

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE PANEL REPORT

REPORT TO:	The Corporate Performance Panel		
DATE:	22 nd January 2018		
TITLE:	Update and amendments to the Private Sector Housing Policy		
TYPE OF REPORT:	Policy		
PORTFOLIO(S):	Councillor Adrian Lawrence		
REPORT AUTHOR:	Jo Russell		
OPEN/EXEMPT		WILL BE SUBJECT TO A FUTURE CABINET REPORT:	Yes

REPORT SUMMARY/COVER PAGE

PURPOSE OF REPORT/SUMMARY:

The Council administers Disabled Facility Grants (DFGs) on behalf of the Government. The funding for the DFG is paid via the Better Care Fund initially to NCC and then passported to this Council.

The Better Care Fund (BCF)/Disabled Facility Grant (DFG) allocation award has been increased in West Norfolk from £759,000 in 2015/16 to £1,352,170 in 2017/18 and there is an expectation that this allocation will either be maintained or will increase marginally year on year until 2020 to meet with the demand on the service.

The council make a contribution to the BCF/DFG allocation dependant on the financial resources available.

The conditions attached to all capital grant funding pooled through the BCF states that it will need to be allocated on the basis that local plans are jointly developed and agreed with relevant local authorities.

As a result of this colleagues from the district borough have met with representatives from the Norfolk County Council/Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to discuss and agree a plan for the West. In addition to the statutory duty to provide adaptations to the homes of disabled people the following areas have formed part of the planned activity and delivery for 2017/18 and forthcoming years:

- Hospital Discharge – support patients to be discharged from hospital in a timely manner, reducing delays
- Target approaches – proactive use of funding for identified cohorts of people, to ensure they continue to be able to live independently in their home
- Staffing capacity and resources – consider how staffing capacity can be aligned and optimised to ensure timely and effective adaptations.

There are four required outcomes/benefits that form part of the BCF metrics which have to be reported on at a local CCG level:

1. Support people to remain independent
2. Reduce permanent care home admissions
3. Reduce hospital admissions
4. Support discharge from acute services

The purpose of this paper is to recommend changes proposed for the Private Sector

Housing Investment Policy. This Policy has not been updated since 2012 and there is a need to reflect the requirements within the Better Care Fund (BCF) and the DFG Locality plan within the policy.

KEY ISSUES:

A summary of the intended changes are:-

1. Re-Name the policy to Housing Assistance Policy – Mandatory and Discretionary.
2. The policy will cover key areas of assistance which will be written into separate appendices. It allows for minor changes to be made to individual appendices by delegated power to the relevant Director.
3. Adapt Grant – to increase the maximum grant limit to £12,000 and to add a condition of this grant that the council may demand the repayment by the recipient of such part of the grant that exceeds £5,000 (but may not demand an amount in excess of £10,000) if the client disposes of the premises within 10 years of the certified date. Include fast tracking all hospital discharge/hospital admission/referrals received from a health professional cases for ramp works only – exclude the means test process for those cases that would normally require this financial assessment and passport them through the application process.
Provide all minor adaptations where the works cost £1,000 and under without a financial assessment.
4. To create a separate Relocation Grant to a maximum of £6,000 this will offer assistance with removal costs and other associated costs.
5. To introduce a Low Level Preventative Grant for works under £300 – this will include minor adaptations and equipment provision and will target those that would benefit from an early intervention that have a health condition, to prevent the need for further adaptation services in the future.
6. Provide Discretionary Adaptation Assistance – this is a loan for works that exceed the DFG limit of £30,000 available to home owners – to reduce the loan maximum from £15,000 to £10,000 and to include cases where the applicant has been means tested and has a contribution to pay towards the cost of work but where no other financial assistance is available to fund this contribution.
7. Emergency Repair Grant – this is a grant to help vulnerable households with emergency repairs to alleviate the most significant hazards – this will remain. The policy amendment is to increase the maximum grant level to £500 for works and remove the Care & Repair fee of £250
8. Safety and Security Grant – this is a grant to help fund minor repairs to support day to day living and independence. Policy amendment is to change the eligibility in line with the low Level Preventative Grant to assist those with a health condition.
9. The Careline Grant – this grant is to provide access to 24 hour support by way of a community alarm. The policy amendment is to add in a qualifying criteria to include anyone with a diagnosis of dementia or memory difficulties and for anyone with a direct referral from health to avoid delayed transfer of care.
10. The formation of Housing Review Panel to make some decisions regarding policy administration. Senior officers from other services and departments including Legal Services and Financial Services may on occasion be invited to attend. A quorum for the panel will comprise a chair and at least two other officers from the list below:

- Service Manager
- IHAT Manager
- Housing Services Manager
- Senior Housing Standards officer

The aim of the panel is to provide a formalised system for unusual cases to be discussed and considered on their individual merits, thus promoting consistent decision making. In some cases the panel will determine the course of action, in others where the situation may set a significant precedent; the panel will present a report to the Portfolio Holding Council Cabinet Member and Director for a decision. Minor changes to the policy which do not affect the broad scope of the policy may from time to time be made by the Director in consultation with the portfolio holding council cabinet member.

11. Small Projects or Initiatives – to add an appendices covering any small project or initiatives that may be funded internally or externally.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED:

The intended changes made within the Private Sector Housing Investment Policy reflect the requirements of the BCF and the DFG Locality Plan. This will ensure the council works collaboratively to improve outcomes across health, social care and housing particularly focusing on reducing hospital and care admissions and supporting early discharge from hospital.

The changes will not only meet these national and local plans but will also increase the speed of processing the adaptations to meet the increase in demand.

It will create a fast-track pathway for the most vulnerable people that require discharge from hospital and residential care to a home environment where they can remain living safely and independently with a reduced care package.

There are no alternative proposals to meet the desired outcome.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

To note and approve the policy

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

REPORT DETAIL

1. Introduction/Background

See purpose of the report

2. Proposal/Post Implementation Review/Monitoring Report

See summary of changes

3. Issues for the Panel to Consider

4. Corporate Priorities

Update and amendments to the Private Sector Housing Policy fit within Priority 6 of the Corporate Priorities: Work with our partners on important services for the borough. This states – “we will work closely with partners in health and adult services to improve services for older people”.

5. Financial Implications

Increased Better Care Funding since 2015/16
Increased council contribution to the capital budget

6. Any other Implications/Risks

The risks are that demand is increasing and there is a waiting list

7. Equal Opportunity Considerations

8. Consultation

Duncan Hall
John Greenhalgh
Debbie Gates
Emma Boore
Councillor Adrian Lawrence

9. Conclusion

The recommendations to amend the Policy

10. Background Papers

The draft Housing Assistance Policy