

Report of the Cabinet Member – Next Generation Services

Cabinet – 10 December 2015

AMENDMENTS TO THE DISABLED FACILITIES & IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAMME

Purpose:	To seek approval to amend the 2015-16 Disabled Facilities & Improvement Grant programme.
Policy Framework:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Local Housing Strategy 2015-2020.2. Private Sector Housing Renewal and Disabled Adaptations: Policy to Provide Assistance 2012-2017.3. Statutory declaration of the Sandfields Renewal Area approved by Cabinet on the 14th January 2014.
Reason for Decision:	To comply with Financial Procedure Rule No.7 (Capital Programming and Appraisals) - to commit and authorise schemes as per the Capital Programme.
Consultation:	Legal, Finance, Access to Services.
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The amendments to the 2015-16 Disabled Facilities and Improvement Grant Programme detailed in the report are approved.
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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The current Private Sector Housing Renewal and Disabled Adaptations Policy was approved by Council on 24th November 2011.

2.0 Capital Programmes Process

- 2.1 The Disabled Facilities Grants and Improvement Grant Budget of £5.2m was agreed by Council on 24th February 2015. Specific schemes within the budget were approved by Cabinet on 14th April 2015.

3.0 The Scheme

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

- Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) – Mandatory large scale adaptations for private home owners and tenants of private rented accommodation. For example, level access showers.
- Council House Adaptations – small and large scale adaptations for Council tenants
- Homefix Loans – Recyclable loans for homeowners needing large repairs. For example, roof repairs and damp proofing.
- Emergency Repair Fund – Small repairs of an emergency nature. For example, dangerous electrics.
- Grants for Nominations – For works to bring long term empty properties back into use. Grant is provided in exchange for nomination rights.
- Swansea Care & Repair – Small, rapid adaptations and repairs provided for elderly and disabled residents.
- 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.
- 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.

- Renewal Areas – Renewal Area funding to deliver an agreed programme of property repair and environmental improvement works in designated Renewal Areas.

4.0 Proposed Changes to the Disabled Facilities and Improvement Grant Programme for 2015-16

4.1 Table 1 sets out the proposed changes to the Disabled Facilities and Improvement Grant Programme for 2015-16. These include:

- Swansea Care & Repair – increase of £250,000 in response to increased demand for rapid adaptations provided for elderly and disabled residents through Minor Adaptations Grants (MAGs). This is to be funded by a transfer from the DFG budget for 2015-16. MAGs are used to help delay the need for larger scale adaptations funded by DFG and/or to reduce the scope of works.
- The Sandfields Renewal Area Programme declaration included provisional amounts of Welsh Government (WG) Vibrant and Viable Places (V&VP) funding. The actual amounts of V&VP received from WG for Sandfields Renewal Area Programme are less than originally expected. The confirmed allocations are £450,000 for 2015-16 and £400,000 for 2016-17. The Sandfields Renewal Area programme V&VP funding reduction will have an impact on delivery of the programme and this will be the subject of a future report.
- The National Home Improvement Scheme WG allocation for Swansea, to be used equally as Home Improvement Loans and Houses to Homes Loans, for empty properties, was £1,519,055 in total for 2014-15 and 2015-16. As a result of one Local Authority in Wales not taking up their allocation in respect of Home Improvement Loans, Swansea has been allocated a further £201,370. This additional amount will be added to the total amount approved for the scheme.

5.0 Financial Implications

5.1 The Disabled Facilities and Improvement Grant Programme for 2015-16 is fully funded by the General Fund. The Sandfields Renewal Area is funded by Welsh Government Grants and Utility Company funding. The National Home Improvement Loan scheme is funded by WG repayable loan.

Table 1 details proposed revisions to the 2015-16 programme.

Table 1		
SCHEMES	Original 2015-16	Revised 2015-16
DFG and fast track adaptations	£4,500,000	£4,250,000
Swansea Care and Repair Handyperson – Minor Adaptations	£200,000	£450,000
National Home Improvement Loan	£1,519,055	£1,720,425* (see note below)
Sandfields Renewal Area - V&VP	£1,250,000	£450,000** (see note below)

Note:

* Consisting of funding allocations of £733,039 in 2014-15 and £987,386 in 2015-16 including the additional amount allocated as a result of one Local Authority not taking up their allocated funding.

** Reflecting the actual V&VP amount allocated by WG.

6.0 Equality and Engagement Implications

6.1 The Access to Services Team has advised that an equality impact assessment (EIA) is not required.

7.0 Staffing Implications

None

8.0 IT/Systems Implications

None

9.0 Legal Implications

9.1 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.

9.2 The Council will need to ensure that it complies with any terms and conditions attached to any Welsh Government grant funding.

Background Papers: Private Sector Housing Renewal and Disabled Adaptations Policy to Provide Assistance 2012-2017

Appendices: None.