

Ref:

Called in

Yes/No

THE THANET DISTRICT COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISION OF CABINET

Cabinet Member

Councillor Lesley Ann Game

Relevant Portfolio:

Cabinet Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods

Date of Decision:

25 July 2019

Subject:

Adoption of a new Housing Assistance Policy

Key Decision

Yes

In Forward Plan

Yes

Brief summary of matter:

The Council has a duty to award Disabled Facilities Grants to people who qualify for assistance, subject to means testing. The only way to offer any additional financial assistance for adaptations, repairs or improvements to residents' homes is by including the provision in a Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptations Policy.

The council's current Housing Assistance Policy requires an update to better reflect current government policy which offers more of an integrated care approach. Times have changed; the council no longer holds a waiting list for grants, government funding for adaptations has increased significantly and there is now an opportunity to expand our policy to provide additional assistance in appropriate cases. The draft Housing Assistance Policy (2019-2024) seeks to align the available funding better with the care needs of residents.

The proposed new policy includes:

1. Enhancements to the basic Disabled Facilities Grant so that people who don't have savings or cannot afford the cost of borrowing will be able to get sufficient funding to pay for the works that are needed. At the moment some larger jobs don't go ahead because of lack of funding. The proposals would offer a repayable grant in most cases, repayable next time the property is sold.
2. In appropriate cases, to assist people with the cost of moving from a home that cannot be adapted into a more suitable property (this is likely to be very rare)
3. Measures to help address the issue of bed blocking by carrying out vital work in patients' homes quickly to facilitate discharge from hospital; for example tidying-up, moving a bed downstairs, installing a stairlift, and similar things when there is no-one else available to assist.
4. Enhanced provisions for minor repairs, adaptations and energy efficiency improvements for elderly and vulnerable people to help reduce hospital admissions.
5. A proposal to speed-up the administrative process and improve continuity by having a dedicated Occupational Therapist available in-house to assess peoples' needs and give advice.

Decision made:

Cabinet agreed to:

1. Approve the draft of the Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptations Policy attached (Annex 1) of this report;
2. Delegate authority to the Head of Housing and Planning in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods to make any minor changes to the policy and from time to time when needed.

Reasons for decision:

To provide a full and reasonable adaptation funding programme to enable residents to remain in their properties and improve their wellbeing.

Alternatives considered and why rejected:

The Council considered using the current policy in place. This would result in a significant under-spend of the budget each year and would not take advantage of the opportunities to improve outcomes for people with disabilities and other vulnerable residents that the increased funding presents.

Details of any conflict of interest declared by any executive Member who has been consulted and of any dispensation granted by the Standards Committee:

None

Author of Officer report:

Bob Porter

Background papers

Housing Assistance Cover Report
Annex 1 - Draft Housing Assistance Policy
Annex 2 - EIA Housing Assistance Policy

Statement if decision is an urgent one and therefore not subject to call-in:

None

Last date for call in: 2 August 2019