

Chichester District Council

CABINET

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Disabled Facilities Grants – Staffing Resources

1. Contacts

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2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That a Senior Environmental Health Officer (DFG Specialist) and two Specialist Housing Standards Officers are appointed to deliver the West Sussex Disabled Facilities Grants Policy 2020-24 within Chichester District to be funded from the Council's annual Disabled Facilities Grant funding.**

3. Background

- 3.1 Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) provide funding to older and disabled people in owner-occupied, privately rented and registered provider properties, to make changes to their home environment, such as the installation of showers, stair lifts and ramps, to help them live as independently and safely as possible.
- 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 implementation of the wider prevention agenda has resulted in increased demand on the adaptations service. During the pilot project in 2017 to 2019 a third more adaptations were delivered and the number of complex cases increased. Following Cabinet's approval of the West Sussex Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) Policy 2020-24 on 5th November 2019 and with an aging population, demand is expected to continue to grow. It is therefore proposed to expand and restructure the Housing Standards Team to ensure appropriate staffing resources are in place to deliver the service.

4. Outcomes to be Achieved

- 4.1 To establish an experienced, robust and resilient team to implement the newly adopted DFG Policy and deliver life-changing home adaptations to residents across the district, enabling them to occupy their homes safely and remain independent longer.

5. Proposal

- 5.1 The existing team structure consists of two permanent Environmental Housing Technical Officers (both posts are currently vacant) who report directly to the Housing Standards and HomeMove Manager, and throughout the pilot project contractors were employed in order to meet the additional demand. With case volume set to increase it is necessary to establish a self-supporting DFG Team with a senior officer and two highly experienced Specialist Housing Standards Officers.
- 5.2 The appointment of a Senior Environmental Health Officer (DFG Specialist) with a breadth of experience will provide the team with day to day management and support, along with the ability to manage the most complex adaptation works.
- 5.3 The two Specialist Housing Standards Officers will be required to have technical qualifications and relevant experience. These posts will replace the vacant Environmental Housing Technical Officer posts as they have been evaluated at a higher grade.
- 5.4 The proposed expansion and restructure of the team is to ensure the team is equipped with the necessary staffing resources to deliver disabled adaptations to our residents in an efficient and timely manner.

6 Alternatives Considered

- 6.1 It is not considered possible to absorb the increasing caseload within the existing team.

7 Resource and Legal Implications

- 7.1 The additional cost of appointing the three proposed new posts, with on costs and expenses is estimated to be £64,000 per annum. This cost would be met from the Council's annual DFG funding from the government's BCF.
- 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 West Sussex Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) Policy 2020-24 recently adopted contains provision for a review if the funding significantly changes.

8 Consultation

8.1 Senior leadership Team have been consulted and are supportive of the proposal.

9 Community Impact and Corporate Risks

- 9.1 The proposed changes would allow the Council to meet its commitments to deliver a wider adaptations service via the West Sussex Disabled Facilities Grants Policy 2020-24. The additional flexibility provided by this policy would ensure residents are provided with a safe home, which will reduce hospital admissions and hospital stays.
- 9.2 The future of BCF funding is unknown so there is a risk this may be reduced in coming years resulting in an immediate review of the Discretionary Policy the Council is able to offer, including the staffing resource that is required.

10 Other Implications

	Yes	No
Crime and Disorder		√
Climate Change and Biodiversity		√
Human Rights and Equality Impact		√
Safeguarding and Early Help		√
General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)		√
Health and Wellbeing		√
Other (please specify)		

11 **Appendices** – None

12 **Background Papers** - None