

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO HEALTH & HOUSING COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No. 6

meeting date: THURSDAY, 21 MARCH 2019
title: REVIEW OF DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS
submitted by: NICOLA HOPKINS – DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING
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1 PURPOSE

1.1 To provide Members with a review of the current position and delivery in 2018/2019 in terms of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) and propose a revised policy for DFG delivery in 2019/2020.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities

- Community Objectives – To address the identified housing needs of the borough.
- Corporate Priorities - To be a well managed and efficient Council.
- Other Considerations – None.

2 INFORMATION

2.1 In May 2017 it was reported to Committee that the Better Care fund (BCF) allocation allowed a more flexible approach to the delivery of disabled adaptations.

2.2 Various amendments were proposed to the policy and approved by Committee; these amendments have been incorporated into the Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant Policy which is attached at Appendix 1 and this was first adopted in January 2018.

2.3 This report is a review of the delivery of DFG's one year from the introduction of the new policy.

3 DFG POLICY 2018/2019

3.1 The key change to the policy was the introduction of a discretionary grant. This meant as a Council we were able to offer some form of assistance to every household that we received an Occupational therapist (OT) recommendation from.

3.2 The discretionary grant 'Ribble Valley Adaptation' offers a grant of a maximum of £5000 towards one adaptation recommended. To date the Council have completed 32 Ribble Valley Adaptations (RVA) and therefore it was proved to be very successful. In total there has been £113,293 committed to Ribble Valley adaptations over the year. This year we are proposing to cap the maximum amount spent of RVA's at £80,000. When the grant was introduced the proposal to cap the amount that could be spent of RVA's was considered but not introduced until a year of the operating policy was completed. The proposal to introduce a cap on the maximum spent on discretionary grants (RVAs) is to ensure the spend on RVA's is restricted and mandatory grants remain the priority.

3.3 Minor amendments have been made to the wording of the Ribble Valley Adaptation grant description paragraph 5 to provide clarification around the cases where a contribution from the household has been calculated.

3.4 Another type of discretionary grant, the top-up grant was also introduced under the new policy. This could be considered the most successful aspect of the new policy. The top-up grant is only available where the maximum mandatory grant cannot meet the cost of the works. Therefore without this grant many large paediatric and complex adult cases were not able to progress. This top-up grant enables those households with the most complex needs to have their specialist housing needs met. To date 5 households have been assisted with the type of grant and a further 2 are at application stage.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications

- Resources – Resources available to deliver disabled adaptations have been increased with the new allocation. The Council were offered an additional amount of BCF funding and also requested further funding in addition to this allocation. A request for a contribution towards DFG funding from Onward Housing has also been received.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – The discretionary policy provides clear guidance to all applicants and partners in administering the grants available.
- Political – Enabling applicants to stay and live independently in their own home is a priority for the Council and health and wellbeing agenda.
- Reputation – The Council is keen to demonstrate all the partnership work involved in delivering the adaptation service and that more households will be assisted.
- Equality & Diversity – More households should be assisted under the new policy.

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 Accept the contents of this report and agree the amendments to the DFG policy.

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Ribble Valley
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Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant Policy

Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996

The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002

Reviewed March 2019

1. Introduction

Housing is a key determinant of health and poor housing is directly linked to poor health. This disabled facilities grant policy details the financial assistance that the Council aims to provide to support improvements to enable disabled occupants to remain in their own home through the use of the Better Care Fund allocation.

The Council is required to adopt a Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant Policy which sets out how it intends to use its discretion to develop schemes having regard to the needs of the Borough, the availability of funding, and the Council's priorities.

This Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant Policy forms part of the Council's over-arching Housing Strategy. This policy was first adopted January 2018 and has proved to be successful in supporting the householder to maintain independent living.

2. Aims and priorities

Improving the housing conditions across the Borough will support improvements in health and well-being as well as having a positive impact on the quality of local neighbourhoods, particularly for those residents who are vulnerable and cannot access their homes and gardens due to their disability.

This policy sets out in greater detail our offer to disabled occupants and their families. It also details to local Councillors, local residents and our stakeholders how we will work to maintain and improve the provision of adapted property across the borough.

Appendix 1 details the assistance schemes that the Council intends to offer during the life of this policy and sets out specific eligibility criteria relating to each scheme.

The health and well-being of disabled and vulnerable residents is often compromised due to their homes not meeting their specific needs, and this can impact on their ability to live with dignity within their homes.

3. Disabled Facilities Grants

The Council has a statutory obligation to administer mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) to provide aids and adaptations to enable disabled residents to live independently within their own homes.

The eligibility requirements, scope of works, and the general requirements governing mandatory DFGs are prescribed and the Council is unable to deviate from these requirements.

The Council is required to administer Disabled Facilities Grants to all eligible applicants irrespective of their tenure, and the Council aims to work collaboratively with housing associations to fund aids and adaptations within social housing wherever possible to ensure everyone has the same opportunity to have their home adapted.

In some cases the use of Disabled Facilities Grants is able to assist with reducing the length of stay in hospital and facilitating a quick return to home. This also reduces the demand for residential care placements.

4. Discretionary Top-up Grant

The Council have agreed to use discretionary powers to provide in eligible cases a top-up award in addition to the £30,000 mandatory grant. In more complex cases the work required often goes over the mandatory grant award maximum. This top-up of a maximum of £10,000 will assist to provide all the required work identified by the Occupational Therapist. In addition to this, the 10% administration fee will also be eligible for the discretionary grant. The additional £10,000 can only be accessed where the full £30,000 of mandatory grant has been utilised. The discretionary element will be registered as a land charge if the works include alterations to the property on owner occupied properties and, in the event the property is sold within a 10 year period, the Council require repayment. * Please see exception policy. In exceptional circumstances where more than one DFG is approved, more than £10,000 may be registered.

