



## Report of the Cabinet Member for Service Transformation

Cabinet – 21 March 2024

# Disabled Facilities & Improvement Grant Programme 2024/25

<b>Purpose:</b>	To provide details of the Disabled Facilities & Improvement Grant Programme and to seek approval to include schemes in the 2024/25 Capital Programme. To provide details of the Housing with Care Fund (HCF) allocation to the Council's Disabled Facilities Grant Programme for 2023/24 retrospectively and 2024/25 programme. To comply with Financial Procedure Rule No.7 (Capital Programming and Appraisals) - to commit and authorise schemes as per the Capital Programme.
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	1. Local Housing Strategy. 2. Private Sector Housing Renewal and Disabled Adaptations: Policy to Provide Assistance 2022-2027.
<b>Consultation:</b>	Legal, Finance, Access to Services.
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>	It is recommended that:  1) Cabinet approves the Disabled Facilities and Improvement Grant Programme as detailed, including its financial implications, and includes the Programme in the 2024/25 capital budget.  2) HCF allocation of £465,840 is provided to the Disabled Facilities Grant Programme, split into an allocation of £232,920 in 2023/24 to be approved retrospectively given the late award of the funding and £232,920 in 2024/25.
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## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 The current Private Sector Housing Renewal and Disabled Adaptations Policy to Provide Assistance 2022 to 2027 was approved by Council on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

## **2.0 Capital Programme Process**

- 2.1 The Disabled Facilities Grants and Improvement Grant Budget for 2024/25 of £5.2m was approved by Council on 6th March 2024.

## **3.0 The Scheme**

- 3.1 The Policy for Private Sector Housing Renewal and Disabled Adaptations 2022 to 2027 sets out the detail of various types of assistance aimed at helping home owners and tenants to carry out essential adaptations and repairs. Assistance is provided on the basis of helping residents, who are often on low incomes and/or vulnerable, carry out essential repairs and maintain independence at home. The Policy also describes the Council's approach to bringing empty homes back into use and offering loans for home repairs. In summary, types of assistance include:

- Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) – large scale adaptations for private home owners and tenants of private rented accommodation, for example, level access showers, bedroom / bathroom extensions.
- Discretionary Fast Track Adaptations Grant – new non means tested grant for medium scale adaptations for private home owners and tenants of private rented accommodation.
- Discretionary Disabled Facilities Loan –top up funding to a DFG available to private home owners where the costs of the works at design / approval stage exceeds the DFG maximum limit of £36,000. The loan is repayable on future sale or transfer of the property.
- Council House Adaptations – small , medium and large scale adaptations for Council tenants.
- Homefix Loans – Recyclable loans for homeowners needing serious and urgent repairs, for example, roof repairs and damp proofing.
- Care & Repair Western Bay Minor Adaptation Grants– Small, rapid adaptations provided for elderly and disabled residents ; Comfort, Safety, and Security Grants – Low cost, rapid repairs provided for elderly and disabled residents.
- Welsh Government Landlord Loan – previously known as Houses to Homes Loan Scheme – interest free loans to tackle empty homes to renovate and improve properties or convert empty properties into a

number of units suitable for residential accommodation. Loans to be repaid and recycled as further loans.

- Welsh Government Owner Occupier Loan – previously known as National Home Improvement Loan Scheme – interest free loans for the repair or conversion of properties to make them safe, warm and/or secure. Loans to be repaid and recycled as further loans.

#### **4.0 Housing with Care Fund (HCF)**

4.1 In 2022/23 the Welsh Government introduced a regional capital investment scheme called the Housing with Care Fund (HCF), the fund having three key objectives :

- Housing with care (to fund housing projects such as extra care housing for older people with support needs).
- Intermediate Care and accommodation to increase stock of intermediate and short term care settings.
- Minor projects such as repairs, digital aids and adaptations.

4.2 On the 26<sup>th</sup> October 2023 Welsh Government officers confirmed that the Minister for Climate Change Julie James had approved flexibility for Regional Partnership Boards (RPB) to spend 5% of their nominal allocation HCF on DFGs in the 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years. The HCF grant award letter confirming this funding for Swansea was received on the 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

#### **5.0 Integrated Assessment Implications**

5.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

5.1.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance

with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

- 5.1.2 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.
- 5.2 An IIA Screening Form has been completed and a full IIA report is not required at this stage.
- 5.3 The grant programme does not negatively impact on any protected characteristic groups, with a number benefitting from the forms of assistance provided including:

Poverty & Social exclusion – provision of adaptations and repairs assistance to those on means tested benefits and low income, bringing back into use empty properties creating low cost affordable homes, often for first time buyers or renters in the local area.

