



North Devon Council

Report Date: 6th March 2023

Topic: Financial Policy for the Better Care Fund

Report by: Wendy Slate (Service Lead – Home Adaptations, Improvements & Energy Efficiency)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Members established North Devon Council's current policy for Disabled Facilities Grants and other Home Improvement Grants at the Strategy & Resources Committee meeting on the 12th April (Minute 9, 12th April 2021 refers).

1.2. This paper seeks to update the current policy in line with a new Devon-wide policy which has been endorsed by all district authorities and the County Council.

1.3. While each district authority will adopt a similar policy, based on core principles, it is recognised that there will be differences between districts, reflecting local priorities.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. To approve the adoption of the revised North Devon Council's Financial Policy for the Better Care Fund, set out in Appendix 1.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. To provide an enhanced range of home adaptation and improvement grants across Devon in support of the objectives set out in the Better Care Fund and Health & Wellbeing Board priorities.

4. REPORT

4.1. Disabled Facilities Grants aim to support disabled and older people to be independent, enabling carers to continue their role safely, preventing accidents and helping people to return from hospital. It therefore crosses the boundaries between housing, health and social care and reflects the increasing national focus on the integration of housing with health and social care services.

4.2. This policy is required under Article 4 of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002. The Order provides councils with the discretion to develop schemes to provide financial assistance to deal with a range of housing issues.

- 4.3. In 2015 the government introduced the Better Care Fund in an attempt to bring health and social care together in an integrated way. The fund is a combination of government funding from the Department of Health and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and includes the grant allocation for disabled facilities grants.
- 4.4. A Better Care Fund Policy is published annually and it lists the conditions that the better care fund must be used. This policy forms part of the suite of options to achieve these conditions. The district authorities and DCC have identified an opportunity to provide additional grant and loan products to meet these conditions and deliver against the Health and Wellbeing Board priorities.
- 4.5. This report sets out in Appendix 1, a revised Financial Assistance for the Better Care Fund Policy. The proposed policy significantly enhances the services currently being provided by:
- 4.5.1. Increasing the scope of the existing Stair lift grant to now include step lifts and through-floor lifts without a means test for the applicant.
 - 4.5.2. The Stair lift grant also includes the provision of rented Stairlifts for end of life care, or any other reason, as specified by the Occupational Therapist.
 - 4.5.3. Putting in place a specific grant for bathroom adaptations providing level access showers, automatic wash-dry WCs and other bathroom adaptations and/or equipment, within the existing footprint, without a means test for the applicant.
 - 4.5.4. The bathroom grant will incorporate North Devon Homes (NDH) bathroom adaptations. NDH tenants are given the opportunity to have either NDH undertake the bathroom adaptations or via quotations from private contractors.
 - 4.5.5. Increasing the maximum grant limits within the discretionary funding available, including Warm Up Grant (top up funding available for energy efficiency measures) to £3,000 per property.
- 4.6. The following grants are now set out in the revised Council's policy:
- 4.6.1. Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants.
 - 4.6.2. Stair Lift Grant
 - 4.6.3. Bathroom Adaptation Grant
 - 4.6.4. Accessible Homes Grant - General

4.6.5. Accessible Homes Grant – Contribution

4.6.6. Accessible Homes Grant – Moving

4.6.7. Health Homes Grants

4.6.8. Warm Up Grants

4.7. This policy will help more people and make a very positive contribution towards the corporate priority 'Becoming focused on delivering the best for our citizens'.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1. The capital programme established in 22/23 to support the implementation of this policy is £1,852,981.

5.2. The capital programme for 23/24 would see a further £1,200,000; currently going through member approval.

5.3. The human resources required to deliver this scale of programme will need to be reviewed. This review will consider the increasing of resources and/or the use of Customer Service Centre for some tasks.

6. EQUALITIES ASSESSMENT

6.1 An equality impact assessment of this revised policy has been completed, as set out in Appendix 2.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

7.1. Potential improvements in energy efficiency from increased housing standards may impact positively on the environment.

8. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

8.1. What impact, positive or negative, does the subject of this report have on:

8.1.1. The commercialisation agenda:

8.1.1.1. None

8.1.2. Improving customer focus and/or

8.1.2.1. Disabled or older residents of North Devon benefitting from home adaptation and improvement grants to help them live independently and safely.

8.1.3. Regeneration or economic development

8.1.3.1. Improvement in housing standards.

9. CONSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

9.1. Article of Part 3 Annexe 1 paragraph: 1(f)

9.1.1. Strategy & Resources Committee

9.2. Referred or delegated power?

9.2.1. Delegated

10. STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

This report contains no confidential information or exempt information under the provisions of Schedule 12A of 1972 Act.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- Financial Policy for the Better Care Fund (Minute 9, 12th April 2021, refers)

(The background papers are available for inspection and kept by the author of the report).

12. STATEMENT OF INTERNAL ADVICE

The author (below) confirms that advice has been taken from all appropriate Councillors and Officers: Wendy Slate – Service Lead Home Adaptations, Improvements & Energy Efficiency