

**Report of Head of Housing Support**

**Report to Director of Environment and Housing**

**Date: 1 March 2017**

**Subject: Disabled Facilities Grants 2016/17 Capital Scheme Number 98040/000/000**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary of main issues**

1. Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) are a means tested mandatory grant for the provision of adaptations/other alterations that help disabled people to live independently in their own homes.
2. Housing Leeds (Health and Housing Service) manages DFGs for the Council. The grants are funded through a government funding allocation of £5.631m in 2016/17, a council capital contribution of £1.069m and customer/housing association contributions of £250k to make a gross budget of £6.95m for 2016/17.
3. The government allocation increased from £2.958m in 2015/16 to £5.631m in 2016/17 – an increase of 2.673m. This has meant that the council contribution has decreased by £2.673m from £3.742m in 2015/16 to £1.069m in 2016/17. The 2015/16 budget assumed that customer/housing association income would be £180k with the 2016/17 budget assuming £250k – an increase of £70k.
4. Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs) are third sector agencies that help disabled people to live independently through the provision of a range of adaptation related services. The Leeds HIA is Care and Repair. Funding to Care and Repair in 2016/17 is £256k.

**Recommendations**

The Director of Environment and Housing is requested to:-

1. Authorise the expenditure of £6.95m on the 2016/17 Disabled Facilities Grants programme.
2. Approve the funding of the Care and Repair Home Improvement Agency and Handypersons Service at a value of £256k in 2016/17 from within the DFG budget.
3. Amend the authorised spend of Disabled Facilities Grant spend for the three year period 2016/17 to 2018/19 injecting £8.019m additional government grant into the capital programme (£2.673m \* three years) with an equivalent reduction in the council contribution and inject an additional £210k into the capital programme from customer/housing association contribution which equates to £70k per year.

## 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1. To authorise expenditure of £6.95m on Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) in 2016/17.
- 1.2. To seek approval to use the DFG budget to fund Leeds Care and Repair's Home Improvement Agency and Handypersons Service at a value of £256k in 2016/17.
- 1.3. To amend the authorised spend of Disabled Facilities Grant spend for the three year period 2016/17 to 2018/19 injecting £8.019m additional government grant into the capital programme (£2.673m \* three years) with an equivalent reduction in the council contribution and inject an additional £210k into the capital programme from customer/housing association contribution which equates to £70k per year.

## 2. Background Information

- 2.1. Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) are means tested mandatory grants that cover the cost of major adaptations/other property alterations to help disabled people live independently by creating accessible living environments. Disabled people, or whose family, are home-owners, private or housing association tenants are eligible to apply for DFGs. Adaptations for council tenants are funded through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). Major adaptations are defined as costing over £1k with the maximum DFG grant being £30k. The £30k cap is potentially relaxed for disabled children with the additional cost being shared by Statutory Housing Services and Children's Services.
- 2.2. The legal framework relating to DFGs is set out in Part I of the 1996 Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act. In determining eligibility for a Disabled Facilities Grant, the local housing authority must be satisfied, under section 24 (3) of the Act, that the 'relevant works' are 'necessary and appropriate' to meet the needs of the disabled occupant and it is 'reasonable and practicable' to carry out the works having regard for the age and condition of the housing to which the works will be carried out. Section 24 (3) also obliges a local housing authority to 'consult' with the 'social services authority' in respect of assessing whether the 'relevant works' are 'necessary and appropriate' to meet the needs of the 'disabled occupant'. An Occupational Therapist, employed by Adult Social Care or Children's Services, determines whether adaptations are 'necessary and appropriate'.
- 2.3. Housing Leeds – Housing Management and Support, through the Health and Housing Service, has overall responsibility for managing DFGs in Leeds City Council. Health and Housing surveyors determine whether adapting a disabled person's home is 'reasonable and practicable' by drawing up a scheme of works, where appropriate making planning applications, tendering the works to an approved set of contractors and then overseeing the works process to ensure they are carried out satisfactorily, to budget and deliver an accessible living environment for the disabled person. The Health and Housing Service is also responsible for confirming the disabled person's legal interest in the property to be adapted, their grant eligibility and payments to contractors.

2.4. Since 2008/09, the rules relating to the use of Disabled Facilities Grant have been relaxed to include any expenditure incurred under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002. Paragraph 3 of The Regulatory Reform Order states the following:

**Para 3.** – (1) For the purpose of improving living conditions in their area, a local housing authority may provide, indirectly or directly, assistance to any person for the purpose of enabling him –

- (a) to acquire living accommodation (whether within or outside their area)
- (b) to adapt or improve living accommodation (whether by alteration, conversion or enlargement, by the installation of anything or injection of any substance, or otherwise)
- (c) to repair living accommodation
- (d) to demolish buildings comprising or including living accommodation
- (e) where buildings comprising or including living accommodation have been demolished, to construct buildings that comprise or include living accommodation.

