

**Policy and Resources Committee
Monday, 10 June 2024**

PART I

**Housing Assistance Policy
(ADSPH)**

1 Summary

- 1.1 The Housing Assistance Policy sets out to ensure that the Council meets our statutory obligations in the delivery of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) for our residents.
- 1.2 The Policy sets out how the Council will provide financial assistance to enable residents to remain independent in their homes, for as long as possible, through disabled adaptations.

2 Details

- 2.1 The Council is provided funding from the Better Care Fund (BCF) on an annual basis, allocated by Hertfordshire County Council, which is to be used specifically for providing grants to help disabled people live more independently in their own homes.
- 2.2 Disabled Facilities Grants are available to disabled adults and children, when works to adapt their current home are judged to be 'necessary and appropriate' to meet their needs and when it is 'reasonable and practicable' to carry them out, having regard to the age and condition of the dwelling.
- 2.3 Although the Council holds the statutory duty to provide the DFG's, they are currently administered on behalf of the Council by The Building Control (Hertfordshire) Company, with the Council having to approve or reject the grant prior to it being administered.
- 2.4 This Policy covers two different types of grants that will be provided by the Council -
 - 2.4.1 The mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant.
 - 2.4.2 A Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is a means tested mandatory grant, provided under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. This grant is for those who are disabled and only used for qualifying works, as set out in the 1996 Act.
 - 2.4.3 All owner-occupiers, tenants, licensees, or occupiers meeting the statutory criteria and financial assessment set out in the 1996 Act are eligible to apply for a DFG.
 - 2.4.4 The maximum grant that can be awarded is set by Government and is currently £30,000.
 - 2.4.5 To be eligible for assistance an assessment must be undertaken by a suitably qualified Occupational Therapist (OT).
 - 2.4.6 Appendix One of the Policy sets out the DFG application process for residents, including eligible expenses that can be included within the grant, how the grant will

be paid and the conditions that are placed upon a resident following the approval of a grant.

2.4.7 Appendix One also details what benefits the Council will consider as a passported benefit, meaning that if an applicant is in receipt of one of these benefits listed, they will not be subject to the financial means test.

2.4.8 Any application for a DFG made on behalf of a child, will not be subject to a test of financial resources.

2.5 The Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant Top Up

2.5.1 Government have increased the flexibility of funding provided to local authorities from the Better Care Fund (BCF). This flexibility has enabled the Council to consider a discretionary top up grant in some cases.

2.5.2 Any expenditure allocated for this discretionary top up grant must be based on the requirements of the BCF and aim to achieve at least one of the following below –

- Reducing or eliminating hospital admissions
- Allowing speedier discharge from hospital
- Considering the long-term needs of individuals and reductions in associated treatments; and
- Undertaking works, adaptations or provision of equipment that is not provided by another service.

2.5.3 This grant is intended to assist in cases where a major adaptation has been identified as essential to meet the needs of the disabled person, once all other options, such as moving home, or internal alterations have been considered.

2.5.4 This grant will only be available to applicants who have met the criteria for a mandatory DFG, and who require additional funding beyond the £30,000 maximum mandatory DFG they have already been awarded.

2.5.5 This grant will only be available to an applicant in the most exceptional of circumstances and subject to funds, provided to the Council from the BCF on an annual basis, being available.

2.5.6 Before this grant application can be considered, the applicant will be required to evidence that all other funding mechanisms have been explored.

2.5.7 Any award of the Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant Top Up will be capped at £15,000 per applicant.

2.5.8 This grant will not be awarded in the following circumstances –

- The request for discretionary assistance exceeds £15,000. However, where the additional works required to a property exceed the £15,000 Disabled Facility Grant Top Up, the Council may still award up to £15,000 to the applicant, if proof of the additional funds required to complete the works is provided. This limit will include any previous award of discretionary assistance granted to a recipient.

- The applicant moving to an alternative suitable property is a viable option.
- The applicant has a live application for re-housing on the Council's Housing Register.

