



Report of the Cabinet Member for Service Transformation

Cabinet – 23 March 2023

Disabled Facilities & Improvement Grant Programme 2023/24

Purpose:	To provide details of the Disabled Facilities & Improvement Grant Programme and to seek approval to include schemes in the 2023/24 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 2022-2027.
Consultation:	Legal, Finance, Access to Services.
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that Cabinet: 1) Approves the Disabled Facilities and Improvement Grant Programme as detailed, including its financial implications, and includes the Programme in the 2023/24 capital budget.
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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 27th January 2022.

2.0 Capital Programme Process

2.1 The Disabled Facilities Grants and Improvement Grant Budget for 2023/24 of £5.2m was approved by Council on 2nd March 2023.

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 Integrated Assessment Implications

4.1 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.

4.1.1 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'.

4.1.2 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.

4.2 An IIA Screening Form has been completed and a full IIA report is not required at this stage.

4.3 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.

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 The programme for 2023/24 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.
- 5.2 The previous Covid 19 pandemic restrictions continued to have a significant impact on the DFG and improvement grant programme in 2022/23. There has been significant disruption to delivery of the adaptations and repair loans programme due to contractor supply shortages impacting on the capacity of the framework of contractors to deliver schemes. A new contractor framework is being introduced to increase capacity to deliver the capital programme.
- 5.3 As a result a sizeable proportion of Housing General Fund allocation in 2022/2023 will not be spent and will need to be carried forward into the 2023/2024 grant programme.
- 5.4 Revenue running costs for 2023/24 are estimated at £1,424,300 and are met from fees of £1,411,500 generated from administering grants and loans. The balance is met from a contribution of £12,800 from the General fund.

Table 1 details proposed 2023/24 programme and draft programme for 2024/2025

Table 1				
	Proposed 2023/24			Draft 2024/25
	General Fund	Previous allocation c/fwd	Total Funds 2023/24	
SCHEMES				
DFG, minor and fast track adaptations	£4,300,000	£1,025,000	£5,325,000	£4,300,000
Tenant adaptations (HRA funded)	£2,750,000		£2,750,000	£2,750,000
Homefix Loans	£500,000	£376,000	£ 876,000	£500,000
Care & Repair Minor Adaptation Grant	£370,000		£ 370,000	£370,000
Care & Repair Comfort, Safety, Security	£30,000		£ 30,000	£ 30,000
TOTAL PROGRAMME	£7,950,000	£1,401,000	£ 9,351,000	£7,950,000
Funded as follows:				
Total general funded	£5,200,000			£5,200,000
Total HRA funded	£2,750,000			£2,750,000
Total funding	£7,950,000			£7,950,000

6.0 Legal Implications

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 The Council will need to ensure that it complies with any terms and conditions attached to any Welsh Government grant funding.
- 6.3 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