

**REPORT TO:** CABINET

**DATE:** 18 JULY 2019

**TITLE:** HOUSING ASSISTANCE POLICY – HOME ADAPTATION FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

**PORTFOLIO HOLDER:** COUNCILLOR MARK WILKINSON, PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR HOUSING

**LEAD OFFICER:** JANE GREER, HEAD OF COMMUNITY WELLBEING (01279) 446406

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**This is a Key Decision**

**It is on the Forward Plan as Decision Number I009979**

**Call-in Procedures may apply**

**This decision will affect no ward specifically.**

**RECOMMENDED that Cabinet:**

- A** Approves the proposed policy on help with home adaptations attached as Appendix A to the report.
- B** Subject to recommendation A, delegates authority to the appropriate Head of Service, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, to make such minor or inconsequential amendments to the policy and to approve procedures for giving it effect as may be necessary from time to time.

**REASON FOR DECISION**

- A** Adopting the proposed policy will give the Council authority to provide help with home adaptations that is not currently available through statutory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs).

## **BACKGROUND**

1. Adapting homes for people with disabilities is greatly valued as a way of increasing their independence from institutional and social care, and can ensure that people receiving treatment can be discharged safely.
2. The Council has met the needs of residents referred to it by adapting its own stock for tenants, or providing DFGs for people in other tenures. However the statutory DFG process imposes some limitations which in some cases can make assistance slower, more difficult, or more uncertain than it might be.
3. National policy designed to better join-up health and social care services led to the pooling of funding streams from the NHS and local government into the Better Care Fund. This is administered by Health and Wellbeing Boards to help more people manage their own health and wellbeing, and live independently in their communities for as long as possible. Government funding for DFGs was a part of the pooled resource, and funding for home adaptations is now provided through the Better Care Fund.
4. The Government, recognising the value of home adaptation, has increased the funding allocated. For 2018/19 and 2019/20, the allocations to the Council for home adaptations were £739,674 and £798,153 respectively.
5. The Council, subject to resources, has a wide discretion to give assistance with home adaptations to people with disabilities, provided that it does so in accord with published policy. Increased funding now permits the Council to offer assistance that could complement or extend the help available under the mandatory DFG regime to make adaptations more flexible, more rapid, and more affordable, and that could ensure that as far as practicable, the available funding is used to help Harlow residents.

## **ISSUES/PROPOSALS**

6. The Council has consulted with the County Council and the Princess Alexandra Hospital to identify the ways in which it could best use available resources to overcome issues that might affect service users. The measures described in the draft policy set out at Appendix A are calculated to offer the most useful forms of help achievable using available support from the Better Care Fund. It is proposed that the policy be adopted so that the Council can offer help in the ways described.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### **Place (Includes Sustainability)**

Adaptations may require planning consent and/or building regulations approval. Where appropriate, advice should be sought from the Planning and Building Control team.

**Author: Andrew Bramidge, Project Director – Enterprise Zone and Interim Head of Planning**

### **Finance (Includes ICT)**

As contained within the report.

**Author: Simon Freeman, Head of Finance and Deputy to the Managing Director**

### **Housing**

As outlined in the report.

**Author: Andrew Murray, Head of Housing**

### **Community Wellbeing (Includes Equalities and Social Inclusion)**

As contained within the report.

**Author: Jane Greer, Head of Community Wellbeing**

### **Governance (Includes HR)**

As contained within the report.

**Author: Simon Hill, Head of Governance**

## **Appendices**

Appendix A – Help with Home Adaptations 2019

## **Background Papers**

None.

## **Glossary of terms/abbreviations used**

DFG – Disabled Facilities Grant