

Open

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Agenda

6pm
Thursday, 7th July 2016
Council Chamber
Wyre Forest House
Finepoint Way
Kidderminster



Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Members of Committee:

Chairman: Councillor H E Dyke
Vice-Chairman: Councillor M Rayner

Councillor J R Desmond
Councillor K Henderson
Councillor D Little
Councillor S J Walker

Councillor N Gale
Councillor A T Hingley
Councillor C Rogers
Councillor S J Williams

Would Members please note that, to ensure continuity in scrutiny, substitutes should only be appointed for the Scrutiny Committee in exceptional circumstances.

Information for Members of the Public:

Part I of the Agenda includes items for discussion in public. You have the right to inspect copies of Minutes and reports on this Agenda as well as the background documents used in the preparation of these reports.

Part II of the Agenda (if applicable) deals with items of "Exempt Information" for which it is anticipated that the public may be excluded from the meeting and neither reports nor background papers are open to public inspection.

Declaration of Interests by Members – interests of members in contracts and other matters

Declarations of Interest are a standard item on every Council and Committee agenda and each Member must provide a full record of their interests in the Public Register.

In addition, alongside the Register of Interest, the Members Code of Conduct ("the Code") requires the Declaration of Interests at meetings. Members have to decide first whether or not they have a disclosable interest in the matter under discussion.

Please see the Members' Code of Conduct as set out in Section 14 of the Council's constitution for full details.

Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) / Other Disclosable Interest (ODI)

DPI's and ODI's are interests defined in the Code of Conduct that has been adopted by the District.

If you have a DPI (as defined in the Code) in a matter being considered at a meeting of the Council (as defined in the Code), the Council's Standing Orders require you to leave the room where the meeting is held, for the duration of any discussion or voting on that matter.

If you have an ODI (as defined in the Code) you will need to consider whether you need to leave the room during the consideration of the matter.

Co-opted Members

Scrutiny Committees may wish to appoint Co-Opted Members to sit on their committee in order to add value to the scrutiny process. To appoint a Co-Opted Member, a Committee must first agree to appoint either a specific person or to approach a relevant organisation to request that they put forward a suitable representative (e.g. the local Police Authority). Co-Optees are non voting by default but Committees can decide to appoint voting rights to a Co-Optee. The Co-Option of the Member will last no longer than the remainder of the municipal year.

Scrutiny Committees can at any meeting agree to terminate the Co-Option of a Co-Opted Member with immediate effect. Where an organisation is appointed to put forward a Co-Opted Member, they are able to send a substitute in exceptional circumstances, provided that they notify Democratic Services in advance. Co-Opted Members must sign up to the Members Code of Conduct before attending their first meeting, failure to sign will mean that they are unable to participate. This also applies to substitute Co-Opted Members, who will need to allow sufficient time before a meeting in order to sign the Code of Conduct.

The following will apply:

- i) The total number of voting co-opted members on any Scrutiny Committee will not exceed 25% at any one time.
- ii) The total number of voting Co-opted Members on any Review Panel will not be limited.
- iii) Those Co-opted Members with voting rights will exercise their rights in accordance with the principles of decision making set out in the constitution.

For Further information:

If you have any queries about this Agenda or require any details of background papers, further documents or information, you should contact Louisa Bright, Principal Committee and Member Services Officer, Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster, DY11 7WF. Telephone: 01562 732763 or email louisa.bright@wyreforestdc.gov.uk

Wyre Forest District Council

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 7th July 2016

Council Chamber, Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster

Part 1

Open to the press and public

Agenda item	Subject	Page Number
1.	Apologies for Absence	
2.	Appointment of Substitute Members To receive the name of any Councillor who is to act as a substitute, together with the name of the Councillor for whom he/she is acting.	
3.	Declarations of Interests by Members In accordance with the Code of Conduct, to invite Members to declare the existence and nature of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI's) and / or Other Disclosable Interests (ODI's) in the following agenda items and indicate the action that they will be taking when the item is considered. Please see the Members' Code of Conduct as set out in Section 14 of the Council's Constitution for full details.	
4.	Minutes To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on the 2nd June 2016.	6
5.	Housing Assistance Policy To consider a report from the Strategic Housing Services Manager which sets out the policy that will be used to determine how the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) funding from central government will be spent.	10
6.	Kidderminster Eastern Gateway Development Framework To consider a report from the Head of North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration Committee to consider the proposed Kidderminster Eastern Gateway Development Framework. (The Appendix to this report is to follow).	34
7.	Treasury Management Review Panel To request nominations for membership of the Treasury Management Review Panel for the current municipal year.	

	<p>Meeting dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monday 5th September 2016 - 4pm Training for All Members 6pm Meeting Wednesday 2nd November 2016 - 6pm Wednesday 1st February 2017 - 4pm Training for All Members 6pm Meeting 	
8.	<p>Feedback from Cabinet</p> <p>To note the content of the Cabinet action list, following consideration of the recommendations from the meeting on 14th June 2016.</p>	39
9.	<p>Work Programme</p> <p>To review the work programme for the current municipal year with regard to the Sustainable Community Strategy Theme, Corporate Plan Priority, Annual Priorities and the Forward Plan.</p>	40
10.	<p>Press Involvement</p> <p>To consider any future items for scrutiny that might require publicity.</p>	
11.	<p>To consider any other business, details of which have been communicated to the Solicitor of the Council before the commencement of the meeting, which the Chairman by reason of special circumstances considers to be of so urgent a nature that it cannot wait until the next meeting.</p>	
12.	<p>Exclusion of the Press and Public</p> <p>To consider passing the following resolution:</p> <p>“That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of “exempt information” as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act”.</p>	

Part 2 - Not open to the Press and Public

13.	<p>To consider any other business, details of which have been communicated to the Solicitor of the Council before the commencement of the meeting, which the Chairman by reason of special circumstances considers to be of so urgent a nature that it cannot wait until the next meeting.</p>	
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WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY, KIDDERMINSTER

THURSDAY, 2ND JUNE 2016 (6PM)

Present:

Councillors: H E Dyke (Chairman), M Rayner (Vice-Chairman), J Baker, R Bishop, J R Desmond, N Gale, A T Hingley, C Rogers, S J Walker and S J Williams.

Observers

Councillors: M J Hart, T L Onslow and J A Shaw.

OS.1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K Henderson and D Little.

OS.2 Appointment of Substitutes

Councillor J Baker was appointed as a substitute for Councillor D Little.
Councillor R Bishop was appointed as a substitute for Councillor K Henderson.

OS.3 Declarations of Interests by Members

No declarations of interest were made.

OS.4 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 19th May 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

OS.5 How Are We Doing? Performance Update

The Committee received a report from the Head of Transformation and Communications which updated Members on the performance of the Council for quarter 4 (from 1st January to 31st March 2016).

Councillor S J Walker entered the meeting at this point, (6.12pm).

Members were led through the report and considered each page of the appendices in turn. In relation to the bar chart on page 18 of the report detailing the data for LA038 (average house price), a request was made for a definition of the term 'Goldilocks'. The Head of Transformation and Communications agreed to arrange for the definition to be circulated to Members.

Agreed:

- **The progress in performance for quarter 4 be noted.**
- **The Head of Transformation and Communications to provide Members with a definition of the term ‘Goldilocks’ as set out on page 18 of the report.**

OS.6 Temporary Accommodation Placement and Procurement Policy

The Committee considered a report from the Strategic Housing Services Manager which outlined the policy that would be used for placing households who require temporary accommodation and for procuring temporary accommodation to assist with the Council’s duties under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002).

