



Report of the Cabinet Member for Homes, Energy & Service Transformation

Cabinet – 19 March 2020

Disabled Facilities & Improvement Grant Programme 2020/2021

Purpose:	To provide details of the Disabled Facilities & Improvement Grant Programme and to seek approval to include schemes in the 2020/21 Capital Programme. To comply with Financial Procedure Rule No.7 (Capital Programming and Appraisals) - to commit and authorise schemes as per the Capital Programme.
Policy Framework:	1. Local Housing Strategy. 2. Private Sector Housing Renewal and Disabled Adaptations: Policy to Provide Assistance 2017-2022.
Consultation:	Legal, Finance, Access to Services.
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that: 1. The Disabled Facilities and Improvement Grant Programme as detailed, including its financial implications, is approved and included in the 2020/21 capital budget. 2. The Private Sector Housing Renewals and Disabled Adaptations Policy is reviewed in 2020/21 to help inform funding requirements for the programme in future years.
Report Author:	Darren Williams
Finance Officer:	Ben Smith
Legal Officer:	Debbie Smith
Access to Services Officer:	Rhian Millar

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The current Private Sector Housing Renewal and Disabled Adaptations Policy was approved by Council on 22nd June 2017.

2. Capital Programme Process

- 2.1 The Disabled Facilities Grants and Improvement Grant Budget for 2020/21 of £5.2m is to be agreed by Council on 5th March 2020.

3. 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 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) – Mandatory medium and large scale adaptations for private home owners and tenants of private rented accommodation, for example, level access showers, bedroom / bathroom extensions.
- 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.
- Renewal Areas – Renewal Area funding to deliver an agreed programme of property repair and environmental improvement works in the Sandfields Renewal.
- Welsh Government Valleys Taskforce Empty Property Grant – the Council has committed to participating in the Welsh

Government Valleys Taskforce Empty Property grant scheme to offer grant funding to owner occupiers to bring empty properties back into use.

- A further empty property scheme is proposed for the Western Valleys Councils including Swansea. This is due to commence in 20-21 and will allow private landlords to bring empty properties back into use in return for nomination rights.

These two empty property schemes are subject to a separate report to External Funding Panel.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The programme for 2020/21 is shown at table 1 below and is fully funded by the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). 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 12th November 2013 and the 18th of November 2014 respectively. The changes to these loans were reported to Council on the 21st June 2018.
- 4.2 It has been agreed with members that the Private Sector Housing Renewals and Disabled Adaptations Policy will be reviewed in 2020/21 to help inform funding requirements for the programme in future years.
- 4.3 Sandfields Renewal Area funding is required in 2020/21 to fund release of retentions at end of defects period on a number of previously completed schemes and to fund environmental improvement works identified within the Renewal Area Exit Strategy. Capital funding available for the Renewal Area in 2020/21 is estimated at £700,000, funded from a combination of receipts from previous area renewal energy efficiency programmes, resident contributions and general capital funds.
- 4.4 The pilot Welsh Government Valleys Taskforce Area Empty Property and Western Valley Empty property schemes require an estimated capital contribution from the Council in 2020/21 of £410,000. It is proposed this is funded through carry forward balances from 19-20 capital programme from Homefix (estimated £80,000), Grants For Nominations (estimated £80,000) and Homefix Sandfields (estimated £250,000).
- 4.5 Revenue running costs for 2020/21 are estimated at £1,599,800 and are met from fees of £1,427,600 generated from administering grants and loans. The balance is met from a contribution of £59,800 from the General fund.

Table 1 details proposed 2020/21 programme and draft programme for 21/22

Table 1			
SCHEMES	2019/20	Proposed 2020/21	Draft 2021/22
DFG, mini and fast track adaptations	£4,300,000	£4,300,000	£4,300,000
Tenant adaptations (HRA funded)	£2,850,000	£2,850,000	£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
Sandfields Renewal Area*	£nil	£nil	£nil
WG Valleys Taskforce Empty property and Western Valley schemes.**	£nil	£nil	£nil
TOTAL PROGRAMME	£ 8,050,000	£8,050,000	£7,950,000
Funded as follows:			
Total general funded	£5,200,000	£5,200,000	£5,200,000
Total HRA funded	£2,850,000	£2,850,000	£2,750,000
* Sandfields Renewal Area : carry forward estimated underspend in 19/20 of £700,000 into 20/21 to fund release of end of defects retentions and environmental works.			
** WG Valleys Taskforce Empty Property Scheme and Western Valleys Empty Property Scheme : Council contribution to WG empty property schemes estimated at £410,000.			
Total funding	£8,050,000	£8,050,000	£7,950,000

5. Equality and Engagement Implications

5.1 The Council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (Wales) 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 Act.
- 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.

Our Equality Impact Assessment process ensures that we have paid due regard to the above.

5.2 An EIA Screening Form has been completed with the agreed outcome that a full EIA report was not required. The Screening Form is included in the appendices as a background paper.

6. IT/Systems Implications

6.1 None

7. 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 European and domestic procurement legislation as appropriate.

Background Papers: Private Sector Housing Renewal and Disabled Adaptations Policy to Provide Assistance 2017-2022

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - EIA Screening Form