



**REPORT TO:** Housing Portfolio Holder  
**LEAD OFFICER:** Director of Housing

19 October 2017

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## **Disabled Facilities Grants and the Joint Housing Adaptations Agreement**

### **Purpose**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Housing Portfolio Holder with an update as to the countywide review of Disabled Facilities Grants and to seek approval of the joint Housing Adaptation Agreement proposed by Cambridgeshire County Council.
2. This is not a key decision but has been brought before the Housing Portfolio Holder for formal approval of the joint Housing Adaptations Agreement.

### **Recommendations**

3. It is recommended that the Portfolio Holder approves:

**Option A** – To approve the Joint Housing Adaptations Agreement (Appendix A) that provides a framework from which the districts will work towards developing a Joint Adaptations Policy.

**Option B** – To approve, as an interim before the Joint Policy is agreed, the flexibility within the Council's existing policies to provide for 'top up' funding where necessary and subject to available funding.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

4. The joint Housing Adaptations Agreement has been prepared as part of the overall countywide review of the use of Disabled Facilities Grants and is in line with the aims and aspirations of the Better Care Fund.

### **Background**

5. The funding for Disabled Facilities Grants and other Grants was historically awarded to the district housing authorities directly from the Department of Communities and Local Government. In 2008/09 the Government extended the scope of the Regulatory Reform Order (2002) to broaden the use of the DFG Capital Allocation. This allowed authorities to use the capital allocation on other types of adaptations, repairs and assistance.
6. For South Cambridgeshire, the DFG Capital Allocation continues to be spent on mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants, with the Council funding their RRO initiatives through separate capital funding which includes a Discretionary DFG (relocation grants & hospital discharge) and Home Repairs Assistance Grant (such as boiler replacement, electrical works, etc)..

7. In 2014 the Government recognised the contribution good, accessible, warm and safe housing makes to improved health and social care outcomes and passed the DFG Allocation capital funding to the Department of Health to be included in the Better Care Fund. This was then passed down to the housing authorities by the County Council as required by BCF regulation.
8. Since 2015, the allocation for DFG's through the Better Care Fund has increased, with a further anticipated increase in 2018/19. The table below sets out the funding provided to facilitate DFGs and other grants over the last three years.

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
BCF Allocation	£312,241	£566,013	£619,976
SCDC Contribution	£347,759	£93,987	£40,824
<b>Overall DFG Budget</b>	<b>£660,000</b>	<b>£660,000</b>	<b>£660,000</b>
DFG Spend	£663,223	£561,804	£216,555 (to date)
Discretionary SCDC Grant	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000
Spend	£212	£1,606	£1,375 (to date)
Home Repairs Assistance Grant	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000
Spend	£72,102	£67,625	£7,676 (to date)

9. The table above illustrates how the contribution SCDC has made towards DFGs has reduced over the two years following the increase in the BCF allocation. There may well be a future case for maintaining the Council's contribution to enhance service delivery but this is dependent on the outcome of the Home Improvement Agency Review which is currently being undertaken. In 2016/17, the Council was underspent on DFGs which could be attributed to various factors such as the HIA focusing capacity in other Districts, delay in referrals from Occupational Health, potential fall in demand, etc.

### Considerations

10. The inclusion of the DFG Capital Allocation within the BCF has given a new focus for health and social care to work more closely with housing. It was agreed by the five district housing authorities, the County Council and the CCG to carry out a review of DFGs and adaptations in Cambridgeshire led by the County Council as a project within the Older People's Accommodation Strategy. The review was initiated in early 2016 at the same time as the Government announced a significant increase in the DFG Capital Allocation. In Cambridgeshire this meant an increase in capital allocation from £1.9m to £3.4m. The DFG Review was completed in September 2016 and resulted in three key findings:
- New services are needed that consider people's needs in context, including early conversations around housing options including and planning for the longer term.
  - Existing services will need to adapt to support a growing population
  - Funding arrangements across the system will need to change to support a shift in focus

