

Allerdale Borough Council

Executive – 11 January 2023

Housing Grants and Assistance Policy –The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002

Portfolio holder	Councillor Marion Fitzgerald, Strategy Policy and Performance
Report from	Sharon Sewell - Chief Officer (Place and Governance)
Wards affected	All outside of the National Park Planning Authority
Is this a key decision	Yes

1.0 The reason for the decision

- 1.1 This report provides details of a Housing Grants and Assistance Policy, which sets out the circumstances in which the Council can provide financial assistance to improve the conditions, adapt existing housing and provide a prevention service that enables people to continue to manager more safely within their home.
- 1.2 This policy is being updated as the current policy should reflect the introduction of the Adult Social Care Reform White Paper, published in December 2021 and the Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) Delivery: Guidance for Local Authorities in England.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Executive supports the introduction of updated Housing Grants and Assistance Policy.
- 2.2 That the Executive formally adopts the updated Housing Grants and Assistance Policy.
- 2.3 That any future minor amendments are delegated to the Chief Officer Place and Governance in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing.

3.0 Background and Introduction

- 3.1 National Policy - The Council is required to approve applications made under section 23(1) of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 that satisfy the requirements of the Act, for example mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs).
- 3.2 The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (RRO) equipped local authorities to address housing issues. In 2008-09, the Government extended the RRO powers to provide assistance for housing renewal based on the principles that repairs are fundamentally the responsibility of the property owners, but grant assistance should be given in particular circumstances, and for the purpose of improving living conditions.
- 3.3 This policy makes use of these powers to broaden the scope of Disabled Facilities Grants and to offer alternative forms of grants for disabled, elderly and other vulnerable residents in Allerdale.
- 3.4 To provide financial assistance for housing repairs and improvements, the local housing authority must first adopt and publish a policy setting out how it intends to use this general power to award assistance.
- 3.5 This report seeks to replace the Housing Grants and Assistance Policy 2017.
- 3.6 This policy will strengthen the Council's position in working with local partners to ensure that there is a common vision backed by commitment of resources from the principle delivery agencies.

4.0 Content (to include alternative options considered)

- 4.1 The RRO gives discretion to local authorities, and it is important to note that authorities still have a statutory duty to approve DFG applications, which meet the statutory requirements.

5.0 Delivery arrangements

- 5.1 The mandatory and discretionary grants set out in Appendix 1 are delivered by the Council's Housing Team.
- 5.2 The additional proposal within the policy is to introduce a handy person service, which the Council will seek to work with key partners to help deliver. This service will also support the streamlining of the application process for minor grants, whilst creating a service that will help with prevention and early intervention.

6.0 Implications and Impact

6.1 Contribution to Council Strategy Priorities, Outputs and Outcomes

This policy supports the Resilient Communities priority set out in the Council Strategy 2020-2030, specifically the objective to address inequalities. It also contributes to the Thriving Towns and Villages priority, by seeking to ensure that the Council enables "suitable, affordable, decent homes for all".

6.2 Finance/Resource implications

- 6.2.1 The policy dictates that both mandatory and discretionary grants will be offered. Where grants are provided repayment may be demanded on the sale of the property, although discretion will be used depending on the financial circumstances of the client at that time. The provision of mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants will be given priority over discretionary grants.
- 6.2.2 The proposed policy makes changes to the amounts of funding available for discretionary grants (Please note Mandatory Grant funding is set and cannot be increased).
- 6.2.3 The policy introduces a new handy person service and is seeking to utilise £100K of the Councils allocated grant towards the commissioning of this new service annually or until such time as the policy is reviewed.

6.3 Legal and governance implications

- 6.3.1 The policy ensures that the Council is compliant with the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002.

6.4 Risk analysis

- 6.4.1 The table below set out a scored and mitigated risk log. There are no additional risk management implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

Risk	Consequence	Controls required	Mitigated score
Challenges to the policy.	Delay in making available funding for housing grant to those who need it most. Individuals and families health and wellbeing suffers as a result of decisions being made delays . Impacts on wider statutory organisations such and Health and Social Care agencies who are also trying to deliver services and meet the needs of vulnerable people in our community.	Timeframe in place to review policy. Appeals process set out within the policy.	Medium/High
Policy isn't approved	There is a legal requirement of the local authority to have in place a published policy.	Council's risk of legal challenge.	Medium

6.5 Increasing satisfaction and service

6.5.1 The revised policy has taken into consideration the governments ambition to give people greater choice to live independently and healthier in their own homes. It aims to minimise the need for hospital stays and reduce the need to move into more longer term care establishments either to early or where this is not the desire of the individual.

6.6 Equality impacts

An equality impact assessment is being updated to reflect the updates within the revised policy and is included within the body of the Housing Grants and Assistance Policy.

6.7 Health and Safety impacts

None

6.8 Health, wellbeing and community safety impacts

6.8.1 This policy makes a positive contribution to the health and wellbeing of those in greatest need of assistance through the disable grants fund.

6.8.2 Through the introduction of a handy person service, this will enhance the Council's offer of support and bridges a gap in service provision in Allerdale for those who cannot access services following a Care Act Assessment.

The benefits of a prevention, early intervention service that support the health and wellbeing of individuals will have a positive impact on the need for more expensive health and social care services.

6.9 Environmental/sustainability impacts

None

6.10 Other significant implications

None

Appendices attached to this report

Appendix number	Title of appendix
1	Housing Grants and Assistance Policy

Background documents available – none

Name of background document	Where it is available
Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) Guidance	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disabled-facilities-grant-dfg-delivery-guidance-for-local-authorities-in-england

Adult Social Care Reform White Paper	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/people-at-the-heart-of-care-adult-social-care-reform-white-paper/people-at-the-heart-of-care-adult-social-care-reform
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