



Title of report: Approval for draw down of Budget for Equipment and Aids within the Sensory Impairment Service Procurement

Decision maker: Corporate Director Community Wellbeing

Decision date: 15/09/2026

Report by: Senior Commissioning Officer

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

All wards

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the inclusion of a budget of up to £37,000 per annum for a 5 year period with the option to extend for a further two years for specialist equipment and aids within the procurement of the Sensory Impairment Service. This budget was not included within the total contract value approved through the Cabinet Member Decision dated 9 September 2026.

Approval of the equipment and aids budget will increase the maximum contract value by £185,000 over the initial five-year term and by £259,000 over the full potential seven-year term. This will bring the total approved value of the procurement to £780,000 over the initial term and £1,092,000 if the available extensions are used.

The budget is already available within the existing approved Sensory Impairment Service budget, and the decision will not create an additional budget pressure. The approval is required to ensure that the governance approval reflects the full potential value of the procurement.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) **an equipment and aids budget of up to £259,000 (£37,000 per annum) be approved for inclusion within the Sensory Impairment Service procurement; and**
- b) **the total approved value of the procurement be increased to £780,000 over the initial five-year term and £1,092,000 over the full potential seven-year term, inclusive of any extensions.**

Alternative options

1. **Do not approve the equipment and aids budget for inclusion within the procurement.** This option is not recommended. Specialist equipment and aids form an established part of the Sensory Impairment Service and support residents to maintain their independence and manage the effects of sensory loss. Excluding the budget would mean that the approved contract value did not reflect the full scope and potential value of the procurement. It could also restrict the future provider's ability to supply equipment to people following an assessment of their needs.
2. **Procure equipment and aids separately from the Sensory Impairment Service.** This option is not recommended. The requirement for equipment is identified through specialist assessment and rehabilitation activity undertaken as part of the Sensory Impairment Service. Retaining the budget within the service provides a direct link between assessment, identified need and supply of appropriate equipment. A separate arrangement could create additional administration and fragmentation.

Key considerations

3. On 9 September 2026, a Cabinet Member Decision approved the procurement of a Sensory Impairment Service for adults in Herefordshire and authorised the award of a contract for an initial five-year term, with the option to extend for a further two years. The approved value reflected the core service budget of £119,000 per annum (£595,000 over five years and £833,000 over seven years).
4. Following publication of the decision, it was identified that the separate equipment and aids budget of up to £259,000 (£37,000 per annum for up to 7 years) had not been included within the approved contract value. The equipment budget forms part of the proposed service arrangements and is included within the service specification and procurement documentation.
5. The budget supports the provision of specialist equipment and aids identified through assessment and rehabilitation activity. Expenditure is demand-led and subject to assessed need.
6. Approval is therefore sought to include a maximum equipment and aids budget of £185,000 over the initial five-year term and £259,000 over the full potential seven-year term. This increases the total procurement value to £780,000 over five years and £1,092,000 over seven years.
7. The proposal is cost-neutral and will be funded from within the existing approved Sensory Impairment Service budget. It does not create any additional budget pressure.

8. This decision does not alter the service model, procurement route, contract term or intended outcomes approved through the original Cabinet Member Decision. Its purpose is to ensure that the approved contract value accurately reflects the full potential value of the procurement and that the procurement proceeds with the appropriate governance approval in place.

Community impact

9. The decision will support continued access to specialist equipment and aids for residents who are blind, partially sighted, deaf, hard of hearing or living with dual sensory loss.
10. Equipment and assistive technology can help people undertake everyday activities, communicate, access information, manage risks and remain independent in their own homes and communities. The budget therefore supports the preventative aims of the wider Sensory Impairment Service, including improved independence, reduced isolation, improved access to services and communities, and delayed or avoided need for more intensive care and support.
11. The decision is not expected to have a direct adverse effect on children in care, care leavers or care-experienced children and young people. The service primarily supports adults with sensory impairments, although its preventative and inclusion benefits may also support their families and carers.