2.5.9 Any decision to award a Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant Top Up will be made by the Council's Strategic Housing Manager or the Council's Associate Director for Strategy, Partnerships and Housing.

3 Options and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 It is recommended that the Council adopt this Policy to enable the Council to meet our statutory obligations and to effectively and efficiently deliver DFG adaptations that best serve the needs of our disabled residents.

4 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications

4.1 The recommendations in this report are within the Council's agreed policy and budgets.

5 Staffing, Environmental, Community Safety, Public Health, Customer Services Centre, Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications

None specific.

6 Financial Implications

6.1 The funding for DFG delivery is provided to the Council on an annual basis from the Better Care Fund (BCF), via Hertfordshire County Council.

6.2 Funding levels available are reviewed as part of budget monitoring throughout the financial year, to ensure grants are not awarded that would exceed the funding provided to the Council from the BCF.

7 Legal Implications

7.1 The Housing Assistance Policy has been reviewed in full by Legal, who have confirmed that the Policy adequately records our statutory requirements.

8 Equal Opportunities Implications

8.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached to this report as an Appendix.

9 Environmental Implications

9.1 A Climate and Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA) has been completed and attached as an appendix to this report.

9.2 The SIA for the Policy shows a neutral impact, as it is not possible to anticipate what potential works will be contained in any future application.

- 9.3 Relevant works that are conducted as part of a DFG will always be completed to the required energy efficiency standards. However, as the grant is capped at £30,000, it is imperative that the works required are financially viable in the circumstances.
- 9.4 It is important that in these circumstances, the equality duty owed to the disabled customer will take precedence over ensuring the works required follow best practice with regards to sustainability.

10 Communications and Website Implications

- 10.1 If adopted, the Policy will be uploaded to the Council's website.

11 Risk and Health & Safety Implications

- 11.1 The Council has agreed its risk management strategy which can be found on the website at <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk>. In addition, the risks of the proposals in the report have also been assessed against the Council's duties under Health and Safety legislation relating to employees, visitors and persons affected by our operations. The risk management implications of this report are detailed below.
- 11.2 The subject of this report is covered by the Housing Services service plan(s). Any risks resulting from this report will be included in the risk register and, if necessary, managed within this/these plan(s).

Nature of Risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response <i>(tolerate, treat, terminate, transfer)</i>	Risk Rating <i>(combination of likelihood and impact)</i>
The Housing Assistance Policy is not adopted by Council	The Council would not be effectively or efficiently delivering DFG applications that best serve the needs of our disabled residents.	Council to adopt the Housing Assistance Policy	Tolerate	2

- 11.3 The above risks are scored using the matrix below. The Council has determined its aversion to risk and is prepared to tolerate risks where the combination of impact and likelihood scores 6 or less.

Very Likely ----- Likelihood ----- ▼ Remote	Low 4	High 8	Very High 12	Very High 16
	Low 3	Medium 6	High 9	Very High 12
	Low 2	Low 4	Medium 6	High 8
	Low 1	Low 2	Low 3	Low 4
Impact Low -----► Unacceptable				

Impact Score

4 (Catastrophic)

3 (Critical)

2 (Significant)

1 (Marginal)

Likelihood Score

4 (Very Likely (≥80%))

3 (Likely (21-79%))

2 (Unlikely (6-20%))

1 (Remote (≤5%))

11.4 In the officers' opinion none of the new risks above, were they to come about, would seriously prejudice the achievement of the Strategic Plan and are therefore operational risks. The effectiveness of the management of operational risks is reviewed by the Audit Committee annually.

12 Recommendation

12.1 That:

For the Policy and Resources Committee to agree the Housing Assistance Policy.

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Data Quality

Data sources:

N/A

Data checked by: N/A

Data rating: N/A

Background Papers

Nil

APPENDICES / ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A – Housing Assistance Policy – March 2024

Appendix B – Equalities Impact Assessment

Appendix C – Climate and Sustainability Assessment