

Approval of an updated Housing Assistance Policy 2019
For Councillor Yeates Cabinet Member Regulatory Services,
Housing and Wellbeing



Date: 3 April 2019
Agenda Item:
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Key Decision? **YES**
Local Ward
Members

CABINET MEMBER DECISION

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks approval of an updated Housing Assistance Policy 2019. The policy has been revised to incorporate minor amendments to reflect a new contract that is place to deliver Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's) in Staffordshire by Millbrook Home Improvement Agency through the Support for Independent Living Service in Staffordshire (SILIS) Partnership. It also includes minor amendments to the sections on emergency Home Repair Assistance grants (HRA) and energy efficiency, bringing them up-to-date with current activity.
- 1.2 Once the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-2022 has been developed and we have identified our priorities for action we plan to carry out a full review of the schemes that we have in place and complete revision of the policy.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To approve an updated Housing Assistance Policy 2019 at Appendix A.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Housing Assistance Policy sets out how Lichfield District Council will provide assistance to residents and implement a range of schemes to raise housing standards and improve the quality of life for disabled residents in need of an adaptation to their home, whilst making best use of limited council resources. A policy has been in place since 2011 when delegation of authority was given to the Cabinet Member to revise the various schemes as appropriate.
- 3.2 The current policy was approved in 2016 and now requires minor changes to reflect a new contract for delivery of DFG's and some changes to the national, regional and local context.
- 3.3 The overall purpose of the policy or the eligibility criteria for the various schemes has not changed and only minor adjustments to the policy are needed. We are in the process of collating evidence for a Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-2022. Once this is developed and we have identified our priorities for action we plan to carry out a full review of the schemes that we have in place and revision of the housing assistance policy.
- 3.4 In Staffordshire there have been changes to the delivery of Home Improvement Agency services across the county. Millbrook Health Care Ltd was appointed to deliver the Support for Independent Living Service contract from 1st April 2018 in a partnership with Staffordshire County Council and six of the

eight district councils¹. The contract for this service runs for 5 years until the 31st March 2021 with a potential 2 year extension, and the policy has been updated to reflect the changes to the contract held by the previous contract holder Revival.

3.5 The minor changes that we have made to the policy are as follows:

3.5.1 Minor updates:

- Title, header, contents, relevant contacts and references to Cabinet Member for Housing and Health updated to RSHW
- Regulatory Reform Order (RRO) text revised
- DFG sections including Appendix A have been reworded to reflect the new contract for SILIS with Millbrook Healthcare Ltd
- Information on local housing stock conditions updated in light of the findings of 2017 BRE stock modelling conditions study
- Emergency HRA grant text has been amended as the service is administered by the Council after the contract with Revival ended
- Energy Efficiency activity within the District and Staffordshire has been updated

3.5.2 Minor additions:

- Footnote to reflect the development of the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-2022
- Reference to Health in All Policies and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-2020
- Criteria to access DFG support
- Paragraph to cover Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) requirements

3.5.3 Removed:

- Specific references to Warmer Home Greener District(WHGD) delivery partners as a new Service Level Agreement will be in place from April 2019
- Maintenance funding e.g. for stairlifts and Closomat toilets due to a change in policy by Staffs CC
- Appendix B- standard specification has been removed as it is no longer relevant to the SILIS contract
- Reference to criteria for ‘vulnerable due to income level’ from Appendix C Table A (now Appendix B Table A) - no specified criteria ever existed or was linked to, so reference to it is meaningless.
- Section on ‘Step Change – Financial Solutions’- this has no longer been available since the contract with Revival ended
- References to HAP’s focus on private sector housing
- Section on sub-regional context – this focussed almost entirely on historical delivery of DFGs and didn’t add any real value to delivery of the policy.

