

Better Care Fund Update

Extraordinary Cabinet	2nd March 2023
Report Author	Bob Porter (Acting Corporate Director of Place)
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Jill Bayford, Cabinet Member for Housing
Status	For Recommendation
Classification:	Unrestricted
Key Decision	No
Ward:	All wards

Executive Summary:

This report details the current allocation of the Better Care Fund, its use and proposal to use additional resources within the Home Energy Team.

Recommendation(s):

1. To note the report regarding the current use of the Better Care Fund, and approve the additional resource within the Housing Strategy & Projects Team for Home Energy.

Corporate Implications

Financial and Value for Money

The financial implications are laid out in the report including the annual allocation from the Better Care Fund and proposed uses.

Legal

The mandatory basis of Disabled Facilities is set out within the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and supported by detailed guidance from the Government.

Launched in 2015, the programme established pooled budgets between the NHS and local authorities, aiming to reduce the barriers often created by separate funding streams. The primary purpose of the allocation to Thanet, through the Better Care Fund is to support Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants, however the grant can also be used to support other health and social care outcomes.

Risk Management

A significant part of the BCF is used to fund mandatory disabled facilities grants or to fund partner agencies to provide linked services.

The key risk linked to the use of the fund relates to the resourcing of the mandatory DFGs. It is essential that the council allocates sufficient funding to mandatory grants to ensure that people that need a grant are able to access the funding.

The use of the fund is reviewed regularly to ensure that the fund is appropriately allocated and the retention of a BCF reserve means that there is sufficient funding to mitigate the key area of risk.

Corporate

TDC is aware of the challenges facing its residents and in 2019 our Corporate Statement committed to supporting residents through effective partnership working with both the public sector agencies and the community. We will provide leadership and direction across the District and the region to ensure everyone is working to the same goal. Delivering high-quality housing, safer communities and enhancing the health and wellbeing of our residents. Specifically we committed to improve standards and safety in homes across all tenures.

Equality Act 2010 & Public Sector Equality Duty

Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Protected characteristics: age, sex, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy & maternity. Only aim (i) of the Duty applies to Marriage & civil partnership.

This report relates to the following aim of the equality duty: -

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- To advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- To foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Corporate Priorities

This report relates to the following corporate priorities: -

- *Communities*

1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The Council has a statutory duty to award Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) to people who qualify for assistance, subject to means testing.
- 1.2 In the past, funding for DFGs came directly from the government. Now the funding for DFGs is part of the Better Care Fund (BCF). The BCF is a pooled budget across district and county councils and health services. The fund is administered by KCC and is available to be spent on things which contribute to the BCF Plan, including DFGs. The purpose of including the DFG funding in the BCF was to enable spending on wider joint housing, health and social care outcomes, such as reducing hospital admissions and enabling earlier discharge from hospital. KCC are required to pass the DFG element of the BCF fund to the district and borough councils each year.

2.0 The Current Situation

- 2.1 The Better Care Fund (BCF) programme supports local systems to successfully deliver the integration of health and social care in a way that supports person-centred care, sustainability and better outcomes for people and carers. It represents a unique collaboration between:

- The Department of Health and Social Care
- Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
- NHS England and Improvement
- The Local Government Association

The four partners work closely together to help local areas plan and implement integrated health and social care services across England, in line with the vision outlined in the [NHS Long Term Plan](#). Locally, the programme spans both the NHS and local government to join up health and care services, so that people can manage their own health and wellbeing and live independently in their communities for as long as possible.

Launched in 2015, the programme established pooled budgets between the NHS and local authorities, aiming to reduce the barriers often created by separate funding streams. The pooled budget is a combination of contributions from the following areas:

- minimum allocation from integrated care systems (ICSs)
- disabled facilities grant – local authority grant
- social care funding (improved BCF) – local authority grant
- winter pressures grant funding £240 million – local authority grant.

2.2 The table below shows the Better Care Funding we have received since 2018/19:

Financial Year	2018/19 (£)	2019/20 (£)	2020/21 (£)	2021/22 (£)	2022/23 (£)
Funding From Government	2,794,932	3,015,899	3,015,899	3,422,000	3,422,000
Top sliced by KCC	(375,132)	(404,815)	(404,815)	(459,322)	(513,322)
Additional grant allocation	336,312	0.00	351,593	0.00	0
Grants paid back to TDC from homeowners	182,154	146,219	131,836	143,733	116,754
Total in Year Funding	2,938,266	2,757,303	3,094,513	3,106,411	3,025,431

