and housing.
56. Agreement of a revised Business Case and an agreed future funding model is essential if the Partnership is to continue.

Background Papers

Report to the Cabinet: 10 October 2017 – Delegation of Adult Social Care Functions to Blaby District Council (Lightbulb Programme) – Urgent Action by the Chief Executive <https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Mid=4864> (item 52)

Report to the Cabinet: 19 December 2023 – Review of the Lightbulb Partnership <https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Mid=7081>

Report to the Cabinet: 24 March 2024 – Review of the Lightbulb Partnership <https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Mid=7504>

King's Fund - Driving better health outcomes through integrated care systems
<https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/reports/driving-better-health-outcomes-integrated-care-systems-role-district-councils>

[Lightbulb Business Case November 2018](#)

Minutes of the Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 4
November 2024

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1040&MId=7454&Ver=4>

Appendix

Minor Adaptations Business Case - January 2025