Councillor T L Onslow left the meeting at this point, (6.26pm), and returned at 6.31pm.

The Strategic Housing Services Manager took Members through the report and advised that the Council had a duty to provide advice and assistance to homeless households and to provide emergency, interim or temporary accommodation for those that required it. Members were advised the emergency accommodation was usually in the form of bed and breakfast or houses in multiple occupation style accommodation.

A discussion ensued and it was agreed a reference should be made to the cross agency working the Strategic Housing Services Team undertake when dealing with complex cases. The Team were complimented for producing a very thorough and easy to understand document.

Agreed: Recommend to Cabinet:

- **The Temporary Accommodation Placement and Procurement Policy as set out in appendix 1 of the report, be amended to reflect the cross agency working the Strategic Housing Services Team undertake when dealing complex cases.**
- **The Temporary Accommodation Placement and Procurement Policy, for use by the Strategic Housing Services Team, and its agent, when placing homeless households and procuring emergency and interim accommodation be adopted.**

OS.7 A Strategy for Enabling Enterprise and Business Growth

The Committee considered a report from the Head of Economic Development and Regeneration – North Worcestershire, which proposed the Wyre Forest Enterprise and Business Growth Strategy.

The Director of Economic Prosperity and Place led Members through the report which explained the purpose of the Strategy and the approach the Council

Agenda Item No. 4

proposed to take to support local enterprise and business growth which would be delivered against the Council's Corporate Priorities.

Agreed: Recommend to Cabinet:

The Enterprise and Business Growth Strategy, as set out in appendix 1 of the report, be adopted.

OS.8 Wyre Forest District Local Plan Review: Revised Local Development Scheme (Project Plan 2016 - 2019)

The Committee received a report from the Interim Planning Policy Manager which presented the proposals for the revision of the Local Development Scheme (LDS) (Project Plan) which will be used to guide the future production of the District's Local Plans.

Councillor M J Hart left the meeting at this point, (7.11pm).

Members were led in depth through the report which had been based on a briefing paper which had been presented to and endorsed by the Local Plans Review Panel in April 2016.

A lengthy debate ensued which included discussions around the need for a balanced and informed review of the Green Belt within the District.

The Committee acknowledged the importance of having an up to date and realistic timetable for the preparation and review of the plan, and as the Council does not hold key decision making meetings during August, the plan be amended accordingly.

Agreed: Recommend to Cabinet:

- **The programme for the preparation and review of Development Plan, as set out on page 93 of appendix 1 of the report be amended in August 2017 and 2018 to reflect the fact that the Council does not hold key decision making meetings during August.**
- **The proposed Revised Local Development Scheme 2016-19 as set out in Appendix 1 of the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (as amended) be adopted.**

OS.9 Tracking Recommendations 2015/2016

Agreed: The content of the Tracking Recommendations from 2015/16 be noted.

OS.10 Feedback from Cabinet

Agreed: The content of the Cabinet decision list following consideration of the recommendations from its meeting on 8th March 2016 be noted.

OS.11 Work Programme

The Committee considered the work programme for the new municipal year. Members were asked to submit any suggestions for future scrutiny items to the Chairman.

OS.12 Press Involvement

There were no future items for scrutiny that might require publicity.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 7.49pm



Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Briefing Paper

Report of: Kate Bailey, Strategic Housing Services Manager
Date: Thursday 7th July 2016
Open

Housing Assistance Policy

1. Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to agree the policy that will be used to determine how the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) funding from central government will be spent. In 2016/17 the Council received £1.02m of capital funding via the Better Care Fund (BCF) to deliver its DFG service.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council previously approved the Housing Assistance Policy in 2013.
- 2.2 Local Housing Authorities have a duty to provide DFGs under the Housing Grants (Construction and Regeneration) Act 1996. DFGs are a mechanism to provide financial assistance to applicants who require an aid or adaptation to be able to remain living independently at home where they fall below an income threshold (unless the DFG is for a child).
- 2.3 Wyre Forest District Council discharges this duty through the use of a Home Improvement Agency (Care and Repair Worcestershire (CRW)) who are commissioned jointly by all the Local Authorities in the County. The current providers, Fortis Living, commenced the most recent contract in April 2015 and the contract is for a term of 3 + 2 years. The Council currently pay CRW an annual sum for this service of £130k (please note this amount diminishes over the first three years of the contract and is also subject to annual review). This funding is currently made up of £80k (from the capitalisation of grant monies) and £50k from the existing revenue budget.
- 2.4 The newly commissioned service immediately suffered with staffing shortages (as staff left the organisation whilst the previous contract was coming to an end and there was uncertainty over whether they would be awarded the contract again). The new contract placed a greater emphasis on prevention services and reducing the spend on DFGs due to the grant levels at the time and the fact we couldn't meet the demand. The Occupational Therapist service also suffered with staff shortages throughout the year leading to delays in assessments of up to 19 weeks. Overall this meant fewer DFGs were undertaken in 2015/16. Please see table below for numbers of DFGs since 2012/13;

YEAR	DFG BUDGET	GRANT / BCF	SPEND	RTB TOP UP	No CASES
2012/13	800,000	852,862	551,111	301,751	130
2013/14	731,110	669,006	448,717	133,569	148
2014/15	800,000	598,577	462,104	136,473	89
2015/16*	750,000	553,210	556,442	N/A	74

*First year of new arrangements with Fortis Housing – new processes embedding with greater emphasis on prevention and advice/signposting.

- 2.5 All Local Housing Authorities are required, by the Regulatory Reform Order 2002, to have a Housing Assistance Policy (HAP) where they wish to provide discretionary grants and services in addition to the mandatory DFGs. Accordingly the Council has had its HAP in place since that date and has amended it on a number of occasions to account for changing circumstances. Discretionary grants and services are provided for a number of reasons but primarily where they would support the Better Care Fund metrics (please see Appendix Two) or support applicants requiring DFGs in other more cost effective ways. It is also possible to use the capital funding to contribute towards revenue costs e.g. staffing incurred in the provision of the service. To provide consistency to Worcestershire residents and to CRW the Housing Assistance Policy is replicated across the county where possible. The revised HAP is therefore currently being agreed with officers by the end of June before taking it through the various decision making processes. The use of the DFG funding is also currently being agreed with the County Council who are the accountable body for the BCF. It is likely that the County Council will want to see the funding focused on outcomes to support the BCF metrics. The DFG element within the BCF is ringfenced so that the upper tier authorities must passport it through to lower tier authorities for the purpose of DFGs but within that spending there is some ability to use the funding for capital grants and related services providing that the overall need for mandatory DFGs is met, the spending is in line with the BCF Plan and the Council has a Housing Assistance Policy in place.
- 2.6 The Council's allocation has increased from £557k in 2015/16 to £1.02m in 2016/17 as a result of the government's support of DFG as a way of improving wider health objectives and is likely to remain at this level or increase further over the next three years. In previous years the allocation to the Council was not sufficient to meet estimated need and the Council topped up the funding through Right To Buy (RTB) receipts through an agreement with Community Housing Group, as well as offering non-urgent category 3 cases an alternative loan product (Adaptation Assistance). The increase in funding will enable the Council to better meet increasing demand and enable more creativity and flexibility to identify new, more cost effective ways of delivering grants and services without the need to use the Council's RTB receipts.

- 2.7 In developing these proposals we have worked with Foundations, the national body providing advice and support to Home Improvement Agencies, to ensure we are following government guidelines and best practise.