Community cohesion- provision of much needed repairs and adaptations to homes in deprived areas where applicants are on low income and not able to afford the works themselves, enabling the individuals to remain living independently within their home. Re-use of often problematic long term empty properties in areas that have a negative impact on the locality and community, often a haven for anti-social behaviours, drug and alcohol abuse.

Age and generations: provision of adaptations and repairs are often to applicants over 60, empty property schemes give local residents, often first time buyers the opportunity to remain in the locality close to their extended families.

The Screening Form is included in the appendices as a background paper.

## **6.0 Financial Implications**

- 6.1 The programme for 2024/25 is shown at table 1 below and is fully funded by the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and additional funds allocated for DFGs. Welsh Government Landlord and Owner Occupier Loans are funded by ring-fenced WG funds. These loans formerly known as Houses to Homes and National Home Improvement Loan schemes have been reported separately to Cabinet on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2013 and the 18<sup>th</sup> of November 2014 respectively. The changes to these loans were reported to Council on the 21<sup>st</sup> June 2018.
- 6.2 The HCF allocation of £232,920 for 2023/24 is being used on further DFG budget spend for the remainder of the 2023/24 capital programme.

The HCF allocation of £232,920 for 2024/25 will be added to the DFG General Fund budget allocation for 2024/25 to be committed and spent in

the financial year.

- 6.3 Demand for DFGs has now increased above pre covid levels and resulted in record numbers of schemes being referred to the service's Grants Home Improvement agency in 2023/24. The current General fund and HRA funding levels are needed in 2024/25 and for future years to try and keep up with this demand and continue to support elderly and disabled residents to remain living independently in their own homes.
- 6.4 In 2022/23, as a consequence of the Covid pandemic, the shortage of supply of available contractors disrupted the delivery of the grant programme resulting in a proportion of the Housing General Fund allocation not being committed or spent and was carried forward into the 2023/24 programme with a total DFG grant programme fund of £5,232,920. The introduction of a new framework of contractors to deliver the programme in January 2023 has significantly increased the capacity to deliver the DFG and improvement grant programme in 2023/24. This increased capacity to deliver more DFGs together with ongoing increases in DFG building works costs will result in the full capital allocation for DFGs in 2023/24 being committed and spent.
- 6.5 The current high levels of demand for DFGs will result in the General fund DFG allocation for 2024/25 of £4.3 million not being sufficient to deliver the programme. It is proposed that additional funding from other funding sources of £932,920 are to be allocated to the DFG programme in 2024/25 to cover this additional demand. This includes the Welsh Government Housing with Care (HCF) funding award of £232,920 and the recycling of DFG repayment receipts of £700,000 into the DFG programme.
- 6.6 Revenue running costs for 2024/25 are estimated at £1,331,500 and are met from fees of £1,318,700 generated from administering grants and loans. The balance is met from a contribution of £12,800 from the General fund.

**Table 1 details 2024/25 programme, and draft programme for 2025/2026**

<b>Table 1</b>				
	<b>2024/25</b>			<b>Draft 2025/26</b>
<b>SCHEMES</b>	<b>General Fund</b>	<b>Additional funds</b>	<b>Total Funds 2024/25</b>	
DFG and fast track adaptations	£4,300,000	£932,920*	£5,232,920	£4,300,000
Tenant adaptations (HRA funded)	£2,750,000		£2,750,000	£2,750,000
Homefix Loans	£500,000		£500,000	£500,000
Care & Repair Mini Adaptation Grant	£370,000		£370,000	£370,000
Care & Repair Comfort, Safety, Security	£ 30,000		£30,000	£ 30,000
<b>TOTAL PROGRAMME</b>	<b>£ 7,950,000</b>	<b>£932,920</b>	<b>£8,882,920</b>	<b>£7,950,000</b>
<b>Funded as follows:</b>				
Total general funded	£5,200,000			£5,200,000
Total HRA funded	£2,750,000			£2,750,000
<b>* Additional DFG Funds :</b> WG HCF funding for DFGs of £232,920. DFG repayment receipts budget E2171 to be recycled for DFG funding of £700,000				
<b>Total funding</b>	<b>£7,950,000</b>	<b>£932,920</b>	<b>£8,882,920</b>	<b>£7,950,000</b>

## **7.0 Legal Implications**

- 7.1 The schemes detailed are in line with local authority powers to provide assistance, contained in the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 and the Councils published Policy.
- 7.2 The Council will need to ensure that it complies with any terms and conditions attached to any Welsh Government grant funding.
- 7.3 All works and services undertaken to deliver any scheme will need to be procured in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and procurement legislation as appropriate.

**Background Papers:** Private Sector Housing Renewal and Disabled Adaptations Policy to Provide Assistance 2022-2027

**Appendices:** Appendix A - IIA Screening Form