



REPORT of DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITY

**To
FINANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES COMMITTEE
25 JULY 2017**

DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval to vary the fees for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) in accordance with the recommendation of the Council's Community Services Committee on 4 July 2017.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That Members of this Committee approve the increase of Disabled Facility Grants fees to 15%, in order to make the service sustainable and meet current and future strategic demands.

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 On 4 July the Council's Community Services Committee was presented with a report that outlined performance for the previous year including the rising cost of meeting demand for various types of adaptations and high levels of satisfaction from clients for the service provided by the Council and contractors. As part of the review of the service, it was noted that the Council still charges variable levels of fees as a result of

these being introduced at differing times, ranging from 5% to 12% depending on the type of assistance that is provided even though in most cases these are all within the Council's DFG programme. A comparison of fees charged by other districts shows that the range charged is between 15% to above 20% with less if any variation between the percentage and type of work commissioned. This variation is confusing and also weakens the ability of the Council to develop the service as envisaged in paragraph 3.3 above. It was therefore proposed to the Community Services Committee that all fees be set at 15% which is comparable with other districts in Essex.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 The Council's Community Services Committee resolved that:

“the Finance and Corporate Services Committee be recommended to approve the increase of Disabled Facilities Grants Fees to 15% in order to make the service sustainable and meet current and future strategic demands.”

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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