

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Cambridgeshire Housing Adaptations & Repairs Policy

Meeting/Date: Cabinet – 21st March 2019

Executive Portfolio: Councillor Ryan Fuller, Executive Councillor for Housing, Planning and Economic Development

Report by: Andy Moffat, Head of Development

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

The District Council has a statutory duty to provide Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs), but in some circumstances it may be more beneficial to a resident and more cost effective to the Council to assist the resident by providing Relocation Assistance to help the disabled person to move to a more appropriate home. There are also other circumstances when the Council may choose to support a resident. This Cambridgeshire-wide (not including Peterborough) policy sets out the circumstances when DFGs will – and Top Up Assistance, Relocation Assistance and Special Purposes Assistance may – be provided. Importantly, it also makes clear that any Top Up Assistance, Relocation Assistance or Special Purposes Assistance will be dependent on the resources available. In recent years, the Council's spend on DFGs alone has significantly exceeded the grant received from the Better Care Fund (BCF). The policy sets out details of each form of assistance, and eligibility. The Policy sets out when DFGs will be available, and the circumstances when the other forms of assistance may be available.

The government recently announced a national review of Disabled Facilities Grants. This policy would also provide clarity and assurance as to how additional BCF funding would be used, and would help provide support for an increase in funding.

A Summary of the Policy is provided as Appendix 1, and the full policy is provided as Appendix 2.

Recommendation:

That Cabinet adopts the Cambridgeshire Housing Adaptations & Repairs Policy.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To outline the statutory requirement to provide Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) and the discretionary options that can be an alternative (Relocation Assistance and/or Special Purposes Assistance) or in addition (Top Up Assistance) to a DFG, and the benefits of a Policy that sets out the circumstances when each may be appropriate.

2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY/BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The District Council has a statutory duty to provide DFGs and they will continue to be the priority for the Council's DFG budget, but there may be circumstances where it would be more beneficial to a resident and more cost effective to the Council to assist the resident by providing Relocation Assistance to help the disabled person to move to a more appropriate home.
- 2.2 There may also be circumstances where the cost of the approved works exceeds the maximum DFG grant amount (currently £30K) and the Council wishes to provide a loan as a Top Up. This might be appropriate where, having taken all reasonable steps, funding cannot be found from other sources; not carrying out the works would mean that the applicant would be unable to remain living in the community; the person or their carer would be at significant risk if the work was not completed; or completion of the work would potentially bring significant savings in other areas of public provision including health, social care, and education.
- 2.3 Given the current pressure on the Council's DFG budget, it is extremely unlikely that funding would be available for further assistance, but the Policy sets out the circumstances where Special Purposes Assistance might be provided if significant further funding through the Better Care Fund was provided.
- 2.4 This Policy sets out the circumstances when DFGs will be available, and the circumstances when the other forms of assistance may be available. It reflects changes in circumstances since and would supersede the Cambridgeshire Housing Adaptations Agreement agreed by Cabinet in March 2017.

3. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 3.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Customer and Partnerships) considered the report at their meeting on 7th March 2019. Having previously looked at the subject as a Panel, Members expressed their support and requested that the Cabinet adopt the Cambridgeshire Housing Adaptations Policy.

4. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS

- 4.1 Whilst the Policy is clear that DFGs will be the priority, and other assistance will be subject to resources/funding being available, there is a risk that the Policy will lead to greater expectation and more enquiries for discretionary loans or grants than cannot be funded from the current budget.
- 4.2 If this Policy is not adopted, enquiries would be assessed and prioritised against the Cambridgeshire Housing Adaptations Agreement 2017.

5. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN/TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 5.1 If adopted, the Policy would take effect from April 2019.

6. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND / OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

- 6.1 The Huntingdonshire Corporate Plan 2018-2022 includes a vision to 'support people to improve their health and wellbeing'. There is a performance indicator linked to this vision which is to monitor 'the average time between dates of referral for Disabled Facilities Grants to practical completion for minor jobs up to £10k'. One of the five themes in the Annual Governance Statement is Morbidity/Growing numbers of years of ill health – impacting on people's ability to be self-reliant and generating additional cost through support needs.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The Policy has been prepared in partnership with Cambridge City, South Cambs, East Cambs and Fenland Councils.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Policy ensures that prioritisation for statutory DFGs remains.

9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Policy makes clear that resourcing for the discretionary services is dependent on there being resources available, but provides a framework to ensure that cost effective alternatives to DFGs e.g. Relocation Assistance is also considered.

10. HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The key objectives of the policy are: to support healthy, safe and independent living; to help prevent hospital, care home or residential school admission; to facilitate a patient being discharged from hospital and enabling them to live safely and independently at home, including making it easier for carers to provide support; to prevent the need for higher expenditure elsewhere in the health and/or social care system; and to improve housing conditions and remove hazards in the home (i.e. Category 1 hazards under the Health & Safety Rating System).

11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out on this Policy to ensure that the Policy takes into account the needs of all groups, and that particular groups of people are not adversely affected by it.

12. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 12.1 Adoption of the Cambridgeshire Housing Adaptations & Repairs Policy will ensure that the circumstances in which DFGs will be available, and other forms of assistance may, be available are clearly set out without putting added pressure on the Disabled Facilities Grant budget.

13. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 - Cambridgeshire Housing Adaptations & Repairs Policy Summary of Policy

Appendix 2 - Cambridgeshire Housing Adaptations & Repairs Policy

BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Cambridgeshire Housing Adaptations Agreement - 16th March 2017 Cabinet](#)

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