Alternative Options	1. To not approve the revised policy.
Consultation	Internal consultation only as only minor updates have been done.
Financial Implications	<p>6.1 The funding available to implement the types of assistance outlined in the policy has generally not changed from the previous policy.</p> <p>6.2 The budget for DFG’s will continue to be funded predominantly from the Better Care Fund (BCF) which is administered by Staffordshire County Council</p>

¹ Lichfield District Council, Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council, Stafford Borough Council, Staffs Moorlands Borough Council, South Staffs District Council and Tamworth Borough Council.

	<p>and a small council contribution. The total budget for 2018/19 is £1,193,300 comprising £905,939 BCF, £165,361 of additional government funding and up to £122,000 capital funding from the council.</p> <p>6.3 The budget for HRA grants has remained constant at £15,000 pa for a number of years and is administered by the council’s Housing Strategy Team. The policy contains eligibility and prioritisation criteria which should ensure that funding is targeted towards those households most in need.</p> <p>6.4 WHGD is the council’s energy efficiency initiative, which is currently delivered through a service level agreement with Marches Energy Agency and Beat the Cold. The current service level agreement runs from April 2018 to March 2019; it is currently being retendered to enable the service to continue beyond March 2019. There is a maximum revenue budget available for this of £10,000 per year.</p> <p>6.5 The empty homes work that is carried out as part of the updated Housing Assistance Policy and the Empty Homes Policy 2016 has no financial implications or issues.</p>
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<p>Contribution to the Delivery of the Strategic Plan</p>	<p>The Housing Assistance Policy 2019 is linked to the Strategic Plan 2016-2020 theme of a ‘Healthy and Safe community’ as it outlines the way in which the council will deliver a programme of DFG’s to help people to remain living safely in their homes. This is a specific action in the Strategic Plan outlining delivery between 2016 and 2020.</p> <p>The updated Housing Assistance Policy will contribute to the council’s ability to achieve 2 of the ‘by 2020’ aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fewer people and families will be homeless because the housing assistance policy supports people and families to access funding to enable them to remain in their homes. This can be through a DFG, home repair assistance or target hardening works. • more people will be living independently at home because the housing assistance policy provides essential support and funding primarily via DFG’s and home repair assistance grants. The key aim of both funding streams is to enable people and households to remain in their home.
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<p>Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications</p>	<p>The current Housing Assistance Policy 2016-2018 underwent an Equality Impact Assessment prior to adoption. This update does not materially change our housing assistance offer, nor the qualifying criteria.</p>
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<p>Crime & Safety Issues</p>	<p>The update does not impact on our duty to prevent crime and disorder within the District (Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act, 1988).</p>
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	Risk Description	How We Manage It	Severity of Risk (RYG)
A	<p>No additional risks are anticipated as a result of this policy update.</p> <p>The key risk to be managed in relation to the Housing Assistance Policy remains as before; non delivery of the types of assistance outlined in section 4.</p>	<p>There are service level agreements in place for DFGs and energy efficiency, which account for the majority of activity under this policy. These are subject to ongoing monitoring, enabling issues to be identified and acted upon quickly.</p> <p>Target hardening, empty homes and emergency HRA grants are council-led and well established areas of work. Monitoring and delivery procedures have been established for each.</p>	Green
B	<p>The energy capital budget is not spent.</p>	<p>The energy capital budget is available to enable top-up funding where there is a shortfall in external grant funding for ECO qualifying households. Through wide spread promotion of WHGD, the council promotes available grant support available. However, as occurred in 2018, availability of short-lived and unforeseen external grants can reduce or eliminate the need for further financial assistance from the council.</p> <p>We aim to ensure that council money is only spent when there are no other alternative options; external funding opportunities will be fully utilised before our budget is spent.</p>	
C	<p>The emergency home repair budget is not fully spent.</p>	<p>The emergency HRA grant is to provide funding of last resort and is promoted to selected public-services in order to target the intended audience. Each potential applicant is assessed to ensure that there are no alternative options to fund emergency works, including ECO funding, thereby minimising inappropriate spending.</p>	Green

Background documents

The current Housing Assistance Policy 2016-18 can be found here:

<https://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/Residents/Housing/Housing-strategy/Downloads/Housing-assistance-policy-2016-2018.pdf>