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 protecting and enhancing Herefordshire's outstanding natural environment.
13. The environmental impact of this decision is expected to be limited. However, the purchase, use, reuse and disposal of equipment can have environmental implications. The service specification and contract management arrangements will therefore require the provider to use resources efficiently, minimise waste and consider the reuse, recycling or responsible disposal of equipment where this is safe, appropriate and consistent with an individual's assessed needs.
14. Where practicable, the provider will also be expected to use sustainable purchasing and delivery arrangements. Environmental considerations will be addressed proportionately through ongoing contract management.
15. The original report already anticipates responsible procurement or recycling of equipment and proportionate monitoring of environmental impacts

Equality duty

16. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to consider how it can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations and demonstrate that it is paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.

17. The mandatory Equality Impact Screening Checklist has been completed for the Sensory Impairment Service procurement. The screening identified a low risk of adverse impact, and a full Equality Impact Assessment was therefore not required.
18. This decision is expected to have a positive impact on disabled people by maintaining access to specialist equipment and aids that can help reduce barriers associated with sight loss, hearing loss and dual sensory impairment. Appropriate equipment can support communication, access to information, personal safety, mobility, everyday activities and independent living.
19. Equipment and aids will be provided in response to assessed need, and the provider will be expected to ensure that access is fair, person-centred and responsive to individual communication and accessibility requirements.

20. **Resource implications**

21. The existing approved annual budget for the Sensory Impairment Service is £156,000. Under the proposed arrangements this comprises:
 - a. £119,000 per annum for delivery of the core service; and
 - b. up to £37,000 per annum for specialist equipment and aids.
22. The previously approved contract value included the core service budget but did not include the equipment and aids budget within the stated total procurement value.
23. The maximum equipment and aids expenditure will be:
 - a. £185,000 over the initial five-year contract term; and
 - b. £259,000 over the maximum seven-year period, if the available extensions are exercised.
24. The inclusion of this amount results in an overall procurement value of:

Budget element	Five-year value	Seven-year value
Core Sensory Impairment Service	£595,000	£833,000
Equipment and aids	£185,000	£259,000
Total potential procurement value	£780,000	£1,092,000

25. The proposal does not increase the Council's existing annual budget for the Sensory Impairment Service.
26. Equipment expenditure is demand-led. The £37,000 annual allocation represents the maximum available amount rather than a guaranteed level of expenditure. Actual expenditure will depend upon assessed needs and the type and volume of equipment required.

Legal implications

27. This decision is to include the equipment element into the original [Cabinet Member decision](#) that was made on the 9th September 2026.

28. That decision was a key decision and the requirements for transparency in relation to the Forward Plan were complied with (under The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012. Political groups were consulted on the 15 July 2026.
29. This decision is to spend a further maximum of £259k which under the council's arrangements is considered non-key and is a decision for the Corporate Director.
30. The relevant legal provisions for this decision can be found in the council's constitution, www.herefordshire.gov.uk/constitution.

Risk management

Risk or opportunity	Mitigation
If the additional budget is not approved, the approved procurement value will not reflect the full potential value of the contract.	Approval of the equipment and aids budget will align the governance approval with the service specification and procurement documentation before the tender is published.
If the decision is not approved, the procurement will be unable to proceed in its intended form.	Complete the required approval process before publication of the tender and review the procurement timetable with Procurement.
A delay to the procurement could affect the planned contract commencement and continuity of service.	Review the procurement and mobilisation timetable and consider appropriate contingency arrangements for the existing service if these are required.

Consultees

31. The wider Sensory Impairment Service procurement was considered by the Strategic Commissioning Group in July 2026 and was supported to progress to procurement.
32. A Political Groups Consultation was held on 15 July 2026 for the original decision taken on 9 September. Members supported the continued provision of the Sensory Impairment Service and recognised its importance in helping people with sensory impairments maintain their independence and wellbeing. Members also emphasised the importance of ensuring that the service reaches eligible residents.

Appendices

None

Background papers

None identified

Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.

Term or acronym	Meaning
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CMD	Cabinet Member Decision
EqIA	Equality Impact Assessment
ITT	Invitation to Tender
RFI	Request for Information
SIS	Sensory Impairment Service
SCG	Strategic Commissioning Group