2.3 The table below shows the spend and carried forward sums from our Better Care Fund allocation.

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
B/fwd	591,991	1,428,064	1,367,443	1,409,721	1,632,747
Total Funding	2,938,266	2,757,303	3,094,513	3,106,411	3,025,431
Spend	-2,102,193	-2,817,924	-3,052,235	-2,883,385	-2,789,402
C/fwd	1,428,064.23	1,367,443	1,409,721	1,632,747	1,868,776

2.4 It cannot be assumed that funding will continue at this level, and the report therefore prudently projects expenditure forward for the medium term, at 2.6 below. As DFG's are a mandatory statutory service these have first call on the funding and it is essential that sufficient reserves are maintained to ensure that all grant requirements can be covered. Reserves of around 50% of the annual spend are considered to be prudent.

2.5 However, the level of expenditure in recent years has fully met the need for mandatory grants and provided capacity for other related services to be delivered. The current Housing Assistance Policy also includes discretion to exceed statutory amounts for DFGs. This was included within the last review of the Housing Assistance Policy to enable schemes to proceed that may otherwise have been unaffordable. Even with this additional flexibility, there is a further opportunity for the council to expand the services available, including additional resources for energy efficiency.

- 2.6 Funding has also been used to help speed up the application process, completing works more quickly and providing assistance that may otherwise have not been available. Additional discretionary services will need to be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that funds continue to be available to support them, once budget has been set aside for mandatory grants.
- 2.7 Within the BCF Plan there is particular emphasis on reducing long stays in hospital (bed blocking) by speeding-up the provision of care and adaptation services and on reducing admissions to hospital by improving energy efficiency, security and safety in the home. Councils are able to offer additional types of assistance to alleviate these problems, if funding is available.
- 2.8 The table below shows the current allocation of spend of the BCF on staff resource, capital schemes and discretionary services. At around 6%, the proportion of the fund spent on administration is considered to be reasonable.

Post Funded	2022/23 Forecast use	2023/24	2024/25
Mandatory (Capital)			
Disabled Facilities Grants	2,106,002	2,316,602	2,432,432
Discretionary (Capital)			
Occupational Therapist	54,000	54,000	54,000
HandyMan Service	53,495	53,495	53,495
Discretionary grants	413,585	454,944	477,691
Administrative costs (Revenue)			
Grants Officer	47,560	49,460	51,430
Housing Improvement Assistant	30,170	32,370	34,570
Home Energy Officer	47,560	49,460	51,430
Proposed Home Energy Officer			
Home Energy Assistant	12,430	28,510	29,650
Towards management costs	13,600	13,600	13,600
Pathways modelling	5,000	5,000	5,000
Feasibility studies	6,000	6,000	6,000
	2,789,402	3,063,441	3,209,298
% admin costs vs Mandatory/Discretionary spend	6.18%	6.40%	6.35%

- 2.9 The spending projections over the medium term, assuming funding continues at the current level do indicate that there is capacity for further new services.
- 2.10 Fuel Poverty is a particular priority currently, with increasing fuel costs and climate change objectives to be delivered. Fuel poverty disproportionately impacts on

households with low incomes, older people and people with disabilities and is therefore a legitimate use of any space capacity within the BCF.

- 2.11 NEA, the lead in UK fuel poverty analysis, estimates that due to the energy price rises and the reductions in household income, there has been an increase in fuel poverty of 50%. For Thanet this is 19.2% of homes in Thanet are facing fuel poverty (12,300 homes).
- 2.10 Our Home Energy Officer was recruited in August 2020, and the role has since become very well established. This role has been redefined into Sustainable Energy Lead and is now responsible for submitting grant bids and sourcing external funding for residents of Thanet to support households with energy bills. A Home Energy Assistant was recruited in August 2021. Between the months of June and August 2021 the service received 76 referrals. However for the same months in 2022, referrals increased to 250 referrals. This is over a 200% increase.

3.0 Options

- 3.1 To increase the resource of the Housing Strategy and Projects Team to allow recruitment of another Home Energy Officer to support the existing Sustainable Energy Lead, and Home Energy Assistant. This option is recommended.
- 3.2 Alternatively the Cabinet could decide to invest additional resources into other services linked to the BCF, for the benefit of people with disabilities.

Contact Officer: Ashley Jackson, Housing Strategy & Projects Manager
Reporting to: Bob Porter, Acting Corporate Director of Place

Annex List

None

Background Documents

Adopted Housing Assistance Policy: [Link](#)

Corporate Consultation

Finance: *Chris Blundell (Acting Deputy Chief Executive)*

Legal: *Sameera Khan (Interim Head of Legal & Monitoring Officer)*