

**REPORT FROM: HOUSING, HEALTH AND ENGINEERING SERVICES
MANAGER**

TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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**HOUSING RENEWAL POLICY
MEANS TESTING OF DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS**

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To seek a revision to the Housing Renewal Policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to agree a revision to the Housing Renewal Policy to remove the requirement for means testing of Disabled Facilities Grants below £10,000

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

To speed up the delivery of the DFG programme.

ISSUE

The Regulatory Reform Order (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (RRO) gives Local Authorities the power to provide assistance, directly or indirectly, to improve living conditions in their area. This assistance can take the form of grants, loans, advice or materials.

The RRO imposes a condition that before a Local Authority can offer any form of assistance, it must have adopted a policy for the provision of assistance and publicised its adoption. Our current policy was approved in 2016. The policy details the forms of assistance available to help residents improve or adapt their properties. These forms of assistance are broken down into the 4 themes, which are regarded as our main housing renewal priorities; area regeneration, assisting the housing market, helping the most vulnerable and improving the energy efficiency of the stock. We are now proposing to revise the Policy to incorporate the flexibility to allow more effective use of the Better Care fund by utilizing discretionary powers under the Regulatory Reform Order (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002

Currently the Council only facilitates mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) as set out in the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and subsequent regulations. The Act

and Regulations dictate that any person with a disability aged 19 or over be financially assessed (means tested) to determine whether a contribution is needed based on the household income. The means test is complicated and can add significant delay to the provision of the adaptation.

The revised policy proposes the introduction of a £10,000 (estimated cost of adaptation) threshold before the means test is applied. The table below shows the means tested contribution raised in each of the last 3 years.

Year	Total grants approved	Number of Grants under £10,000	Total approved for under 10,000 Grants	Total contribution received	Number of contributions
17/18	133	89	410,290	4,689	5
18/19	142	91	440,410	2,631	6
19/20 to date	79	43	240,697	0	0

The introduction of the threshold is a pragmatic way to reduce bureaucracy and reduce the time taken to process the application by up to three weeks. This will allow us to approve more grants and assist in spending the increased Better Care Funding and reduce the time that applicants have to wait for their adaptation.

This approach has already been adopted in some of the other Lancashire authorities

The Housing Renewal policy, which was adopted in January 2016, will need to be updated to reflect this change.

IMPLICATIONS

Policy: : The existing Housing Renewal Policy was approved in January 2016, and will be amended to incorporate the change outlined in the report

Financial: There will be a small loss of resident contributions

Legal: The Council is required by the Regulatory Reform Order (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (RRO) to adopt and publish a policy setting out how it will exercise the power to provide the assistance set out in article 3 of the Order.

Risk Management: There are no implications arising from this report.

Health and Safety: There are no implications arising from this report.

Sustainability: There are no implications arising from this report.

Community Safety: There are no implications arising from this report.

Equality and Diversity: There are no implications arising from this report.

Appendix None

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS