

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO HEALTH & HOUSING COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No. 9

meeting date: 7 SEPTEMBER 2017
title: UPDATE ON DFG POLICY AMENDMENTS
submitted by: MARSHAL SCOTT, CHIEF EXECUTIVE
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1 PURPOSE

1.1 To update Committee on the proposed revisions to the Disabled Facilities Grant Policy.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities

- Community Objectives – Address the identified housing needs in the borough.
- Corporate Priorities – None.
- Other Considerations – None.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 In May 2017 a set of proposed DFG policy amendments were reported to Committee and approved. These changes are summarised as:

- Non-means tested adaptation for all recommendations under £5,000
- An increase in the maximum grant to £40,000
- To introduce a 10% fee for admin charges
- To commission the use of a private OT where necessary

3 ISSUES

3.1 The grant policy amendments were approved by Committee in May 2017 subject to LCC confirmation that the proposals meet the Better Care Grant Award conditions. After numerous email exchanges with LCC, a response has finally been confirmed on 16 August that the proposals will not be approved as a 'social care capital project' as set out in the Better Care fund. However, the proposals can be covered by the Regulatory Reform Order 2002 and this is set out in the Integration and Better Care Planning requirements 2017/19.

3.2 All Local Authorities are required to set out in their plans how the DFG funding will be used over the two years. Since 2008-09, the scope for how DFG funding can be used has been widened to support any LA expenditure incurred under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (RRO). This enables authorities to use specific DFG funding for wider purposes.

3.3 This discretionary use of the funding can help improve delivery and reduce the bureaucracy involved in the DFG application process, helping to speed up the process. For example, LAs could use an alternative means test, increase the maximum grant amount, or offer a service which rapidly deals with inaccessible housing and the need for quick discharge of people from hospital. The Care Act also

requires LAs to establish and maintain an information and advice service in their area. The BCF plan should consider the contribution that can be made by the housing authority and local Home Improvement Agency to the provision of information and advice, particularly around housing issues.' <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/integration-better-care-fund-planning-requirements.pdf>.

Therefore, the proposal is now to consider delivering the DFG policy amendments through powers set out in the Regulatory Reform Order by publishing a discretionary disabled facilities grant policy.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications

- Resources – The grant expenditure reported to this Committee sets out the resources available to deliver the scheme.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – The Council will investigate the implications of making available a mandatory and discretionary grant award.
- Political – The proposal will enable an increased number of adaptations and number of people that will benefit from the service.
- Reputation – The proposal demonstrates the Council's commitment to improve the DFG service.
- Equality & Diversity – Any changes will be to make the grant more accessible and benefit more households.

5 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

5.1 Approve that the introduction of discretionary grant policy is investigated and reported to the next Health and Housing Committee.

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