2.5. The House of Commons Library briefing paper on Disabled Facilities Grants: [www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN03011.pdf](http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN03011.pdf) (updated on 19 February 2013) states the following on page 16: **‘Creating greater flexibility will allow the DFG funding to be used for associated purposes, such as moving home,’** Using the Disabled Facilities Grant to pay relocation costs demonstrates the wide scope of the relaxation of the rules.

2.6. The Regulatory Reform Order powers can be applied if a local authority has an approved Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy setting out how the Council intends to use the powers. The Leeds Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy was approved in February 2016 and includes assistance options such as adaptations, improvements to private sector housing and the Sanctuary scheme.

2.7. Since 2010/11, the Disabled Facilities Grant has been paid as an un-ring fenced capital payment through a determination under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003. The House of Commons briefing paper states on page 16 **‘This means that DFG funding could be pooled with resources from a number of other programmes. It will then be for local authorities to determine, against local priorities, how best they use these resources’.** Again this demonstrates the broad remit that local authorities have in respect of using DFG funding.

2.8. Following the approval of the Leeds Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy, the 2015/16 DFG budget was used to cover £100k staffing cost of tackling empty homes activity and a £60k contribution to the Sanctuary scheme budget.

2.9. **Home Improvement Agencies** - Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs) help disabled people make adaptations to properties that they own. Leeds Care and Repair is the local Home Improvement Agency. The Disabled Facilities Grant budget covers the cost of the contract that the Council has with Leeds Care and Repair to deliver the Home Improvement Agency. Leeds Care and Repair is asked to design and oversee the delivery of major adaptation schemes, through the use of its own contractors, when the applicant chooses to have a scheme that is

different from the mandatory one drawn up by the Council – this could relate to a different design or contain additional works over and above what the Council has assessed are required. The DFG budget covers the cost of such schemes up to the value of the mandatory scheme and pays Leeds Care and Repair fees for carrying out this work. A review is currently underway as to whether there is any duplication in funding with the fixed contract value and the fee income generated through the HIA. The DFG budget also covers the cost of the Leeds Care and Repair Handy Person's Service. Both services are currently included within a tender of all Council commissioned Care and Repair services.

**2.10 Personal Contributions** – DFGs are a mandatory but means-tested entitlement. Some disabled people will need to make a contribution to the cost of the adaptation work. The Council pays the contractor for the cost of the works and recovers the personal contribution from the customer.

**2.11 DFG and Housing Associations** – disabled people who live in housing association managed properties are eligible for DFG. The Council is not able to apply any condition, such as a housing association part covering the cost of adaptations, to the acceptance of a disabled person's DFG entitlement. The 2006 CLG good practice states that housing associations should seek to enter into arrangements with local authorities for joint funding; however, this does not equate to an obligation to do so. The Health and Housing Service has agreements in place with a number of local housing associations to part cover of adaptations on housing association stock. The majority of these agreements relate to housing associations directly paying contractors a proportion of the adaptation cost; which therefore results in reduced expenditure, rather than increased income, on DFG. Some housing associations have agreed to reimburse the Council a proportion of the cost of adaptations made on managed stock.

### 3. Main Issues

3.1. **Budget:** The Council has received a government allocation of £5.631m in 2016/17 to deliver Disabled Facilities Grants in 2016/17. It is intended to supplement the government allocation by £1.069m from Council capital funds to give a definite budget of £6.7m in 2016/17.

3.2. **Housing Association Income/ Customer Contributions** – the majority of housing associations have an agreement with the Council whereby they pay contractors directly a proportion of the cost of works carried out or reimburse the Council a proportion of the payment made to the contractor. The former option result is reduced expenditure for the Council and the latter generates income that augments the core budget. Some DFG applicants are not fully eligible for the means-tested grant and pay on either a lump sum or incremental basis. The forecast income from these two sources in 2016/17 is £250k.

3.3. The above assumptions result in a gross DFG budget for 2016/17 of £6.95m.

3.4. **Health and Housing Service Cost** – there has been a long standing arrangement to cover staffing costs relating to the delivery of Disabled Facilities Grants Staffing

costs for 2016/17 are £715k and will be automatically deducted from the £6.95m budget.

**3.5. Leeds Care and Repair Home Improvement Agency and Handypersons Service** – It is proposed to fund the two services at a cost of £256k.

**3.6. Occupational Therapists** - It is proposed to make a provision of £200k to cover the cost of Occupational Therapist staff, within the Adult Social Care Directorate, which carry out the 'necessary and appropriate' test within the DFG assessment process.

**3.7. Empty Homes** - It is proposed to use the budget to cover £135k of staffing costs relating to bringing Empty Homes back into use.

**3.8. Sanctuary Scheme** - It is proposed to allocate £60k from the budget to cover the cost of non-council housing Sanctuary installations.

