
Subject:	REVISION OF EXISTING HOUSING ASSISTANCE POLICY
Meeting and Date:	Cabinet – 7 June 2021
Report of:	Diane Croucher, Head of Regulatory Services
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Derek Murphy, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health
Decision Type:	Key Decision
Classification:	Unrestricted

Purpose of the report: To obtain approval for a revised Housing Assistance Policy whose purpose is to simplify the grant administration for applicants and the Council.

Recommendation: That Cabinet approves revisions to the Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy to:

- i) Amend the existing policy in order to simplify and improve the assistance available to disabled residents.
- (ii) Authorise the Head of Regulatory Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health, to make further minor changes to the policy.

1. Summary

1.1 The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002. (RRO), allows a Local Housing Authority (LHA) to give financial assistance to homeowners for repairs and improvements to their homes. The order requires the LHA to agree and publish a Housing Assistance Policy before assistance can be given. The policy should detail the conditions and types of grants and loans that are to be made available. The current policy was approved by the Council in July 2017 and now requires some amendment.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) are grants that all Councils are legally required to provide. Funding for this grant is provided by Government. Since April 2016 this funding has been provided through the Better Care Fund and has seen our Councils funding double. (Last year's grant was £1,275,590). This has allowed the Council to consider providing funding for additional types of assistance under the RRO. One of the primary aims behind the additional funding is to ensure that more disabled people can live independently in their own homes for longer.

2.2 The 2017 Policy provided several additional grants to spend this additional money and this has been very successful in helping more disabled and vulnerable residents. This report recommends that Cabinet agrees some revisions to the 2017 Policy to improve and simplify the provision of this additional funding. A copy of the proposed, revised policy is attached at Appendix A.

2.3 Under the current policy there have been cases where the works of adaptation has resulted in the work being funded by up to four different grants/loans. Although this is

not common it is not unusual for an applicant to make two or three applications to fund the works.

The proposed change is to replace the Disabled Adaptation Grant with a Disabled Independent Grant (DIG). This new grant will deal with most situations so that in future an applicant will have either a DFG or a DIG. The main features of a DIG are:

- The grant will have a maximum limit of £38000. (*DFG's is £30,000 and DAG £20,000*)
- Repairs of up to £3000 can be included. (*Repairs are not included in DFG or DAG*)
- Grant conditions only apply for grants that exceed of £15,000. (*Conditions for DFG start at £5,000*)

3. Identification of Options

3.1 Option 1: To approve the revisions to the Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy as set out in this report and provided in the attached appendix.

3.2 Option 2: Approve the revised Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy subject to further amendments.

3.3 Option 3: To reject the revised Housing Assistance Policy.

4. Evaluation of Options

4.1 Option 1 is the recommended option as it will enable the Council to:

- More effectively utilise DFG funding in accordance with Government guidance and reduce administration.

4.2 Option 2 will need to take account of:

- The increased additional funding that will need to be spent and the objectives the funding is expected to meet contained in the Better Care Fund Policy Framework.

4.3 Option 3 is not recommended as it will mean that spending the budget is not used as efficient and will not reduce the unnecessary administration of the current policy.

5. Resource Implications

5.1 There are no expected additional resources required and the budget will be continuously monitored.

6. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

6.1 The change in policy will have no adverse effects on climate change or Environmental implications.

7 Corporate Implications

7.1 Comment from the Director of Finance (linked to the MTFP): Accountancy has been consulted and has no further comments (DL)

7.2 Comment from the Solicitor to the Council: The Solicitor to the Council has been consulted in the preparation of this report and has no further comments to make

7.3 Comment from the Equalities Officer: The report has given consideration to the equality implications and the revised policy is designed to benefit and have a positive impact on some of the protected groups under the Equality Act 2010. In discharging their duties members are required to comply with the public sector equality duty as set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/149>

7.4 Comments from Climate Change and Energy Conservation Officer: The provision of these grants that improve the thermal efficiency of the property reduce heat loss through the fabric of the building with the consequence of reducing demand for heat to achieve affordable warmth hence reducing carbon emissions (where heat source is from fossil fuels).

8 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Revised Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy 2021

9 Background Papers

Existing Housing Assistance Policy 2017

Department of Health/DCLG “Integration and BCF Policy Framework 2017-19“(March 2017)

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