3. Key Issues

- 3.1 Proposals for spending the monies, including those outlined below, are in the process of being agreed by the six district Local Housing Authorities, the BCF manager, the interim Director of Public Health and CRW.
- 3.2 The proposed increase in the DFG budget will result in an increased workload for the administration of DFG within the team and it is anticipated therefore that an additional staffing resource will be required to ensure successful and timely project delivery. CRW are unlikely to be able to have the capacity to deliver any more DFGs in Year 2 of the contract and therefore the scaled up activity needs to remain with the Council, which means CRW can focus on their core services and embedding in new contractors. We currently capitalize 10% of the DFG staffing expenditure to fund part of CRW costs and we propose to increase this to 15% so that any increase of staffing for the Council and/or CRW will be funded from the increased capital grant. The proposed increase in capitalisation of pay costs will be subject to agreement with our external auditors. We are hopeful that, with the resultant improvements in service delivery in terms of both systems for processing and the greatly enhanced range of service delivery projects facilitated by the specific staffing resource; this change will provide sufficient evidence for the external auditors. Within CRW we will explore, in conjunction with all the Local Authorities, the possibility of directly employing an Occupational Therapist (OT) or specially trained Case Worker to increase the number of assessments for DFGs currently being undertaken by the OT service as we recognise this is a barrier to fast and efficient delivery. In the letter from the Director of the DCLG Housing Standards and Support Directorate (please see Appendix Three) it is clear that the government is encouraging Local Authorities to use the grant money to reduce waiting times and delays to the DFG process.
- 3.3 There are a number of potential streams of funding the Council may wish to consider and it is proposed that determining the exact split of funding for each individual scheme, and for any additional proposals that might be made in our negotiations with the BCF manager and other local authorities, is delegated to the Director of Economic Prosperity and Place in conjunction with the Chief Financial Officer and the Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing.
- 3.4 It is proposed that the Overview and Scrutiny committee note the headline proposals to be explored to utilise the increased budget and provide an enhanced service to local disabled residents. All other schemes, currently included in the HAP (2013) will remain as stated with the exception of the Adaptation Assistance which is no longer required. Potential areas for funding include, but are not limited to:

3.4.1 Discretionary “top-up” to mandatory DFGs: The maximum DFG awarded is £30,000 but some larger schemes such as extensions now exceed the maximum grant and additional funding from other sources (e.g. charities) is either unavailable or very resource intensive to identify and obtain. Funding up to £10k above the mandatory limit is available for this purpose. This fund could also top up handy person works and minor DFGs where they exceed the cap and other funding isn’t available.

3.4.2 Funding for category 1 or serious category 2 hazards under the Housing Act 2004: Where a vulnerable resident, on a low income, has hazards within the home that are contributing to the unsuitability of the property. This exists in the current HAP (2013) and is known as Home Repair Assistance but existing funding is limited.

3.4.3 Hospital Discharge scheme: fast tracked and non-means tested works to the home to enable earlier hospital discharge where problems in the home are identified as a possible reason for delayed discharge.

3.4.4 Dementia Friendly Dwelling Grant: to offer financial assistance to make homes more dementia friendly to help people manage their surroundings, retain their independence and reduce feelings of anxiety and confusion.

3.4.5 Financial assistance for adapting and improving properties: to offer financial assistance for costs associated with moving to a more suitable home and/or purchasing / building / improving properties (in conjunction with a Registered Provider).

3.4.6 Capital grant: to work with partners to develop projects (where required) that are required as part of a wider capital scheme

3.4.7 Housing options: funding to facilitate the delivery of a housing options service within CRW where DFGs and care / support costs can be avoided through the move to more appropriate housing at an earlier stage.

3.4.8 Independent Living Centre: funding to facilitate the development of an innovation centre, with multi-agency / disciplinary staff co-located that enable applicants for a DFG and self-funders to test out potential aids and adaptations and make effective choices.

4. Options

4.1 The committee may wish to:

4.1.1 Recommend to Cabinet that they adopt the Housing Assistance Policy for use by the Strategic Housing Services Team in determining the use of the DFG capital funding.

4.1.2 To recommend any amendments that should be made to the Housing Assistance Policy to Cabinet prior to adoption.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 This report has been circulated to CLT and developed in conjunction with the other six Local Housing Authorities, County Council, BCF Manager and CRW.

6. Related Decisions

- 6.1 Not applicable.

7. Relevant Council Policies/Strategies

- 7.1 Worcestershire Housing Strategy 2010 - 16

8. Implications

- 8.1 Resources: All spending proposals are within the existing budget / funding.
8.2 Equalities: Not applicable
8.3 Partnership working: This Policy has been developed in conjunction with the six Local Housing Authorities and other key partners.
8.4 Human Rights: Not applicable
8.5 E-Government: Not applicable
8.6 Transformation: Not applicable

9. Equality Impact Needs Assessment

- 9.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment screening has been undertaken. There are no negative impacts as a result of this policy on any of the protected characteristic groups.

10. Wards affected

- 10.1 All wards.

11. Appendices

- 11.1 Housing Assistance Policy 2016
11.2 Better Care Fund metrics
11.3 Letter from the Director of the DCLG Housing Standards and Support Directorate

12. Background Papers

N/A

Contact Number Officer Contact Details:

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Wyre Forest District Council

Housing Assistance

Policy

2016

Contents

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1 Introduction

The Reform Order

In July 2002 the Government issued legislation, the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002, which requires all Councils to adopt and publish a policy as to how they intend to use the powers set out in this legislation.

The purpose of this document

This Housing Assistance Policy, which will commence on 1st August 2016, sets out the basis on which Wyre Forest District Council will offer financial assistance ("Housing Assistance") for works of adaption, repair or renewal in the private housing sector.

All housing assistance approved under this policy is either discretionary and are therefore subject to the District Council having sufficient funds or mandatory Disabled Facility Grants.

The District Council will review this policy on a regular basis to take into account changing policies at national and regional level and all available information on the condition of private sector housing in the District.

The document outlines a range of financial assistance that is client and thematic based services that are particularly focused at vulnerable people.

This document sets the principles for how the Council responds to the limited flexibility to use the Government provided Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) fund, channelled through the Better Care Fund (BCF), in order to meet the metrics of the BCF. This policy and the outcomes of measures taken to support those metrics will be reported back through the Better Care Fund to Government.

The aims of this policy

This policy has been produced following consideration of the Housing Assistance Policies of other Worcestershire authorities and is in line with those policies.

This policy supports the Council's overall aim to secure health and community well-being. It supports the Council's Housing Strategy and is set in response to both local identified needs and issues and the national context of Homes for All.

Government provide funds for Disabled Facilities Grants that are ring-fenced to the District Council and Passed via the Better Care Fund. This fund is to be used for providing mandatory DFGs, activities to support the efficient and effective provision of DFGs and other work to support the Better Care Fund Metrics. Apart from the mandatory DFG response, the remaining funding is split across schemes and activities for these purposes and deemed priority through delegated decision of the relevant Director, Head of Finance and lead Cabinet Member. This funding split is reviewed annually according to available budget.

The Housing Assistance Policy also includes discretionary financial assistance for private rented properties and homeowners. This was originally a capital fund for private sector housing improvement provided through the Regional Government but was discontinued some years ago. The remaining and recycled funding is specifically aimed at tackling poor conditions (i.e. non-decent) housing in the private sector (both owner occupied and private rented sector) where the housing is occupied by vulnerable households (e.g. recipients of

benefits). This funding is split across schemes deemed priority through delegated decision of the relevant Director, Head of Finance and lead Cabinet Member. This funding split is reviewed annually according to remaining budget and any repayment of financial assistance received.

