

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO AND DECISION OF CABINET ON 9 DECEMBER 2019

SUBJECT: WEST SUSSEX DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT POLICY

REPORT AUTHOR: Nat Slade – Group Head of Technical Services

DATE: 06 November 2019

EXTN: 37683

PORTFOLIO AREA: Technical Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The report seeks approval of the West Sussex Disabled Facilities Grants Policy which has been developed in Partnership with West Sussex County Council and all the West Sussex District and Borough Councils to utilise the Better Care Funding; more flexibly improve consistency and enable residents to live more independently within their own home.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that Cabinet agrees:

- a. To adopt the Disabled Facilities Grants Policy appended to this report; and
- b. To give authority to the Group Head of Technical Services in consultation with the Cabinet member for Technical Services to make any future amendments and updates to the policy.

1. BACKGROUND:

- 1.1 The Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is a mandatory grant, provided under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, towards the cost of eligible works necessary to support people of all ages and most tenures to live independently and safely in their own homes. Local Authorities have a statutory duty to provide DFGs to applicants who qualify. (Adaptations to council owned housing are provided via a different route and a separate funding stream)
- 1.2 The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (RRO) enables Councils to support the wider prevention agenda of housing, social care and health authorities. The Care Act 2014 provided further direction towards earlier intervention and prevention.

- 1.3 In 2015 Government funding was pooled into a single budget for health and social care services to work more closely together – the Better Care Fund (BCF). The BCF provided an increase in funding for home adaptations and other interventions to improve integration between health, social care and housing services.
- 1.4 The BCF is contributing to the additional allocation for DFGs provided to the Councils in West Sussex under an annual determination from Central Government. The BCF aims to improve health and wellbeing by encouraging more flexible use of DFG monies.
- 1.5 The Districts and Boroughs in West Sussex have come together to agree a single DFG Policy which applies across the whole county area with the aim to improve consistency for residents to help them live safely and independently for as long as possible at home.
- 1.6 Members agreed the adoption of an interim policy at the 11 December 2017 Cabinet meeting and the Policy appended to this report will replace that previously adopted interim policy, having now had appropriate time to implement it and review its effectiveness and delivery.
- 1.7 The Policy brings together the two main elements of DFG work i.e. mandatory grants and discretionary grants. Mandatory grants will always take precedence as these are a statutory requirement. Discretionary grants are possible due to the increased level of funding through the BCF but can only be provided whilst there is sufficient funding. Each Council across West Sussex has reserved the right to withdraw discretionary grants if there is insufficient funding
- 1.8 The detail of the proposal is appended to this report however as examples the Policy includes features which speed up the process for residents, help people to leave hospital more quickly and safely, provides help in cases of hardship, help for residents to move home to better meet their needs and enables help to be given to make homes safer, warmer and more suitable. It also reflects the needs of people with dementia and those who are at the end of life.
- 1.9 The Councils across West Sussex are all in the process of seeking approval from Members for the new Policy. It is proposed to implement the new Policy with effect from January 2020.
- 1.10 The multi-agency DFG Project Steering Group, chaired by Chichester District Council's Chief Executive, will continue to lead and steer the project and will monitor the impact of the Policy.

2. PROPOSAL(S):

It is recommended that Cabinet agrees:

- a. To adopt the Disabled Facilities Grants policy appended to this report.
- b. To give authority to the Group Head of Technical Services in consultation with the Cabinet member for Technical Services to make any future amendments and updates to the policy.

3. OPTIONS:

To not adopt the disabled facilities, grant policy appended to this report.

To not give authority to the Group Head of Technical Services in consultation with the Cabinet member for Technical Services to make any future amendments and updates to the policy.

4. CONSULTATION:

Has consultation been undertaken with:	YES	NO
Relevant Town/Parish Council		X
Relevant District Ward Councillors		X
Other groups/persons (please specify) The DFG project is multi-agency and the proposed Policy has been drafted after extensive discussion and consultation with District and Borough teams, several County Council services, health colleagues and organisations in the voluntary sector. West Sussex Chief Executives have been fully consulted with and involved since the start of the project providing decisions as required for the project. The customer feedback form includes an option for residents to participate in further feedback and consultation on the DFG services provided by the Council. The County Adaptations Manager has approached some of these respondents about their experiences and to explain some of the Policy elements being taken forward.	X	
5. ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: (Explain in more detail at 6 below)	YES	NO
Financial	X	
Legal		X
Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment		X
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act		X
Sustainability		X
Asset Management/Property/Land		X
Technology		X
Other (please explain)		X

6. IMPLICATIONS:

Financial:

The Council's DFG allocation is provided via the BCF on the basis of a determination (formula) set by central Government. The County Council, who receive the BCF funding, pass the DFG element to all the Districts and Boroughs. It is received in the form of a capital grant and historically any underspends have been permitted to be carried forward to the following year by each individual authority.

The Government had planned to review the BCF during 2019 in order to make decisions about future funding from 2020 onwards. However, it is officers' understanding that this has been delayed and funding for next year is anticipated at the broadly the same level as this financial year.

The Policy includes provision for any grant or part grant funding repaid by residents (for example through any breach in grant conditions) to be repaid as income into the DFG budget in order that it can be reused to meet further DFG requests.

The Districts and Boroughs adopting this policy have agreed to the principle of a staffing funding formula which reflects the need to adequately resource the delivery of the Policy, the increased levels of resident needs and increased funding for the service.

7. REASON FOR THE DECISION:

Working in partnership with West Sussex County Council and West Sussex District and Borough Councils the aim is to make best use of the Better Care Fund and enable more residents to live independently and safely within their own homes.

8. EFFECTIVE DATE OF THE DECISION: 18 December 2019

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

West Sussex Disabled Facilities Grants Policy 2020- 2024

Cabinet Report 11 December 2017

<https://democracy.arun.gov.uk/CeListDocuments.aspx?Committeed=140&MeetingId=224&DF=11%2f12%2f2017&Ver=2>