

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNCIL

CABINET

28TH JULY 2022

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF ADULT SERVICES – A. THOMAS

SECTION A – FOR DECISION

Matter for Decision

WARD(S) AFFECTED: All

HOUSING RENEWAL & ADAPTATION SERVICE (HRAS) - PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING RENEWAL POLICY

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To seek authority to implement the new policy tools for the Housing Renewal and Adaptation Service, which includes the newly created discretionary Disabled facility Grant (DFG) for small and minor works with no means test requirement following a Welsh Governments request.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A report went to cabinet on 20th January 2022 outlining the details from Welsh Government on the request for all local authorities to remove the means test for small and medium sized DFG grants and to create a discretionary grant for this. The cabinet decision was made to accept this change and for the HRAS to proceed with updating and re-writing the policy tools to suit.

BACKGROUND

On 10th March 2021 Welsh Government made the following announcement:

We know that reducing barriers so disabled people can maintain their independence, safety and good health allows them to continue to live at home with dignity, and it also reduces pressures on our health and social care services.

From April 2021 it will be simpler for disabled people to get help with small and medium sized adaptations to their homes as we take measures to remove the means test from small and medium Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG).

To enable the authority to offer this a new discretionary disabled facility grant needed to be created and the policy tools amended to suit.

The existing policy document is out of date and includes grants and assistance that are no longer available due to funding cuts and changes, these include:

- Council property Adaptations
- Minor repair assistance
- Minor adaptation assistance
- Emergency repairs
- Priority landlords assistance

The new attached policy has been updated and re written and includes the following assistance and loans

- Mandatory DFG
- Discretionary DFG
- Discretionary Rapid Adaptation Grant
- Relocation Loan assistance
- Welsh Government Landlord Loans
- Welsh Government Owner Occupier loan
- Welsh Government Owner occupier Financial Assistance.

It is proposed to implement the new policy tools from 1st August 2022 and to start accepting discretionary DFG applications from that point on.

Applications that are currently in the system for a DFG will continue to follow the existing process that is in place, only applications received after 1st August will follow new process. Large works such as extensions will continue to follow the current means tested route.

The other grants and loans will continue as normal.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The new discretionary grant will increase demand on the service and existing budget, resulting in the budget being exhausted earlier in the financial year with a likelihood of the waiting list increasing year on year unless the budget is increased.

INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

There is no equality impacts associated with this report

WORKFORCE IMPACTS

There are no workforce impacts associated with this report

LEGAL IMPACTS

This policy sets out how the council will fulfil its legal obligations in respect of mandatory and discretionary grants under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, and in respect of discretionary grants and loans utilising funding provided by the Welsh Government through the Landlord, Homeowner and Homeowner Financial Assistance Loan Schemes.'

RISK MANAGEMENT

As stated above the introduction of the new discretionary grant is very likely to increase demand and based on current budget levels will result in increased waiting times for all

DFG applications due to budget being exhausted earlier in the financial years.

CONSULTATION

There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the policy tool is approved and adopted to be implemented from the 1st August 2022 and reviewed in 2025

REASONS FOR PROPOSED DECISION

To adopt new policy tools and to start the new discretionary Disabled Facility Grant.

IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISION

The decision is proposed for implementation after the three day call in period.

APPENDICES

App 1 - Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy – Policy tools 2022 -2025

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Social Care Health & Well-being Scrutiny board paper – 20th January 2022, Disabled Facility Grants – Removal of means test for small and medium grants.

OFFICER CONTACT

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