The Council has four key Strategic Housing Priorities two of which are relevant. These are 'Improving Private Sector Housing Conditions' and 'Assisting Older and Vulnerable People to Maintain their Independence'.

Also as detailed in the Council Housing Strategy, the Council's Corporate Theme of Enabling Community Wellbeing is supported through this policy. In particular the work of the Private Sector Housing Team enhances Community Safety, Housing and independent Living and Public Health.

The Community Strategy aims include a better environment and community safety. Discretionary financial assistance, advice and enforcement action that provides for energy efficiency and security measures to dwellings will support these aims. This policy is intended to provide for flexibility in dealing with the needs and context of the local population and the housing stock.

The key objective is to assist vulnerable people achieve decent, suitable and affordable homes in sustainable communities and in particular will aim to;

- Provide for an efficient and effective response to need for property adaptation for disabled persons.
- Provide for alternatives and support mechanisms for disabled persons, meeting the national Better Care Fund Metrics.
- Reduce the number of people living in homes in the private sector that have category one hazards.
- Reduce the number of households in fuel poverty.
- Increase the number of people who are able to live independently at home.
- Reduce the number of victims of domestic violence who are forced to leave their own accommodation because of a lack of alternative options.
- Increase the number of empty properties that are brought into to use particularly where that accommodation can then be used to reduce homelessness or the use of temporary accommodation.

The Home Improvement Agency will continue to be supported in part by funding from the Council, including fees for acting as an Agency in the administration of mandatory grants and discretionary financial assistance. They are also able to investigate and provide other mechanisms of funding and assistance to meet the aims of this policy and its functions. This may include third party grants, loans, equity release etc.

The provision of mandatory grants and discretionary financial assistance will be subject to internal auditing and external auditing to ensure adequate procedures are in place and followed and that there is an appropriate use of public funds.

The Council will continue to work with the voluntary sector in order to facilitate their roles in helping vulnerable people.

Disabled Facilities Grant and Discretionary Financial Assistance policies and procedures will be reviewed over time with the intent of bringing a common approach across Worcestershire wherever appropriate.

2 Purpose and Form of Housing Assistance

Housing Assistance may be offered by Wyre Forest District Council in accordance with this policy towards the cost of:

- (i) the improvement, repair or adaptation of existing living accommodation including permanent residential caravans and houseboats
- (ii) any other initiatives which are consistent with the aims and objectives of the District Council in relation to housing.

Housing Assistance may be offered in any form including but not restricted to financial assistance, advice, provision of materials, carrying out of works, loans. The Council may enter into partnership with other organisations or agencies to deliver financial assistance.

The specific types of Housing Assistance available at the time of this policy and the conditions for eligibility are specified in Part 9 of this policy.

The Council will pay reasonable costs of associated fees and charges for financial assistance and grants up to 15% and the administration costs and of schemes to deliver the aims set out.

Financial Assistance will be given upon condition of repayment where applicable and appropriate and any recycled funds to be used for the same aims as set out in the policy.

The assistance will be focused primarily on particular clients' e.g. disabled, elderly and vulnerable households across the District and on particular themes, for example to improve energy efficiency and eradicate fuel poverty.

Assistance and enforcement are both used by the Council when considered appropriate to ensure standards in relation to housing matters. The provision of financial and other assistance will be considered as an alternative to enforcement when considered appropriate and the relevant parts of this policy apply. Factors that will affect the decision to assist or enforce include individual's capabilities, personal circumstances and responsibilities and the legal and social responsibilities of the Council.

3 Persons Eligible for Housing Assistance

Any person who makes an application for Housing Assistance must:-

- (i) be over 18 years of age at the date of the application, and
- (ii) live in the dwelling as his/her only main residence (except where the applicant is a landlord who intends to let the dwelling or where the housing assistance is in relation to an empty property), and
- (iii) have an owner's interest in the dwelling (other than an interest by virtue of being a Registered Social Landlord under Part 1 of the Housing Act 1996 or being eligible for such registration), or be a tenant or licensee of the dwelling, alone or jointly with others but not

being a member of the landlord's family, with a tenancy or license permitting occupation of the dwelling for a minimum period of 12 months after approval of the housing assistance, and

(iv) have the power or duty to carry out the works and where appropriate have the owner's consent in writing to carrying out the works, and

(v) satisfy such test(s) of resources as the Council may from time to time have in place

(vi) not be ineligible, by virtue of the Housing, Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, regulations made under the Act or any other enactment.

(vii) homeowners have the primary responsibility for ensuring their homes are properly maintained but we will assist vulnerable homeowners to make sure they have the opportunity for achieving safe, healthy and appropriately adapted homes.

4 Types of Assistance Available

The provision of assistance or schemes for works and other activities other than mandatory disabled facilities grants is subject to the availability of funding.

The type of assistance available to home owners and tenants will be based on a mixture of advice, private finance and public finance (if available) to priority cases. This is a hierarchy of assistance based on the need and circumstances of the applicant.

The basic information, advice and "sign posting" service provided with the Home Improvement Agency will cover repairs, maintenance and improvements including information on builders, energy efficiency, other re-housing options, etc.

A higher level of service, namely grant aided assistance and access to the Agency Service (for which a fee will be charged) for households to whom we have a mandatory duty and where they meet the means testing criteria.

5 Making a Formal Application

All applications must be on a form approved by the Council and must include the following original documentation:-

(i) Where the estimated cost of the works exceeds £10,000, three quotations are required to be set out on the schedule of grant works/housing assistance provided by the Council. If the estimated works is below £10,000 then there can be either two quotes or one if a comparable costed schedule exists to ensure value for money.

(ii) Particulars of the work to be carried out including where appropriate plans, specifications and specialist reports.

(iii) Details of any professional fees or charges relating to the work and for which assistance is being sought.

(iv) Confirmation of planning and/or building control approval where appropriate.

(v) For applications above £10,000, proof of ownership from a solicitor or mortgagee, or copies of the title deeds/land registry certificate, or copy of the tenancy agreement or licence to occupy.

(vi) Where the application is the owner or landlord, a signed undertaking to repay the assistance if the conditions imposed are not met or complied with.

The application will only be considered complete when the Council has all the information it

needs to be able to make a decision on the application.

The Home Improvement Agency will have their own procurement process where they act in an Agency role, as outlined in the Service Level Agreement. The Council will accept single quotes for costs where provided through such a procurement process.

6 Restrictions on Assistance

No assistance will normally be given for work started before formal approval of an application, except that:

- (i) The Council may in exceptional circumstances exempt an application from this condition for example where a defect may present a serious risk to health and safety.
- (ii) The Council may, with consent of the applicant, treat the application as varied so exclude any works that have been started before approval.

The Council will not consider an application for assistance in respect of premises built or converted less than 10 years from the date of the application, except in the case of an application for a disabled facility grant or sanctuary grant.

The Council will assess whether the scope of works are reasonable and practicable and eligible, in particular having regard to the age and condition of the property.

The Council will assess whether prices given by contractors meet value for money. In determining this, the Officer will give consideration to similar jobs priced within the last year.

In the event that the Officer believes the price for contracts are too high and identifies an appropriate price for this work (which is lower), then they will advise the client that the total eligible grant or assistance will be the lower amount. The client is under no obligation to use the cheaper priced contractor but must be aware that the Council will only make a grant or assistance payment up to the value of the lower price.

Grant assistance will not normally be provided for works covered by insurance. Where, before a grant or assistance is approved, it is found that an applicant can make an insurance claim, the insurance company will be requested to confirm in writing the level of their liability, if any. The level of grant or assistance will be reduced by an amount equivalent to the insurance company's liability. Where a grant or assistance is approved, a condition will be imposed requiring the applicant to pursue any relevant claim against an insurance company or third party for: -

- a) claims for personal injuries where the applicant is in respect of works required under a Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant:
- b) claims on the applicant's property insurance or on a third party where the application is in respect of works for which financial assistance has been given and to repay the financial assistance provided out of the proceeds of such a claim.

The Provision of grants/assistance is allowed for caravans and houseboats used and allowed to be used as main residence, subject to meeting other eligibility requirements. It will not normally be allowed for in the case of 'shacks' and chalet type structures. Shack properties are those that are identified in the Wyre Forest District Council Shack Site

Survey carried out in 1979. Holiday residences, caravans on holiday sites or those with restricted occupancy and second homes (as defined by Council Tax) will not be provided with grants/assistance.

The Council recognises that these policies cannot cover every likely situation and there will be people who genuinely are in need of some form of urgent support that are precluded from accessing them due to a certain aspect. In these situations the Council may consider offering assistance in exceptional circumstances, in particular where support would help the Council meet its strategic objectives, as determined by the Strategic Housing Services Manager or Director.

7 Supervision of Works

In the absence of any agency agreement with the Council or the Home Improvement Agency, the responsibility for supervision of the works rests with the applicant or with any suitably qualified and indemnified building professional or agent acting on the applicant's behalf and not with the Council.

8 Payment of Assistance

A Grant or Financial Assistance will only be paid if

- (i) the assisted works are completed within twelve months from the date of approval unless the delay was not the fault of the applicant and deemed reasonable, and
- (ii) the assisted works are carried out in accordance with the specifications set out in the formal approval or as varied with the agreement of the Council, and
- (iii) the assisted works are carried out to the satisfaction of the Council and the applicant (or just the Council if the applicant appears to be unreasonably withholding approval), and
- (iv) the Council are provided with an invoice, demand or receipt for payment in an acceptable format. Any such invoice must contain sufficient detail for the Council to identify in full the works carried out, by whom and the price charged and must not be provided by the applicant or a member of his/her family.

The Council may pay the Grant or Financial Assistance to the applicant, however it will be normal practice to pay direct to the builder or contractor engaged by the applicant. The Housing Assistance may be paid in one lump sum on satisfactory completion of the works or in instalments ("stage payments") as the work proceeds. Stage payments will only be made where the Council is satisfied the value of the work completed exceeds the value claimed. A maximum of three stage payments will be considered, normally for 25%, 50% and then 100%.

No Grant or Financial Assistance will be given until binding agreements appropriate to the form of assistance have been formally executed.

The Council will not enter into any Form of Contract with a builder or contractor and, in the absence of any agency agreement with the applicant, it is a matter for the applicant to agree any contract with the builder or contractor.

Although not governed by Council Standing Orders in relation to procurement, as the payment of any assistance given is due principally to the applicant and not the builder but Standing Orders do act as a useful reference for determining the administration of

procedures regarding obtaining quotes etc.

9 Types of Grant and Financial Assistance

The types of Housing Assistance offered, and the conditions applicable, are as follows and will remain so until a further Housing Assistance Policy is published. All are discretionary (except in the case of a Disabled Facilities Grant) and are subject to the Council having sufficient resources. As already stated there is discretion to extend the eligibility criteria, level of grant or assistance and scope of works where the situation is exceptional and, in the opinion of the Strategic Housing Services Manager, assistance would help the Council meet its strategic objectives.

Mandatory Disabled Facility Grants

These grants are mandatory under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and are subject to statutory means test.

These grants are awarded to enable applicants to have access to and around their homes, or to use essential facilities in the home to enable them to live independently. Mandatory DFGs can only be given for purposes set out in this Act. Ongoing maintenance and repair of adaptations and equipment provided under the grant will become the responsibility of the applicant or landlord as relevant.

Whilst it is recognized that a DFG is a mandatory grant it is the Council's intention where possible to investigate all housing options which could include moving to more suitable accommodation.

A disabled housing need can be met in a number of different ways and all options will be investigated to identify which will meet the needs of the applicant in the most cost effective and suitable way, whilst acknowledging that DFGs are a mandatory grant.

Discretionary DFG Disabled Facilities Grants for costs above £30,000 will be made available up to £10,000 where the Council agrees the works are eligible, and practicable and represent the most satisfactory course of action. Where works requested are in excess of £40,000 total cost or considered to be unreasonable given the age and condition of the property, alternatives including the following will normally be considered:

- a) Referral to Social Services for their consideration of providing additional resources.
- b) Alternative schemes of work, including modular buildings.
- c) Provision of reasonable funding to enable a move to alternative accommodation with funding for adaptations to the new accommodation.
- d) Referral for consideration of Equity Release funding if applicable.

Disabled Facilities Grant	
Eligible applicants	Any applicant registered or capable of being registered under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 and requires adaptations to be provided.
Qualifying criteria	<p>Details of works requested</p> <p>An assessment confirming that the works are 'necessary and appropriate' is required.</p> <p>Entitlement to a Disabled Facility Grant is mandatory but, before approval, the Council has to be satisfied that the relevant works are both necessary and appropriate for the Disabled Person, and also that it is reasonable and practicable to carry out the works.</p> <p>Works eligible are only those that are eligible in the legislation and deemed to be required to meet the needs of the disabled person.</p>
Conditions	<p>Subject to a financial assessment of resources</p> <p>The Council will use its powers to place a limited charge against the property where the DFG grant exceeds £5,000 up to a ceiling of £10,000. Repayment of the grant up to a maximum of £10,000 will be required if the property is sold within 10 years of the grant being awarded.</p> <p>A means test will not be applied to parents where adaptations are required for a disabled child</p> <p>Proof of title is required.</p> <p>Landlord consent is required where applicable</p> <p>Conditions relating to the recovery of equipment in specified circumstances are applied</p>
Maximum grant	<p>£30,000 mandatory grant</p> <p>Up to £10,000 discretionary top up where applicable</p>
Prioritisation and Timescale	<p>The Council will endeavour to respond to all valid applications as soon as possible. This will normally be within 2 weeks unless further information is required to enable that decision.</p> <p>In exceptional circumstances where further enquiries are necessary and other options may need to be investigated or determination may be reliant on third party information, the Council will respond within the Statutory timescales of a decision within 6 months of a valid application.</p>

Home Repair Assistance

This is discretionary financial assistance and subject to available resources. A charge is placed on a property receiving Home Repair Assistance. If demand for assistance exceeds the budget available, the Council does not undertake to maintain a waiting list. This discretionary financial assistance will be considered after other avenues of funding have been considered and found not to be available.