The availability of the top-up grant is at the discretion of the Council and subject to availability of funding.

5. Ribble Valley Adaptation Grant

For some households the means testing requirement makes them not eligible for assistance. This often means the works are not carried out or don't fully meet the person needs. The Ribble Valley adaptation allows a grant to provide 1 item as recommended by the Occupational Therapist up to a maximum of £5,000. This will fund the cost of the 1 item prioritised by the Occupational Therapist. Where the RVA is providing the calculated contribution the applicant will still be eligible for further items to be provided as a DFG. The applicant can then choose as to whether they fund the remaining works themselves. The full grant will be registered as a land charge if the works include alterations to the property on owner occupied properties and, in the event the property is sold within a 10 year period, the Council require repayment. * Please see exception policy.

The availability of the Ribble Valley Adaptation Grant is at the discretion of the Council and is subject to the availability of funding.

6. Review of the policy

The ability to provide Discretionary Top up and Ribble Valley Adaptation grants will be reviewed quarterly with regard to financial capacity to award the discretionary element. Mandatory grants will take priority.

The provision of Discretionary Top up and Ribble Valley Adaptation DFGs will be reported to each Health and Housing Committee.

The policy will be reviewed annually by the Health and Housing Committee.

Priority 1 – Assist disabled and vulnerable residents to remain in their homes through the provision of aids and adaptations

Scheme	Assistance Available	Purpose	Scope of Assistance	Eligibility	Scheme Conditions
<p>Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant</p>	<p><u>Maximum assistance per application:</u></p> <p>Statutory maximum: £30,000 from Better Care Fund allocation</p>	<p><u>Assistance to:</u></p> <p>Meet the Council's statutory obligation to assist disabled residents to live independently in their homes</p>	<p><u>Aids and adaptations to:</u></p> <p>a) be recommended by an Occupational Therapist;</p> <p>b) meet the regulations governing eligibility for works, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ adaptations to aid access into and around the property; ▪ works to ensure the safety of the applicant; ▪ provision of suitable bathroom or sleeping facilities, heating, and access to lighting and power; ▪ provision of suitable kitchen facilities or adaptation of existing kitchen, and; ▪ works to enable a disabled resident to care for dependent residents. 	<p><u>Applications considered from:</u></p> <p>a) disabled home owners;</p> <p>b) disabled tenants (both in the private and social housing sectors);</p> <p>c) disabled persons living at home with their family, and;</p> <p>d) parents or guardians of a disabled child;</p>	<p><u>Applications to include:</u></p> <p>a) completed application form, and;</p> <p>b) two estimates for the works in the required format</p> <p><u>Applications subject to:</u></p> <p>a) means test through standard test of resources, except where;</p> <p>b) the grant is approved in respect of a disabled child under the age of 19</p> <p><u>Works to be:</u></p> <p>a) completed within 12 months of grant approval;</p> <p>b) completed to the satisfaction of the Council</p>

Scheme	Assistance Available	Purpose	Scope of Assistance	Eligibility	Scheme Conditions
					<p><u>Grants in excess of £5,000 to be:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) registered as a local land charge against the property if the works include alterations to the property on owner occupied properties (ie, not equipment) b) 10% admin fee is charged where technical support is used. 5% admin fee where there is no technical input c) a maximum of £10,000 be repaid if the property is sold, transferred, or assigned within 10 years.
Ribble Valley Adaptation Grant	<p>Maximum individual grant £5,000 + admin fee</p> <p>To be funded from Better Care Fund</p>	<p>As per Mandatory DFG towards the one item</p>	<p>Ribble Valley adaptation DFG only applicable for 1 item or the contribution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provision of stair lift • conversion bathroom to wetroom • ceiling track hoist • wash only bidet • provision of ramps, half steps and galvanised rails 	<p>As per mandatory DFG</p> <p>Only 1 Ribble Valley adaptation grant within a 5 year period</p>	<p>All scheme conditions are the same as Mandatory DFG above except:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no means test • the full grant will be registered as a charge against the property for 10 years, if the works include alterations to the

Scheme	Assistance Available	Purpose	Scope of Assistance	Eligibility	Scheme Conditions
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • access inside or outside the property • Any other adaptation as recommended by the OT 		property owner occupied (ie, not equipment).
Disabled Facilities Discretionary Top up Grant	<u>Maximum assistance per application:</u> £10,000 from Better Care Fund allocation + admin fee	<u>Assistance to:</u> a) provide top-up funding to meet the reasonable cost of aids and adaptations to assist the applicant to live independently in their home, where a Disabled Facilities Grant is approved at the statutory maximum and the eligible expense less contribution also exceeds the statutory maximum (currently £30,000).	<u>Aids and adaptations to be:</u> (As set out above for Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants)	<u>Applications considered from:</u> a) applicants for a Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant, where the eligible costs of the work exceed the mandatory grant	<u>Applications to include:</u> a) No separate application - assistance linked to Mandatory DFG application <u>Applications subject to:</u> a) means test through standard test of resources, except where b) the grant is approved in respect of a disabled child under the age of 19 <u>Works to be:</u> a) completed within 12 months of application approval b) completed to the satisfaction of the Council <u>All the discretionary top up grant amount to be:</u>

Scheme	Assistance Available	Purpose	Scope of Assistance	Eligibility	Scheme Conditions
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) registered as a local land charge against the property if the works include alterations to the property on owner occupied properties (ie, not equipment) b) 10% admin fee is charged where technical support is used. 5% admin fee where there is no technical input c) the full grant to be repaid if the property is sold, transferred, or assigned within 10 years.