



**REPORT of
DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITY**

**to
COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE
4 JULY 2017**

DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Members with an update on the delivery of the Council's Disabled Facilities Grants programme and a recommendation to increase fees to a level that is consistent with other areas and enables the further development of the service.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- (i) that Members note the continued expansion of funding and delivery of Disabled Facility Grants (DFG) work;
- (ii) that the increase of fees to 15% in order to make the service sustainable and meet current and future strategic demands be approved.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The Council has a mandatory duty under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 to provide financial assistance for essential adaptations in people's homes. Although the legislation remains in place, levels and means of funding have changed several times over the last ten years.
- 3.2 In 2016 / 17 funding to the Council for this purpose was paid for the first time via Essex County Council as part of the Better Care Funding. There was also significant increase in the annual level of grant, increasing from £184,700 in 2013 to £420,000 last year. For this current year, 2017 / 18 there has been a further increase and the grant award is £440,000.
- 3.3 The reasons for these changes are to create better opportunities for integrating the DFG programme with social care and health; encourage more pooling of other resources to meet a growing demand in the most cost-effective way and, in two-tier authority areas such as Essex, create new working arrangements between local housing authorities and social care. Officers of Maldon District Council and Essex County Council are currently working on the terms for these new arrangements to ensure funding is allocated within each year, performance reported and there are provisions for dealing with any under-spend or problems with performance.

- 3.4 This new working arrangement fits well with other changes, in particular Essex County Council's decision to withdraw from commissioning Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs) who provided help and support to those needing adaptations such as advice and access to approved contractors. The government previously made a commitment to extending the work of HIAs and in Essex it is possible that this may now be delivered through local district councils, either through expansion of their own service or, where feasible, commissioning others to provide these services. Funding for this expansion which Essex County Council would also like to see including schemes such as 'home from hospital' can now come from the increase in funding paid to districts through the Better Care Funding route.
- 3.5 Most districts already charge a fee, in the case of Maldon District Council this is below the average rate of 15% which was set by the local HIA when it was in operation and most other districts in Essex. Some are also 'top-slicing' the funding, ensuring that there is enough each year to meet their statutory duties, to meet the cost of resourcing an expansion of their services to meet these new demands.
- 3.6 The cost of resourcing the Council's Home Improvements Team can be met through just increasing fees to the county-wide average, taking into account the greater number of cases that can be processed each year with this additional level of funding. For 2016 / 17 the number of cases approved was 74 and the total level of grant allocated was £422,823.87.
- 3.7 Subject to agreement from Essex County Council, the ability to top-slice some of this year's Better Care Funding would help create financial capacity to assist with supporting local groups to develop complementary services such as a local home-from-hospital scheme as envisioned by social care and health as a discretionary service, fitting in well with the provision of DFGs. Options for this have been included as an objective in this year's Business Plan for the Council's Housing Service.
- 3.8 Past problems of performance and capacity are no longer an issue for the Home Improvement Team's delivery of the Council's DFG programme and Members will see below a summary of the allocation (spending) for the last financial year, the number of cases and satisfaction ratings from clients over this period.
- 3.9 Key figures for 2016 / 17:

Total funding committed in year422,823

Number of cases accepted as eligible74

Total amount paid as contributions£48,390

Total amount paid as fees£30,046

How well do you feel the service met the following needs?	Satisfaction score*
Improved your general health and wellbeing	96%
Reduce risk of falls or injury	99%
Increased independence	96%
Became less dependent on carers / other services	90%

How well do you feel the service met the following needs?	Satisfaction score*
Increased confidence	99%
Increased security	94%
Enable to remain in own home	98%
Provided more information about other services	86%
Helped keep home in good repair (only applicable to loans)	93%

*scores rounded

- 3.10 Attached to this report as **APPENDIX 1** is feedback from a client last year explaining the positive impact the service has had on the family with accompanying photographs.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The government intends to improve the links between Housing, Health and Social Care and thereby the aims of the Care Act by including the funding for DFGs within the Better Care Fund. The Council has made good progress in expanding the conventional service to a position where performance is now consistently at a level where it is feasible to look at how this work can be linked with other complementary services to meet the expectations of the government and Essex County Council. Setting a consistent level of fees across the service that is in line with other districts in Essex will help maintain capacity as will, subject to agreement from Essex County Council, an ability to top-slice some of the grant to support the expansion of local services provided either by the Council or other local organisations. The testimony provided in **APPENDIX 1** illustrates the positive impact that the Council can have on the lives of some of the most vulnerable local residents, which often goes unseen but is a vital part of supporting the local community to remain independent.

5. IMPACT ON CORPORATE GOALS

- 5.1 Strengthening communities to be safe, active and healthy;
- 5.2 Delivering good quality, cost effective and valued services.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – The service can have a positive transforming effect on the lives of those with disabilities.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – The Council needs to be able to demonstrate under the Equalities Act how it is ensuring that it provides services to all those with protected characteristics including disabilities.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk** – Future funding is likely to depend upon the Council's ability to demonstrate that it is making the most effective use of the Better Care Funding grant

- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – The service has managed to become partly self-financing and this increases with the number of clients and level of grant funding, reducing the demand on the Council's own resources at a time when the care and support of older people is becoming more challenging.
- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – None.
- (vi) **Impact on the Environment** – None.

Background Papers: Disabled Facilities Grants for Home Adaptations - House of Commons Briefing Paper No. 03011 (28 December 2016).

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