Home Repair Assistance	
Eligible applicants	<p>Available to carry out works to allow persons to remain in their home. Owner-occupiers or private tenants with a repairing responsibility having savings of less than £16,000 and in receipt of one or more of the following means tested benefits:-</p> <p>Working Tax Credit (with an income, after tax, of less than £15,460) Income Support Council Tax Benefit (doesn't include single person or disabled person discount) Pension Guarantee Credit (not pension saving credit) Jobseekers allowance (income based only, in receipt for longer than 6 months) Employment Support Allowance (income related) Income support / job seekers allowance / working tax credit/housing benefit / council tax benefit / pension guarantee credit.</p> <p>OR: owner-occupiers assessed as having low income, have undergone a financial assessment to demonstrate this and are not able to access funding from a high street bank loan or able to affordably take or extend a mortgage or access an appropriate equity release.</p>
Qualifying criteria	<p>Property in need of essential repairs as determined by the Housing Act 2004 as a 'Category 1 Hazard' or significant category 2 hazard, in order to make the property healthy, safe, wind and weatherproof. Assistance may be prioritised based upon the hazard score or circumstances of the applicant.</p> <p>Works to bring the property up to the Decent Homes Standard will be aimed for if practical, reasonable and sufficient funds are available.</p>
Conditions	<p>Only one application for assistance will be considered up to a maximum of £10,000 within any 5-year period. (this condition is at the discretion of the Strategic Housing Services Manager and only in exceptional circumstances)</p> <p>Grant repayable in full to the Council should the property be disposed of or sold. The charge will be registered as a local land charge.</p> <p>Must have lived at the relevant property for at least 12 months.</p> <p>Once approval has been given, the applicant has until 12 months from the date of approval to complete the works.</p>
Maximum grant	<p>£10,000.00 for works.</p> <p>In exceptional circumstances the Strategic Housing services Manager may consider works above this amount where it is considered the most satisfactory course of action and meets strategic housing objectives.</p>

Private Sector Measures

The Government Regional Initiatives Capital fund for private sector initiatives towards decent homes has been delegated to the relevant Cabinet Member and Director for determination of which projects are to be allocated the funds. Part of this funding is allocated to the Home Repair Assistance and the rest is allocated to various projects.

Projects agreed on an annual basis typically include measures to improve conditions in the private rented sector where the works are above what can be reasonably expected of a landlord and are of benefit to the tenants, for example improved, efficient heating systems and ventilation.

Other examples of schemes include the provision of gating to entries, sanctuary schemes for vulnerable individuals, fire safety improvements, flood defence property protection, heating and insulation measures.

Any money received in repayment of assistance is recycled into this funding stream for the same overarching purposes.

Better Care Fund Metric Supporting Measures

Government funding through the Better Care Fund to the District Council is able to be used for activities other than provision of mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants if those activities support the national aims or 'metrics' for the fund. Although any demand for DFGs must first be addressed, any remaining funding will be used to support the metrics through a variety of activity including the following:

Discretionary "top-up" to mandatory DFGs: The maximum DFG awarded is £30,000 but some larger schemes such as extensions now exceed the maximum grant and additional funding from other sources (e.g. charities) is either unavailable or very resource intensive to identify and obtain. Funding up to £10k above the mandatory limit is available for this purpose. This fund could also top up handy person works and minor DFGs where they exceed the cap and other funding isn't available.

Funding for category 1 or serious category 2 hazards under the Housing Act 2004 for vulnerable applicants: Where a vulnerable resident, on a low income, has hazards within the home that are contributing to the unsuitability of the property. This exists in the current HAP (2013) and is known as Home Repair Assistance.

Hospital Discharge scheme: fast tracked and non-means tested works to the home to enable earlier hospital discharge where problems in the home are identified as a possible reason for delayed discharge.

Dementia Friendly Dwelling Grant: to offer financial assistance to make homes more dementia friendly to help people manage their surroundings, retain their independence and reduce feelings of anxiety and confusion.

Financial assistance for adapting and improving properties: to offer financial assistance for costs associated with moving to a more suitable home and/or purchasing / building / improving properties (in conjunction with a Registered Provider).

Capital grant: to work with partners to develop projects (where required) that are required as part of wider capital schemes.

Housing options: funding to facilitate the delivery of a housing options service within CRW where DFGs and care / support costs can be avoided through the move to more appropriate housing at an earlier stage.

Independent Living Centre: funding to facilitate the development of an innovation centre, with multi-agency / disciplinary staff co-located that enable applicants for a DFG and self-funders to test out potential aids and adaptations and make effective choices

The budget likely to be available, priorities and allocation of funding to be undertaken by the Director for Economic Prosperity and Place in consultation with the Lead Cabinet Member and the Head of Finance and subject to annual review.

10. Repayment of Assistance

General

Repaid money will be recycled into provision of future housing assistance.

If an applicant is approved but it subsequently appears to the Council that the applicant (or one of two or more joint applicants) was not, at the time the application was approved, entitled to the assistance approved, then no payment shall be made (or no further instalments paid) and the Council may seek to recover immediately any payments made together with interest accruing from the date of payment.

If the applicant is the owner of a dwelling in respect of which Housing Assistance has been approved and ceases to be the owner before the works are completed he/she shall repay to the Council on demand the total amount of Housing Assistance that has been paid.

Breach of Undertakings

Where an owner occupier has given a signed undertaking to occupy a property as his/her principal residence after completion of the assisted works for a period of time, and if they cease to do so during that time, they shall repay on demand to the Council the total amount of assistance paid out.

Where a landlord (or owner) has given a signed undertaking that the property will be available for letting for a period specified after completion of the assisted works, and if the landlord ceases to make the relevant property available for letting during the specified period then the landlord shall repay on demand to the Council the total amount of Housing assistance paid out.

Where the Council has the right to demand repayment but extenuating circumstances exist, the Council may determine to waive the right to repayment or to demand a sum less than the full amount of Housing Assistance.

Death of Applicant

If the applicant should die before the before the Housing Assistance is approved, the

application will be treated as withdrawn.

If the applicant should die after approval of the Housing Assistance or whilst the approved works are in progress, the Council may at its discretion agree to completion or making good of the works and pay the Housing Assistance in full or, if the works originally agreed are not completed in full, an appropriate proportion of the Housing Assistance.

Where an applicant dies after completion of the works but before the expiry of the ten year undertaking, the Council will seek repayment of the Housing Assistance from the applicant's estate if a disposal by sale or a change in ownership / tenure takes place.

Additional Conditions

The Council reserves the right to impose additional conditions when making a grant approval. These may include but are not restricted to:

- (i) A contribution to the cost of the assisted works by the applicant
- (ii) The right to nominate tenants to housing accommodation available for rent
- (iii) Housing accommodation being maintained in repair after completion of the assisted works.
- (iv) The right of the Council to recover specialised equipment when no longer needed.

Breach of any additional conditions gives the Council the rights to seek repayment of the Housing Assistance on demand.

Security and Repayment

Where a grant condition imposes a liability to repay the Housing Assistance, the condition will be registered by the Council either as a local land charge or on the national land charge register.

The Council may at its discretion determine to require repayment of a lesser sum than the full amount of Housing Assistance

11. Enquiries and Applying for Assistance

Persons wishing to pursue a grant where a test of resources applies will be asked to provide all relevant financial information.

The Council will include in any housing assistance provided an Agency a fee for the Home Improvement Agency who assist eligible persons with their applications etc.

The applicant can either through the Agency or directly submit a formal application along with a priced schedule and any other document required (such as plans, building and planning consents, etc).

Once approval has been given, the applicant has until 12 months from the date of approval to complete the works unless otherwise stated.

For disabled facilities grants, the applicant has the right to apply direct to the Council rather than through an Agency. However the Council would not assist the application process in the manner of an Agency in such circumstances and the Council may take up to the full

legal timescale to consider and determine approval or refusal of an application.

12 Decision and Notification

The Council will notify applicants (normally through the Agency) in writing whether their application has been approved or refused. The decision will be notified as soon as reasonably practicable and in any event no later than six months after receipt of a valid application which includes all required supporting documentation.

If the application is approved, the notification will specify the works that are eligible for assistance, the value of the assistance, the form the assistance will take, any conditions applicable and the builder/contractor who will carry out the works

If the application is refused, the Council will give the reasons for the refusal and also confirm the procedure for appealing against the decision.