11. A key recommendation of the Review was to develop a joint policy across the partners to allow the more flexible use of the increased DFG Capital Allocation in line with the BCF focusing on delivering health priorities and outcomes. The allocation cannot be spent more flexibly without the adoption of a Policy.
12. The Council is actively working with key stakeholders including the five district authorities to formulate a joint policy which will provide consistency and enable the flexibility where funds allow.
13. The Joint Housing Adaptations Agreement provides a framework from which the districts will work towards developing a Joint Policy. The Agreement proposes that any new policy should make provision for the following elements:

New Joint Policy	Existing SCDC Policy
Mandatory DFG – with a recommendation to fast-track standard adaptations	Mandatory DFG
Top Up Grant	Not available
Disabled Persons Relocations Grants	Available through Discretionary DFG
Special Purpose Grants	Mostly available through Home Repairs Assistance

14. The provision of a top up grant within the new policy would be an additional element to the grants offered at present by the Council. In some cases the cost of works eligible for a Disabled Facilities Grant amounts to more than the maximum amount of grant (currently £30,000). In other cases the applicant is liable under the means test to make a contribution. The County Council and some district housing authorities have previously provided top-up grants or loans in certain circumstances in order to provide funds to enable the works to go ahead and therefore meet client's need. Currently the Council will seek alternative methods for topping up the fund, such as charitable organisations, crowd funding, county council. Given the additional funding through the BCF the Housing Adaptations Agreement is seeking agreement that the district councils would make provision from the DFG Capital Allocation for Top-up Grants or loans, and that the County Council's Social Care responsibility towards meeting the needs of vulnerable households will be included, but with the decisions being made locally by the district councils. The detail of the element of the Policy will be jointly agreed between the district partners and the County Council.
15. It is anticipated that the new Joint Policy will be completed by April 2018 for approval by the Housing Portfolio Holder.
16. In the meantime, the Housing Portfolio Holder is asked to consider the approval to use the Better Care Fund Allocation for DFGs to support Top Up Grants should the need arise between now and the implementation of the new Joint Policy, subject to funding being available.
17. As the Council received an additional £53,963 from the BCF in 2017/18, It is not anticipated that South Cambridgeshire District Council would be required to contribute further funds to the budget. As an average, the cost of top up grants funded by the County Council have amounted to circa £20,000 per annum per district.

## Options

<p><b>Option A</b> – To approve the Joint Housing Adaptations Agreement (Appendix A) that provides a framework from which the districts will work towards developing a Joint Adaptations Policy</p>	<p>Reasons for Approval – This proposal is in line with the Health &amp; Wellbeing Strategy to support older people to be independent, safe and well, creating a safe environment and working together effectively. It also aligns with the aims and aspirations of the Better Care Fund.</p> <p>A Joint Policy will provide consistency across the districts and the flexibility to enhance services where funding is available</p>
<p><b>Option B</b> – To approve, as an interim before the Joint Policy is agreed, to allow the flexibility within the Council’s existing policies to provide for ‘top up’ funding where necessary and subject to available funding.</p>	<p>Reasons for Approval: Given the additional funding provided through the BCF for DFGs, it is not anticipated that the Council will be required to contribute any additional funds.</p>
<p><b>Option C</b> – To reject the proposals within the Housing Adaptations Agreement</p>	<p>Reasons for Refusal: This would not be in the spirit of the wider remit of the Better Care Fund and Health &amp; Wellbeing Board.</p>
<p><b>Option D</b> – To refuse the interim arrangements proposed regarding the flexibility within existing policies to use the DFG Allocation to top up DFGs where necessary.</p>	<p>Reasons for Refusal: This proposal should not impact on the District Council. Alternative sources of funding would be sought where possible and the increase in the BCF should facilitate any additional expenditure in the year 2017/18.</p>

## Implications

18. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered: -

There are no significant implications.

## Effect on Strategic Aims

### Aim 1 – Living Well

19. Supporting our communities to remain in good health whilst continuing to protect the natural and built environment.

## Background Papers

Cambridgeshire Health & Wellbeing Strategy – (p.18 & p.30)

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