



Title of report: To extend the council's current commissioned home care frameworks

Decision maker: Cabinet Member Adults, Health and Wellbeing

Decision date: 1 September 2026

Report by: Corporate Director Community Wellbeing

Classification

Open

Decision type

Key

This is a key decision because it is likely to result in the council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the council's budget for the service or function concerned. A threshold of £500,000 is regarded as significant.

This is a key decision because it is likely to be significant having regard to: the strategic nature of the decision; and / or whether the outcome will have an impact, for better or worse, on the amenity of the community or quality of service provided by the authority to a significant number of people living or working in the locality (two or more wards) affected.

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To approve an extension of the existing commissioned home care frameworks until 30 April 2027, with an option for the council to extend for up to a further four months, until 31 August 2027. This will ensure continuity of care to those with assessed eligible needs, maintaining stability in a pressured provider market, and enable transition to a new and different commissioning approach (Care in Your Home). This will provide a stronger framework and service, that is fit and robust for Herefordshire's future ageing population needs. The new approach will be set out and approval sought through council governance (see point 5) and the programme is progressing in line with the target timescales.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) Approval is granted for an extension of the existing home care framework arrangements to 30 April 2027, with an option for the council to extend for up to a further four months until 31 August 2027;
- b) Delegated authority be granted to the Corporate Director Community Wellbeing to implement the extensions and associated contractual arrangements to support the transition to the Care in Your Home (CIYH) commissioning approach planned for implementation from 1 May 2027.

Alternative options

1. Do not extend the existing home care frameworks and allow the current arrangements to expire

This option would involve concluding the current frameworks at their scheduled end date of 31 October 2026 and either ceasing current service delivery or moving to temporary alternative arrangements until the new CIYH approach is in place from 1 May 2027 (and no later than 1 September 2027).

This option is not recommended, as it presents unacceptable risk to approximately 834 service users currently in receipt of home care services. It could also potentially lead to market instability, due to lack of contractual certainty, along with higher costs from temporary purchasing arrangements. It could also impact on the council's ability to meet its statutory duties under the Care Act 2014 and will not provide a safe or controlled transition to the new CIYH approach.

2. Proceed directly to procurement and implementation of the new Care in Your Home approach without extending the current frameworks

This option is not recommended, as sufficient time is required to fully research, scope and develop the new CIYH approach, in order to ensure the council has a long term sustainable home care service to support the needs of its residents, both now and in the future.

3. Extend the current frameworks for a longer period

This option would provide a longer extension to existing arrangements beyond the proposed period.

This option is not recommended, as a longer extension would delay the required implementation of the CIYH approach and may not satisfy the proposed extension justification pursuant to the Public Contract Regulations 2015 (PCR 2015). The proposed extension provides sufficient time to support the development and implementation of CIYH.

Key considerations

4. Background and previous decisions

The current primary commissioned home care framework commenced on 1 November 2021, following a full procurement exercise designed to stabilise the local market, improve quality and ensure more sustainable provision across the county. Since its implementation, the framework has been supported by a number of operational and commissioning decisions to respond to emerging system pressures, including the introduction of the secondary framework in November 2022 to increase capacity and reduce waiting lists. These decisions have contributed to improved market stability and reduced unmet need.

The frameworks were extended until 31 October 2026, following a decision by the Corporate Director Community Wellbeing on 25 June 2025. The decision is available on the [council's website](#).

The further extension will build on this foundation and is brought forward in advance of the scheduled end of the framework arrangements to maintain continuity of provision and support transition to the next phase of commissioning through the CIYH approach.

5. Decision context and governance timeline

The recommendation to extend the current home care frameworks aligns with the proposed forward plan for commissioning CIYH, including Cabinet Member decision in October 2026, procurement between November and December 2026 and implementation from 1 May 2027 (and no later than 1 September 2027).

6. Evidence and factual basis for the extension

The extension of the existing home care frameworks will ensure continuity of service provision and maintain market stability while transitioning to CIYH.

The current service supports approximately 834 service users in their own homes each week, which equates to in the region of 11,608 care hours a week.

The evidence demonstrates that demand is increasing in both scale and complexity, with rising hours per person and physical support needs accounting for the majority of provision, which is why it is imperative to extend the frameworks to coincide with the launch of CIYH, to ensure the council can continue to meet the assessed needs of individuals and help keep them safe and supported in their own homes for longer.

These patterns are consistent with national trends in adult social care, including increasing demand associated with demographic change, complexity of need and workforce challenges. Comparable rural authorities experience similar pressures, particularly in relation to cost of delivery, recruitment and retention and service sustainability.

7. Service improvement and performance management

The extension will support continued delivery of safe and responsive services while enabling longer term service improvement through CIYH, including a more outcomes-focused service to improve independence and quality of life for our service users. It will maintain existing quality and performance through stable contractual arrangements and value for money through the current agreed framework rates.

Community impact

8. The home care service supports the delivery of Herefordshire Council's Corporate Plan priorities by enabling people to remain living independently in their own homes for longer, reducing reliance on residential care and supporting wellbeing. Home care services are fundamental to delivering preventative and community-based support, contributing to improved health outcomes and reduced hospital admissions.

The extension also supports the delivery of local and national policy objectives, including the Care Act 2014 duty to meet eligible needs and shape a sustainable care market and the Health and Care Act 2022 objectives relating to integrated care and Home First approaches.

