

DISABLED FACILITY GRANTS UPDATE

Housing & Health Advisory Committee - 22 March 2015

Report of Chief Housing Officer

Status: For Consideration

Key Decision: No

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Lowe

Contact Officer James Cox Ext. 7312

Recommendation to Housing & Health Advisory Committee: That the report be noted.

Introduction and Background

- 1 Disabled Facility Grants (DFGs) are a mandatory grant with the legislative framework provided by the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. Since 1990 Sevenoaks District Council has been under a statutory duty to provide grant aid to disabled people for a range of adaptations to their home.
- 2 The key principle of an adaptation is to modify the home environment in order to overcome obstacles or enable independent living, privacy, confidence and dignity for individuals. Works often undertaken to ensure independent living includes stair lifts, flush floor showers through to extending a dwelling.
- 3 DFGs for adults are means tested, although grants for children are exempt from this assessment. The maximum grant is currently £30,000 with the majority of funding coming from Central Government. 15/16 SDC's DFG allocation was £477,177 with SDC providing a further £57,000.

Current position 2015/16

- 4 Current expenditure on DFGs means it is expected the entire budget of £534,000 will be spent by 31st March.
- 5 Between 1st April 2015 and 1st March 2016, 93 grants were approved.
- 6 A significant number of the applications from home owners have been assisted by using our own in house DFG advice service. This service has provided a more streamlined and holistic approach ensuring not only the DFG is provided in a timely manner but additional benefits are obtained for the

customer through identifying other discretionary funding sources, maximising income through close working with HERO and promoting the Switch and Save scheme.

Position going forward 2016/17

- 7 The funding for DFGs has now been incorporated into the Better Care Fund and ring fenced for the administration of DFG's. It has recently been announced the allocation received by each local authorities is to be dramatically increased, for SDC our increase is 86% resulting in an allocation of £889,177. It has yet to be seen, after a recent Department of Health announcement, whether all our allocation will be available for providing mandatory DFG's.
- 8 With such an increase for 2016/17, Housing Standards are thinking how we can forge closer links with external agencies and local health providers. There is an obvious overlap within SDC between Health and Community Services and Housing Standards so both Hayley Brooks and myself are working together on how we can promote DFGs and reach groups that may have historically been overlooked.
- 9 The forthcoming year will be challenging and because of this initiatives to ensure adaptations can be undertaken in a timely manner and ensuring demand for DFGs is actively promoted are already being considered and implemented.

Key Implications

Financial

One directly arising from this report.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

None directly arising from this report

Equality Assessment

The report is for information and the decision to note has a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Conclusions

Members are asked to note the report

Pat Smith
Chief Housing Officer