**3.9.** These costs leave a net budget of £5.584m to cover the direct cost of Disabled Facilities Grants in 2016/17 – please see table at 4.4.2.

**3.10** The government grant allocation increased from £2.958m in 2015/16 to £5.631m in 2016/17 – an annual increase of £2.673m and £8.019m for the next three years. This additional grant allocation has been included within the capital programme for the next three years. There is an equivalent reduction of £2.673m per year and £8.019m for three years of the council contribution made on DFGs to include in the capital programme.

**3.11** The 2015/16 DFG budget assumed £180k would be generated from customer/housing association contributions with the 2016/17 budget being set at £250k. The annual increase of £70k, £210k over the next three years, has been included within the capital programme.

## **4. Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1. Consultation and Engagement**

**4.1.1** No consultation has been carried out as such in relation to the setting of the DFG budget. Communication takes place with each prospective grant recipient in relation to the package of adaptations that they require to meet their accessibility need.

### **4.2. Equality Diversity Cohesion and Integration**

**4.2.1** Payments from the Disabled Facilities Grant budget for disabled people to cover the cost of housing related adaptations or moves to alternative accommodation will allow applicants to live independently in their own homes and to exercise greater choice and control over the housing they occupy. Disabled Facilities Grants play

an important role in promoting housing equality and helping disabled people live independently in the community.

Housing Leeds will promote independent living and work hard to ensure that the services are delivered in a fair and non-discriminatory way giving their client base a positive experience when dealing with the Council.

Adaptations are designed to create an environment where disabled people are able to live independently and to exercise greater choice and control over their housing options. An equality, diversity, cohesion and integration screening exercise has been carried out and is appended to this report.

### 4.3 Council Policies and Best Council Plan

4.3.1 The delivery of adaptation services makes an important contribution to the strategic vision of making Leeds the best city for health and wellbeing and the priority of supporting more people to live safely in their own homes.

### 4.4 Resources and Value for Money

4.4.1 Adaptation works will either be delivered directly through Housing Leeds – Property and Contracts or by an approved external contractor.

#### 4.4.2 Capital Funding and Cashflow

Authority to Spend required for this Approval	TOTAL £000's	TO MARCH 2015 £000's	FORECAST			
			2015/16 £000's	2016/17 £000's	2017/18 £000's	2018/19 £000's
LAND (1)	0.0					
CONSTRUCTION (3)	5584.0			5584.0		
FURN & EQPT (5)	0.0					
DESIGN FEES (6)	1050.0			1050.0		
OTHER COSTS (7)	316.0			316.0		
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>6950.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>6950.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Total overall Funding (As per latest Capital Programme)	TOTAL £000's	TO MARCH 2015 £000's	FORECAST			
			2015/16 £000's	2016/17 £000's	2017/18 £000's	2018/19 £000's
LCC Supported Borrowing	1069.0			1069.0		
Private Sector	250.0			250.0		
Government Grant	5631.0			5631.0		
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>6950.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>6950.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
<b>Balance / Shortfall =</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

**Parent Scheme Numbers: 98040/000/000**

**Revenue Implications:** Any revenue implications will be dealt with from exiting budgets

## **4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

4.5.1 The proposals set out in this report reflect the provisions of Part I of the 1996 Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act and the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002.

4.5.2 The report contains no exempt information.

4.5.3 The report is eligible for call in.

## **4.6 Risk Management**

4.6.1 The proposals set out in this report will enable the Council to fulfil its legal duties relating to the provision of Disabled Facilities Grant. The report also serves to support the work of Care and Repair and to the adaptation related provision of Home Improvement Assistance loans. There is sufficient funding to cover all these priorities. The Health and Housing Service has significant experience in delivering Disabled Facilities Grant and will ensure that there the budget is effectively managed and that disabled people receive assistance in a timely way.

## **5.0 Conclusion**

5.1 The services to be funded through the DFG allocation all play a vital role in helping disabled people to live independently. All correspond with the terms of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002 to help vulnerable to continue to live in their existing home through the provision of adaptations, improvements or repairs or to move to alternative suitable accommodation. There is sufficient budget provision to meet service demand and all proposed spend.

## **6.0 Recommendations**

The Director of Environment and Housing is requested to:-

6.1 Authorise spend of £6.95m on Disabled Facilities Grant in 2016/17.

6.2 Approve the funding of the Care and Repair Home Improvement Agency and handypersons service at a value of £256k in 2016/17 from within the budget.

6.3 Amend the authorised spend of Disabled Facilities Grant spend for the three year period 2016/17 to 2018/19 injecting £8.019m additional government grant into the capital programme (£2.673m \* three years) with an equivalent reduction in the council contribution and inject an additional £210k into the capital programme from customer/housing association contribution which equates to £70k per year.

## **Background papers - None**

The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.