

Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	4 February 2021
Subject:	Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy Update 2020		
Report of:	Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services	Wards Affected:	All
Cabinet Portfolio:	Communities and Housing		
Is this a Key Decision:	Yes	Included in Forward Plan:	Yes
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

To present an updated Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy for approval by Cabinet.

Recommendation(s):

That the updated Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy 2020 be approved by Cabinet.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

An updated Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy has been drawn up as the current policy was last reviewed in 2014. Many of the aspects of the existing policy are now out of date. The revised policy would provide greater clarity to others.

Recently the 'Discretionary Assistance Loan Policy' was approved for implementation. This 'Discretionary Assistance Loan Policy' is an additional funding mechanism which is considered in cases where Disabled Facilities Grant adaptation costs are likely to exceed the £30k threshold and where clients are not in a financial position enabling them to meet these additional required costs. This policy will help ensure that adaptations may still proceed, in such cases, and client's needs are met as deemed necessary by the Occupational Therapist. Details of this policy have been included within the revised Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy Update 2020

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)
N/A

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

No additional costs arising from the revised policy

(B) Capital Costs

No additional costs arising from the revised policy

Implications of the Proposals:

The following implications of this proposal have been considered and where there are specific implications, these are set out below

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets): N/A
Legal Implications: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996• The Regulatory Reform 2002 (Housing Assistance England & Wales) order 2002
Equality Implications: The equality Implications have been identified and risk remains, as detailed in the report.

Contribution to the Council’s Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: Provide positive outcomes
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: Neutral impact
Commission, broker and provide core services: Ensure mandatory adaptations are provided.
Place – leadership and influencer: Neutral impact
Drivers of change and reform: Positive impact
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: Neutral impact
Greater income for social investment: Neutral impact
Cleaner Greener; Neutral impact

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources & Customer Services is the author of the report (FD6245/21)

The Chief Legal and Democratic Officer has been consulted and any comments have been incorporated within the report. (LD4446/21).

In addition, the Executive Director of Adult Social Care (February 20) and the Head of Economic Growth and Housing Service (February 20) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

None

Implementation Date for the Decision

Following expiration of the call-in period for the minutes of the meeting

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Appendices:

Private Sector Housing Policy

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 It is important that the Council provide clear up to date policies which helps avoid misinterpretation so that residents within Sefton have a good understanding of what assistance the Council can provide in relation to adaptation and general housing improvements.
- 1.2 Powers provided through the Regulatory Reform Order 2002, (RRO) allow the Council to develop specific policies aimed at addressing local need and in supporting residents to sustain home ownership where they may be affected by age, disability or combination of both.
- 1.3 Since the introduction of the RRO the Council produced and has continually revised a Private Sector Housing assistance policy, which outlines a range of

assistance in support of residents with an emphasis on sustaining home ownership.

- 1.4 The previous policy was produced in 2014 and since that time several changes have been considered which have subsequently been incorporated into the revised 2020 policy (appended).

2. Recent changes

- 2.1 Disabled Facilities Grant, funded through the Governments Better Care Fund, provides an allocation of resources to the Council to adapt the homes of disabled and elderly residents. This a mandatory Grant which has not changed since 2008. In recent times the Council has found that we are not able to meet the needs of some of the more complex cases within the mandatory grant limits (£30k).
- 2.2 Historically cases exceeding this limit rely upon either the scheme being curtailed, the applicant funding the excess, or an application being made for charitable resources in order to continue.
- 2.3 This can lead to essential needs (adaptation) not being addressed due to resource limitations. This can present both a risk to the disabled person where all their needs are not met and may result in them spending time either in hospital due to Injury, or alternatively, them having to move into more costly support / care accommodation. Clearly, this is not in the best interest of the disabled person or the Council.
- 2.4 The 'Discretionary Assistance Loan policy', which was recently approved, is one of the main changes introduced in the revised policy and this clearly evidences where Sefton may assist the most vulnerable, disabled and older residents beyond the mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant limit, currently £30k.
- 2.5 The introduction of this discretionary assistance helps ensure the Council can provide necessary adaptations which are not limited or reduced, therefore helping to further ensure clients safety and wellbeing, along with that of their families and carers whilst enabling them to continue living in their own homes as independently as possible for as long as is possible.
- 2.6 It is important to ensure this discretionary assistance is made known and utilised where appropriate and therefore the revised policy has been introduced to reflect the additional flexibility and support on offer.

3. Conclusions

- 3.1 The Introduction of a revised Private Sector Housing Assistance policy will enable the Council to support its residents in accessing essential adaptations which are not limited by mandatory limits. This will further enable resident with complex needs with the ability to remain living Independently in their own home.
- 3.2 The updated Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy 2020 is presented to cabinet for approval, with immediate adoption following the mandatory call in period.