13 Re-determination of Amount of Grant

Where the Council is satisfied that because of circumstances beyond the control of the applicant which could not have reasonably been foreseen, the cost of the assisted works has either increased or decreased, the Council may at its discretion re-determine the assistance given in accordance with grant framework set out in this document and notify the applicant accordingly.

Additional works carried out without prior approval of the Council will not result in increased financial assistance being provided and would be the responsibility of the applicant to fund.

14 Appeals Against Decisions

Any person who is aggrieved by a decision not to give financial assistance as a consequence of this policy may appeal to seek review of the decision.

The appeal should first be made in writing to the Strategic Housing Services Manager. If the person appealing remains dissatisfied they have the right to go through the Council's Corporate Complaints procedure or approach the Local Government Ombudsman.

Any possible departure from Policy will only be considered where the applicant can demonstrate both wholly exceptional circumstances to justify such a departure and also that the applicant has not means by which he or she could reasonably be expected to undertake the work.

Complaints about service delivery rather than policy should also be made in writing to the Strategic Housing Services Manager and will be investigated in accordance with the Council's Corporate Complaints procedure, a copy of which is available on request.

Appendix Two – Better Care Fund Metrics

The BCF Policy Framework establishes that the national metrics for measuring progress of integration through the BCF will continue as they were set out for 2015-16, with only minor amendments to reflect changes to the definition of individual metrics. In summary these are:

- a. Non-elective admissions (General and Acute);
- b. Admissions to residential and care homes;
- c. Effectiveness of reablement;
- d. Delayed transfers of care.



**Department for
Communities and
Local Government**

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18th April 2016

Dear Colleague

Disabled Facilities Grant 2016/17 – Better Care Fund

April 2016

For the attention of:

1. Upper Tier Local Authority Chief Executives – covering Grant Determination
2. Unitary Authority Chief Executives – covering Grant Determination
3. London Borough Chief Executives– covering Grant Determination
4. Housing Authorities- by way of information
5. Care Commission groups – by way of information

The Chancellor announced at the 2015 Spending Round that up to £500 million of capital funding is being made available by 2019-20 for the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) as part of the Department of Health's Better Care Fund ('the fund'). DFG is for the provision of adaptations to disabled people's homes to help them to live independently in their own homes for longer. The Fund is made up of local pooled funds, local partnerships between Care Commissioning Groups and local Authorities under section 75 of the NHS Act 2002. Many pooled funds are or are likely to have local authorities as "host partners" which means they have ultimate sign off on the accounts.¹

DFG has been included in the Fund so that the provision of adaptations can be incorporated into the strategic consideration and planning of investment to improve outcomes for service users. As was the case last year, DFG will be paid to upper-tier authorities in 2016/17. The statutory duty, however, remains on local housing authorities to provide adaptations to those disabled people who qualify for it will remain. Therefore each area will have to allocate this funding to their respective housing authorities (district councils in two-tier areas) from the pooled budget to enable them to

¹ Section 7 NHS Bodies and Local Authorities Partnership Arrangements Regulations 2000 (SI 2000/617)

continue to meet their statutory duty to provide adaptations to the homes of disabled people, including for young people aged 17 and under.

Special conditions have therefore been added to the DFG Conditions of Grant Usage (under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003) which stipulate that, where relevant, upper-tier local authorities must pay funds into their local pool and then they must ensure the pooled fund cascades an amount at least equivalent to the DFG allocation to district council level in a timely manner such that it can be spent within year. Condition 3 makes clear that Upper Tier Local Authorities have a duty to ensure that Housing Authorities covered by Annex B to their grant determination receive the correct amount so that they can meet their statutory duty. Minimum allocations for DFG have been provided for all upper-tier authorities, with further breakdowns for allocations at district council level. We recognise that the holders of the Fund may decide that additional funding is appropriate to top up the minimum DFG funding levels. Please ensure you carefully read the attached Section 31 Grant and comply with the conditions contained therein. The grant determination requires you to confirm that funding was used for the purposes that a capital receipt may be used for (condition 1); it is for you to determine how you obtain the assurance you need from the lower tier authority allowing you to meet this condition.

As you will know, in March 2016 the Department of Health discontinued the Social Care Capital Grant from 2016-17 and issued a letter to local authorities explaining that it was focussing all of its capital funding through the Disabled Facilities Grant. In the letter the Department of Health also stated that some areas may agree to invest some of the Disabled Facilities Grant into broader strategic capital projects, although this would be a local decision to be considered as part of the Better Care Fund planning process. The statutory duty on housing authorities to provide adaptations remains, so any decision at the local level to spend the Disabled Facilities Grant on wider capital projects must be considered as part of enabling housing authorities to continue to meet their statutory duty.

You may be aware that earlier this year, the Local Government Ombudsman published its report 'Making a house a home: Local Authorities and disabled adaptations'. The report highlighted varying levels of waiting times for adaptations around the country. While some areas are excellent, disabled people in other areas face extremely long waits for adaptations. We are keen to minimise these delays and would appreciate it if you could consider what action you can take with this year's grant to address this.

Officials from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) or the Department of Health (DH) have contacted you, and you have informed them that you are the host authority for the pooled BCF fund. In accepting this funding, you acknowledge that you (rather than the Clinical Commissioning Group) are the host in your area, have accountability for funding paid into the pooled fund, and that you can and will meet the conditions placed on the grant.

The Department of Communities and Local Government would also like to draw your attention to Foundations who are funded by the department. Foundations act as the

national body for home improvement agencies. Foundations can offer advice and support to home improvement agencies on the efficient delivery of adaptations and to local authority commissioners on commissioning local home improvement services. More information can be found at: <http://wwwFOUNDATIONS.UK.COM/home/>

Yours sincerely,



Sally Randall
Director
Housing Standards and Support Directorate



Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Briefing Paper

Report of: Dean Piper
Head of Economic Development & Regeneration –
North Worcestershire

Date: Thursday 7th July 2016

OPEN

Kidderminster Eastern Gateway Development Framework

1. Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to invite the Committee to consider the proposed Kidderminster Eastern Gateway Development Framework.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Kidderminster Eastern Gateway (KEG) site is comprised of a collection of inter-related sites on the eastern side of Kidderminster Town Centre. The site extends to approximately 6.5 hectares and includes a public surface level car park at Bromsgrove Street, a medical centre, Youth House, the former Magistrates Court and the Glades Leisure Centre. It also encompasses Worcester Street, which forms part of the town's traditional retail core, but has suffered serious decline during the last decade, exacerbated by the growth of the Weavers Wharf and Crossley Park retail parks.
- 2.2 The KEG area is due to change significantly during the next 12 months. The Glades Leisure Centre is due to close in July and the current GP practice based in the Bromsgrove Street Medical Centre, is re-locating to a new facility in the former Cheshires Printworks site. Some residual NHS services are expected to continue to operate out of the Bromsgrove Street centre; however this is not envisaged to be a long term arrangement.
- 2.3 One of the key priorities of the Council's ReWyre Regeneration Programme is to secure the regeneration of the Eastern Gateway area of Kidderminster Town Centre. This is in recognition of the fact that in recent years, this area has suffered due to the changing nature of the town centre and is largely characterised by vacant shops and poor public realm.
- 2.4 A significant portion of the KEG site is in public ownership. This means that there is a real opportunity for public sector partners to work together to combine the development potential of their sites which could act as a catalyst for the wider regeneration of the KEG. Properties within Worcester Street are in private ownership and largely are controlled by investors, owner-occupiers

and local developers. The Youth House, is currently used as a Youth Centre and is owned and operated by a Trust.

