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## **DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS POLICY**

To: **Cabinet – 20 June 2013**

Main Portfolio Area: **Financial Services**

By: **Financial Services Manager**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Ward: **All**

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**Summary: To seek approval of the Discretionary Housing Payments policy**

### **For Decision**

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#### **1.0 Introduction**

1.1. The Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001 provide local authorities with a power to make discretionary payments to those Housing Benefit recipients that need further financial assistance. Following the abolition of Council Tax Benefit, Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) awards can not be made to assist Council Tax payers meet their Council Tax liability.

#### **2.0 The Current Situation**

2.1 The council is allocated a sum of money each year from which to make DHP awards. For the financial year 2013/14, the grant to Thanet District Council is £401,310.

2.2 The implementation of welfare reforms has increased the number of requests for financial assistance from those struggling to meet their increased rents. It is therefore timely to introduce a DHP policy to ensure that support is targeted to those most in need.

2.3 The DHP policy is attached at Annex 1. The same policy is being taken for approval at Canterbury City Council and Dover District Council so that EK Services are working to the same policy across the three East Kent authorities. The objectives of the policy are to provide short term help (normally only up to 26 weeks but assessed on an individual case basis) to:

- Prevent homelessness
- Keep families together
- Support the vulnerable and elderly in sustaining tenancies
- Enable people to secure new affordable tenancies
- Provide financial help for people in short-term difficulty
- Incentivise people into and maintaining work

2.4 The policy provides further details on how applications will be considered, the amount of awards that may be granted, how disputes will be dealt with and how the scheme will be publicised.

### **3.0 Options**

3.1 For Cabinet to approve the DHP policy

### **4.0 Corporate Implications**

#### **4.1 Financial and VAT**

4.1.1 The council has been allocated a grant to cover DHPs of £401,310. The budget available for DHPs is limited to this amount.

#### **6.2 Legal**

6.2.1 The Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001 provide local authorities with the power to make discretionary payments to those HB recipients who are in need of further financial assistance.

#### **6.3 Corporate**

6.3.1 This policy helps to meet priority 2 of the Corporate Plan: "We will tackle disadvantage across the district."

#### **6.4 Equity and Equalities**

6.4.1 An equality impact assessment has been conducted by EK Services on this policy and this has revealed no differential treatment or customer access issues that need to be addressed.

### **7.0 Recommendation**

7.1 That Members approve the Discretionary Housing Policy as set out in Annex 1.

Contact Officer:	Sarah Martin, Financial Services Manager
Reporting to:	Sue McGonigal, Chief Executive and S151 Officer

#### **Background Papers**

None	N/A
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#### **Corporate Consultation Undertaken**

Finance	N/A
Legal	