



Report of the Cabinet Member for Homes & Energy

Cabinet – 21 March 2019

Disabled Facilities & Improvement Grant Programme 2019/20

Purpose:	To provide details of the Disabled Facilities & Improvement Grant Programme and to seek approval to include schemes in the 2019/20 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:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Local Housing Strategy.2. Private Sector Housing Renewal and Disabled Adaptations: Policy to Provide Assistance 2017-2022.3. Statutory declaration of the Sandfields Renewal Area approved by Cabinet on the 14th January 2014
Consultation:	Legal, Finance, Access to Services.
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) The Disabled Facilities and Improvement Grant Programme as detailed, including its financial implications, is approved and included in the 2019/20 capital budget.
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1.0 Introduction

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

2.0 Capital Programme Process

2.1 The Disabled Facilities Grants and Improvement Grant Budget for 2019/20 of £5.2m was agreed by Council on 28th February 2019.

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 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 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.
- Grants for Nominations – For works to bring long term empty properties back into use. Grant is provided in exchange for nomination rights. This scheme will close at the end of 2018-19 due to limited demand and alternative funding available from Welsh Government Loans. There will however be demand from remaining applications yet to be processed in 2018-19 that will require funding in 2019-20.
- 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 Area will be closing in 2018-19, however due to slippage in the programme the final improvement scheme will not be completed until May 2019 and will require funding in 2019-20. The exit strategy for the Sandfields Renewal Area includes provision of Homefix loan funding assistance to households not included in the Renewal Area programme.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The programme for 2019/20 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 ringfenced 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 Sandfields Renewal Area funding is required in 2019/20 due to slippage to the current improvement scheme 5. This scheme will not be completed until May 2019. Funds are also required for release of retentions at end of defects period on a number of previously completed schemes. Capital funding available for the Renewal Area in 2018/19 was £1,486,000, funded from a combination of receipts from previous area renewal energy efficiency programmes, resident contributions and general capital funds. The slippage in the programme will result in an estimated £790,000 underspend in 18-19, this will need to be carried forward into the 2019/20 programme for the reasons stated.
- 4.3 The Sandfields Renewal Area programme will be closing at the end of March 2019. An exit strategy has been developed to cater for the remaining households in later phases of the programme that will not be offered External Wall Insulation and External Repair improvements due to lower than anticipated levels of funding for the overall programme. This will include the offer of Homefix loans to eligible applicants. These loans will fund improvement works of a similar scope and specification to those undertaken to properties in the Sandfields Renewal Area programme. Capital funding of these loans in 2019/20 will come from Homefix Loan funding not utilised in 2018/19. An amount of £0.25m will be made available. If applicants do not take up the offer of these loans by the end of September 2019, remaining funds will be returned to the General Fund.
- 4.4 Due to lack of take up, the Grants For Nominations scheme will be withdrawn at the end of 2018/19. Funding of £0.133m carried forward to 2019/20 from 2018/19 is however required for current applications being

processed for approval that will not be completed by the end of 2018/19.

- 4.5 The Grants for Nominations annual funding of £0.08m is to be transferred to the Homefix Loan budget in 2019/20, increasing this budget to £0.50m. Funding to repair and reuse empty homes will still be available via the Houses to Homes budget.

Table 1 details proposed 2019/20 programme and draft programme for 2020/21.

Table 1			
SCHEMES	2018/19	Proposed 2019/20	Draft 2020/21
DFG, mini and fast track adaptations	£4,300,000	£4,300,000	£4,300,000
Tenant adaptations (HRA funded)	£2,750,000	£2,750,000	£2,750,000
Homefix Loans*	£420,000	£500,000	£500,000
Grants for Nominations**	£ 80,000	£ nil	£ nil
Care and Repair Mini Adaptation Grant	£370,000	£370,000	£370,000
Care and Repair Comfort, Safety, Security	£ 30,000	£ 30,000	£ 30,000
Sandfields Renewal Area***	£nil	£nil	£nil
TOTAL PROGRAMME	£ 7,950,000	£7,950,000	£7,950,000
Funded as follows:			
Total general funded	£5,200,000	£5,200,000	£5,200,000
Total HRA funded	£2,750,000	£2,750,000	£2,750,000
<p>Homefix loans * : carry forward £250,000 of estimated Homefix underspend in 18/19 of £674,000 into 19/20 to fund Homefix loans assistance in Sandfields as part of exit strategy arrangements.</p> <p>Grants for Nominations** : carry forward estimated underspend in 18/19 of £133,000 into 19/20 to fund remaining pipeline applications following closure of scheme.</p> <p>Sandfields Renewal Area *** : carry forward estimated underspend in 18/19 of £790,000 into 19/20 to fund remaining scheme in progress and release of end of defects retentions on completed schemes following closure of Renewal Area.</p>			
Total funding	£7,950,000	£7,950,000	£7,950,000

4.6 Revenue running costs for 2019/20 are estimated at £1,560,900 and are met from fees of £1,401,000 generated from administering grants. The balance is met from a contribution of £159,900 from the General fund. There are no asset rent charges.

5.0 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.

6.0 IT/Systems Implications

None

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 European procurement legislation as appropriate.

Background Papers:

Private Sector Housing Renewal and Disabled Adaptations Policy to Provide Assistance 2017-2022
EIA Screening Form

Appendices:

None.