- 2.5 In October 2015, following a competitive procurement process, the North Worcestershire Economic Development & Regeneration (NWEDR) service on behalf of the Council appointed a multi-disciplinary team led by the global commercial property company, Savills, to produce a new vision and Development Framework for the KEG site.
- 2.6 Since October last year, Savills have worked on the production of the KEG Development Framework, taking into account a baseline assessment of the site, engagement with key stakeholders, a market assessment, soft market testing, development of a vision statement, options analysis, public consultation and development of a preferred option.
- 2.7 The Development Framework (in final draft) is attached at Appendix 1. It is intended that the document will be adopted by the Council to guide and inform the comprehensive regeneration of the KEG site. The Framework is not a statutory planning policy document, but will inform the future planning policy context for the KEG site and act as a flexible tool to ensure that the Council and other land owners can respond positively to opportunities presented to it by developers and investors.

3. Key Issues

- 3.1 The Development Framework sets out a new vision for the Eastern Gateway site, which has been developed in close consultation with land owners and key stakeholders:

To bring forward an exciting new destination for Kidderminster Town Centre:

- *To rebalance and improve the vitality of the Town Centre as a whole;*
- *To diversify the Town Centre offer with uses that generate an improved day and night-time economy and footfall;*
- *To improve connections to Worcester Street and the High Street, to augment the scheme's interaction with the Town Centre core;*
- *To support local business and enterprise;*
- *To encourage greater dwell times, through improved public spaces and uses serving the community*
- *To create a dynamic place that residents, workers and visitors can enjoy, which is attractive, easily accessible and safe:*
- *Solutions must be aspirational and improve the quality of the built environment to attract inward investment and draw back to Kidderminster a proportion of the expenditure which is currently lost to facilities at Merry Hill Shopping Centre, Worcester and Birmingham*
- *Public and private sector engagement and collaboration is key to unlocking the opportunity;*

- *Solutions should come forward in deliverable and achievable phases, which can secure early wins whilst creating a catalyst for long term, sustainable activity.*

Options Analysis

- 3.2 Within the Development Framework, Savills present three potential development options which could be delivered by the market. Each of the options comprises six 'development parcels' which could offer distinct development mixes, as follows:

Parcel 1 South eastern area of the site; area includes the Glades Leisure Centre, prominent frontage to Comberton Hill and the A451;

Parcel 2 South western area of the site; area includes the former Magistrates Court;

Parcel 3 North eastern area of the site; area includes Youth Trust House, prominent frontage to the A451;

Parcel 4 Central area of the site; currently includes Bromsgrove Street car park, benefits from vistas across the town centre;

Parcel 5 Worcester Street – it is proposed that re-development in this area should occur 'organically' through investment by the existing private sector owners, responding to improvement in surrounding sites owned by the public sector;

Parcel 6 A 'gateway' to the site is proposed at the Comberton Hill roundabout; this will require improvements to visibility and the public realm.

- 3.3 The inclusion of land ownerships in each proposed parcel does not necessarily imply that they are to be re-developed. This particularly applies to the properties along Worcester Street (Parcel 5) and the Youth House within Parcel 3.
- 3.4 The proposals for the three development options is set out in full in the Development Framework, however they can be summarised as follows:
- Option 1: 120,000 square foot retail and leisure scheme; alongside creative workspaces and 580 car parking spaces.
 - Option 2: Residential led scheme, with private sector housing / apartments (92 units) alongside retirement and/or extra care accommodation and facilities (96 units) alongside community uses.
 - Option 3: Mixed use scheme, with retail and leisure uses alongside residential, creative workspaces and community use.
- 3.5 A public consultation was held during February 2016, to find out the public's opinions on the proposed vision and the three development options. 102 local

residents completed a feedback form and questionnaire. 76% of respondents agreed with the proposed vision for KEG and 72% of respondents felt that the proposed options were appropriate for the site.

Preferred Option

- 3.6 Each of the options has been tested by Savills in terms of deliverability and ability to deliver against the proposed vision.
- 3.7 Option 3 (mixed-use) is recommended by Savills as the preferred development option and would deliver a mix of retail and leisure uses alongside residential, creative workspaces and community uses.
- 3.8 Savills advice is that demand for a mixed use development in Kidderminster Town Centre is strong and that the KEG site would be an attractive location for this type of scheme. However, Savills advise that Option 3 is sufficiently flexible to respond to changing market demands and requirements, which means that the mix of what is actually developed may differ from the illustrative approach in the Development Framework (e.g. there might ultimately be higher levels of residential provision within the scheme).
- 3.9 Within the Development Framework, it is envisaged that Parcel 1 (Glades Leisure Centre) would come forward for development first. This would enable the delivery of the 'anchor' cinema / leisure use to come forward as an early win and act as a catalyst for the wider regeneration of the KEG site.
- 3.10 It is proposed that specialist support will be sought by the Council to prepare and execute a Delivery Strategy and assist the Council in delivering the aspirations set out in the Development Framework.

4. Options

- 4.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is invited to consider the content of the draft Kidderminster Eastern Gateway Development Framework with the following options:
 - 1. To recommend to Cabinet that the Development Framework is adopted;
 - 2. To recommend amendments to the Development Framework before Cabinet adopts it.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 Corporate Leadership Team.
Cabinet Member for Planning & Economic Regeneration.

6. Equality Impact Needs Assessment

- 6.1 There are no issues to be addressed.

7. Wards affected

7.1 Blakebrook and Habberley South.

8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1 – Kidderminster Eastern Gateway Development Framework

9. Background Papers

- Cabinet report 22nd October 2013 – New leisure Centre for Wyre Forest
- Report to Cabinet, 16th December 2014 – ReWyre – Update on Progress over the last 5 years and a Strategic Action Plan for the Next 5 Years
- Council –25th February 2015 – Financial Strategy 2015-2018

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WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

FEEDBACK FROM CABINET MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY 14TH JUNE 2016

Agenda
Item No.

DECISION

9.1 Temporary Accommodation Placement and Procurement Policy

In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, June 2nd 2016:

Decision:

The Temporary Accommodation Placement and Procurement Policy be approved.

10.1 A Strategy for Enabling Business Growth and Enterprise

In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, June 2nd 2016:

Decision:

The Business Growth and Enterprise Strategy be adopted.

11.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 2nd June 2016

- Wyre Forest District Council Local Plan Review: Revised Local Plan Development Scheme (Project Plan 2016-2019)

Decision:

- The programme for the preparation and review of Development Plan, as set out on page 93 of appendix 1 of the report be amended in August 2017 and 2018 to reflect the fact that the Council does not hold key decision making meetings during August.
- The proposed Revised Local Development Scheme 2016-19 as set out in Appendix 1 of the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (as amended) be adopted.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2016-2017

June 2016

“How are we doing?” Q4 update (Housing and Planning)
Tracking Recommendations from 2015-2016
Temporary Accommodation Policy
A Strategy for Enabling Business Growth and Enterprise
Local Development Scheme

July 2016

Nominations for the Treasury Management Review Panel
Housing Assistance Policy
Kidderminster Eastern Gateway Development Framework

September 2016

“How are we doing?” Q1 update (Enabling)
Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy Backward
Look 2015/16
Section 106 Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)
Health Action Plan
Climate Change Action Plan
Recommendations from the S106 Monies Review Panel

October 2016

Development of the Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership Plan

November 2016

“How are we doing?” Q2 update (Business and People)
Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy Mid Year
Report 2016/17
Local Plan Review – Preferred Options

December 2016

Annual Crime & Disorder Review

January 2017

February 2017

Treasury Management Service Strategy 2017/18
“How are we doing?” Q3 update (Place)

March 2017

April 2017