9. The recommendation is informed by a range of evidence sources, including council performance and financial data and the Understanding Herefordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. This evidence base identifies key long-term drivers of demand, including an ageing population, increasing

complexity of need and a shift towards home-based care, which are reflected in current service demand and cost trends.

Ongoing engagement with providers, system partners and stakeholders has further informed the proposal and supports the development of the Care in Your Home (CIYH) approach. This ensures that both current and future commissioning arrangements are aligned to local, evidenced need and delivered in partnership across the health and care system.

10. The recommendation does not have a direct impact on children in care, care leavers or care experienced young people, as it relates to adult social care services. However, in line with the council's corporate parenting responsibilities, consideration has been given to the wider impact of decision making on families and households.

By maintaining continuity of care and supporting independence for adults with care needs, the recommendation indirectly contributes to stable family environments and reduces additional pressures on households, including those where young people may have caring responsibilities.

Environmental impact

11. The extension aligns with the council's environmental policy commitments by maintaining and stabilising locally delivered services, reducing the need for more resource-intensive or reactive service delivery arrangements. The continuation of locality-based commissioning supports more efficient service delivery and helps minimise unnecessary travel, contributing to reduced carbon emissions.

Through ongoing contract management arrangements, providers are encouraged to operate in line with sustainable practices, including efficient routing, use of local resources and minimisation of environmental impact.

12. Herefordshire Council provides and purchases a wide range of services for the people of Herefordshire. Together with partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors we share a strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire's outstanding natural environment.

Environmental considerations will continue to be embedded within contract management processes, including encouraging providers to adopt sustainable working practices, reduce energy use and consider opportunities to minimise carbon emissions.

Equality duty

13. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the council to consider how it can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations and to demonstrate that due regard has been paid to equality considerations in decision making. The council's home care providers will be reminded of their contractual obligations in regard to equality legislation.

14. The mandatory equality impact screening checklist has been completed and the impact of this proposal has been assessed as low. Therefore, a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required. However, the following equality considerations have been taken into account:

- a) The proposal supports continuity of care for vulnerable individuals, including disabled people, older people and individuals with long-term health conditions.
- b) Maintaining home care provision supports equitable access to care services across the county, including for individuals living in rural areas where access to services may otherwise be limited.
- c) The proposal avoids disruption to existing care arrangements, which could disproportionately impact individuals with higher levels of need and protected characteristics.

Resource implications

15. The recommendation relates to the continuation of existing commissioned arrangements and does not represent new investment outside of current service delivery. However, it reflects ongoing cost pressures associated with increasing demand and complexity within home care services.

Home care expenditure has increased from £8.4m in 2022/23 to just over £13.7m in 2025/26, with a predicted spend of approximately £19.8m for future years of the contract, including the extension period, based on current activity levels. The predicated service cost is allocated within the agreed budget for this service.

The extension does not introduce additional capital requirements. Revenue implications will continue to be managed through existing budgets, financial monitoring processes and contract management arrangements.

From an IT perspective, the continued use of the e-brokerage system supports efficient service delivery. From a HR perspective, the proposal supports stability within the provider workforce market. There are no direct property implications arising from this decision.

Revenue budget implications	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	April - August 2027	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
<i>Home care spend 2023/24 – 2025/26 (confirmed) and 2026 onwards (predicted)</i>	£9,886	£11,974	£13,709	£15,642	£4,112	£55,323
Total	£9,886	£11,974	£13,709	£15,642	£4,112	£55,323

Legal implications

16. An extension of the frameworks can be permitted pursuant to 72(1)(e) Public Contracts Regulations 2015 on the basis that the extensions are not substantial amendments. Deeds of

variation will be required to be entered into with all providers on the frameworks to record the extension.

Risk management

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
The extension is not agreed	The council has a statutory obligation to provide a home care service for people with assessed eligible needs. We have undertaken robust engagement with internal and external stakeholders to ensure the extension is a viable, sustainable and agreeable recommendation
Provider challenge or market instability due to uncertainty	Continuity of the frameworks removes potential for uncertainty and supports provider confidence, workforce stability and care continuity and transfer to new arrangements, as it aligns with the launch of CIYH from 1 May 2027
Delays in sourcing care packages impacting service users	The extension will ensure packages are able to be sourced through our frameworks, to ensure care and support is delivered where and when it is needed

17. Risks will be managed at service and directorate level, through existing performance, contract management and risk management processes and will be monitored in line with the council's Performance, Risk and Opportunity Management Framework (PROM).

Consultees

18. Engagement has been undertaken with key stakeholders, including home care providers, internal operational teams and system partners, through regular contract management meetings, provider forums and ongoing commissioning engagement activity.

Provider feedback highlights ongoing challenges relating to workforce capacity, demand pressures and cost of delivery, which have informed both the recommendation to extend the current frameworks and the development of the CIYH approach.

Internal consultation has also taken place with relevant council services to ensure alignment with operational and strategic priorities.

Political engagement has been undertaken through the forward plan process and ongoing discussions with the relevant Cabinet Member.

Feedback from stakeholders has reinforced the need for continuity and stability within the current arrangements and has directly informed the recommendation to extend the frameworks to enable a managed and co-produced transition to the new approach.

Appendices

None identified.

Background papers

None identified.