

Chichester District Council

THE CABINET

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Disabled Facilities Grants Policy 2020 – 2024

1. Contacts

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2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Cabinet approves the proposed West Sussex Disabled Facilities Grant Policy 2020 to 2024 contained in Appendix 1 to this report**
- 2.2 That the Cabinet approves delegated powers for the Divisional Manager for Housing Services, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, to make amendments and updates to the policy**

3. Background

- 3.1 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).
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 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.

- 3.5 Chichester District Council has been at the forefront in trialling the use of the flexibilities offered to provide an enhanced DFG service to residents. The Council's Chief Executive has been the chair of the county wide DFG Steering Group since its inception and has led the project since the start.
- 3.6 Members have previously considered reports on DFGs at Cabinet on 3 July 2018 and 5 September 2017.

4. Outcomes to be Achieved

- 4.1 The proposed West Sussex DFG policy (Appendix 1) will apply across all the Districts and Boroughs and will provide a fair and consistent approach to disabled residents no matter where they live in the county. A significant outcome will be the partnership working between all the Districts and Boroughs and the County Council to deliver DFG services and cover an entire county area which has rarely been achieved elsewhere in the country.
- 4.2 The guiding principle and outcome of the DFG service for residents across West Sussex is to '*help me live in my own home, easily and with dignity with the right adaptation when I need it.*
- 4.3 The proposed policy is a result of an extensive test and learn project and a trial policy across the county. This period (late 2017 until the present) has provided knowledge and feedback which has informed the detail of the proposed policy. A range of data is now being regularly collected in a way which can be better analysed to support the county wide DFG project for example the flow rate of referrals for DFGs, the measurement of the time taken for the different stages of a DFG and the customer end to end times, the types of adaptations being undertaken across the county and monitoring of the budget commitment and spend for all the districts and boroughs.

5. Proposal

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 The Policy will replace those previously in operation across the area and brings together the two main elements of DFG work ie 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.
- 5.3 The detail of the proposal is contained in Appendix 1 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.

- 5.4 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. In the event that other Councils are unable to obtain approval, Chichester District Council will still go ahead with the implementation of the new policy.
- 5.5 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.

6. Alternatives Considered

- 6.1 The Council could decide to adopt its own independent DFG policy and not be part of the countywide project and the single policy. However officers at all levels of the council believe in the principle of a single countywide policy and the consistency and fairness this brings to residents wherever they live. The county wide project also brings with it shared learning and development, the shared role of the County Adaptations Manager and offers opportunities for further sharing and economies of scale in the future.
- 6.2 As the proposed policy incorporates the discretionary elements which are fully supported by the Council's officers it would be counter-intuitive to decide to do something different.

7. Resource and Legal Implications

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 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.
- 7.3 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.
- 7.4 The policy contains provision for the Divisional Manager for Housing Services to make minor amendments to the policy following consultation with the Cabinet member.
- 7.5 The policy contains the provision for annual reviews or a review if funding significantly changes up or down.
- 7.6 The main pieces of legislation which relate to this policy are
 - Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996
 - Regulatory Reform Order 2002 (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales)
 - Care Act 2014

- Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970
- Equality Act 2010

8. Consultation

- 8.1 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.
- 8.2 The West Sussex Chief Executives have been fully consulted with and involved since the start of the project providing decisions as required for the project. Internally staff have been advised and consulted via the Chief executives staff bulletin. Members have similarly been advised and consulted via the monthly members' bulletin.
- 8.3 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.

9. Community Impact and Corporate Risks

- 9.1 The proposed DFG policy will have a significant and positive impact on a large number of disabled residents (including children) and their carers helping them to stay safe and independent in their own homes and communities.
- 9.2 The main risk to the Council in its delivery of the proposed policy is that the current funding level is not sustained by central government. This risk is mitigated by the inclusion of a clause in the policy which allows for the discretionary elements of cease if for some reason the funding was to dramatically reduce.

10. Other Implications

	Yes	No
Crime and Disorder		X
Climate Change and Biodiversity		X
Human Rights and Equality Impact The policy has been subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment and has a positive impact on at least two protected groups ie older and disabled people.	X	
Safeguarding and Early Help		X
General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)		X
Health and Wellbeing This policy and the delivery of both mandatory and discretionary DFGs has a significant positive impact on the health and well-being of disabled and vulnerable residents, including children and young people, in the Chichester District council area. It will also have a significant positive impact on carers looking after disabled and vulnerable residents. The policy applies across all wards.	X	
Other (please specify)		

11. Appendices

11.1 Appendix 1 Disabled Facilities Grants Policy 2020 - 2024

12. Background Papers

12.1 Previous reports to Cabinet on 3 July 2018 and 5 September 2017