

BRECKLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report of: Executive Member for Housing & Homelessness – Claire Bowes

To: Cabinet, Monday 3rd July 2023

Author: Gill Duffy, Housing Manager

Subject: Housing Assistance Policy

Purpose: To approve the Housing Assistance Policy

Recommendation(s):

- 1) That members approve the Housing Assistance Policy

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This policy is required to meet the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England & Wales) Order 2002 (The Order). Article 3 of this Order specifies that Local Authorities may provide, directly or indirectly, assistance to any person for various purposes including those of enabling them to adapt or improve living accommodation or to repair living accommodation.
- 1.2 Article 4 of the Order provides that, before exercising the power conferred by Article 3, the Local Housing Authority must have adopted a policy for the provision of such assistance, publicised the policy and made the policy available in certain specified ways.
- 1.3 The Council is required to publish under the Order a policy that sets out its approach to the provision of assistance. A key element of such a policy is how the Council deals with its mandatory responsibilities including the delivery of adaptations under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.
- 1.4 In addition to the above there is a mandatory duty to act in relation to serious (Category 1) hazards identified under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). The Council's obligations and powers in relation to this are contained within the Housing Act 2004.
- 1.5 This policy summarises all forms of assistance provided by the Council in this area and clarifies the approach to delivering both mandatory and discretionary grants and loans to assist vulnerable residents.
- 1.6 The policy deals with not only the mandatory assistance provided through Disabled Facilities Grants but also the discretionary range of support made under the Order, to assist the most vulnerable households.

- 1.7 This policy was due to renewal and has, therefore, been reviewed and updated to include the Forget Me Not Grant for people with dementia, which has been introduced since the previous policy was agreed. It also gives more clarity to the discretionary grants and loans.
- 1.8 It is important to note that the policy prioritises the delivery of Disabled Facilities Grants, the mandatory provision, over the delivery of discretionary grants. Officers will take a sensible approach to each case and take into account the priority placed on each referral by the Occupational Therapist and balance this with value for money.
- 1.9 In April 2023, the Government announced an additional £102 million nationally over 2 years, to 'help fund additional services that will supplement the core DFG by providing agile and timely home improvement support to help them stay independent'. More information on this will be provided in summer 2023 and this policy puts us in a good position to spend the additional funding, if it is not for core DFGs.

2.0 **OPTIONS**

- 2.1 Option1: That members approve the Housing Assistance Policy
- 2.2 Option 2: That members do not approve the Housing Assistance Policy

3.0 **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 3.1 To meets the requirement of the Regulatory Reform Order 2002, being clear about how housing grants are prioritised and assessed.

4.0 **EXPECTED BENEFITS**

- 4.1 Residents will have an understanding of the council's priorities and the options that may be available to them.
- 4.2 Officers will be able to assess the most effective solution and use discretionary grants, if the funds are available.

5.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

In preparing this report, the report author has considered the likely implications of the decision - particularly in terms of Carbon Footprint / Environmental Issues; Constitutional & Legal; Contracts; Corporate Priorities; Crime & Disorder; Data Protection; Equality & Diversity/Human Rights; Financial; Health & Wellbeing; Reputation; Risk Management; Safeguarding; Staffing; Stakeholders/Consultation/Timescales; Other. Where the report author considers that there may be implications under one or more of these headings, these are identified below.

5.1 **Health & Wellbeing**

This policy enables positive impacts on the health and wellbeing of Breckland's residents.

6.0 **WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED**

6.1 All

7.0 **ACRONYMS**

7.1 DFG – Disabled Facilities Grant

7.2 HHSRS – Housing Health and Safety Rating System...

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Key Decision: No

Exempt Decision: No

This report refers to a Mandatory Service

Appendices attached to this report:

Appendix A Draft Housing Assistance Policy 2023