

Subject:	Disabled Facilities Grants	Status:	For Publication
Report to:	Performance Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Date:	19 th November 2012
Report of:	Head of Health Housing & Regeneration	Portfolio Holder:	Housing and Environmental Health
Key Decision:	<input type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	General Exception	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Urgency <input type="checkbox"/>
Community Impact Assessment:	Required:	Yes	Attached: Yes
Biodiversity Impact Assessment	Required:	No	Attached: No
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1.	RECOMMENDATION(S)
1.1	That the contents of this report be noted.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To provide Members with an overview of the procedures and policies related to Disabled Facilities Grants.

3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 3.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities:
- **A clean and green Rossendale** – creating a better environment for all.
 - **A healthy and successful Rossendale** – supporting vibrant communities and a strong economy.
 - **Responsive and value for money local services** – responding to and meeting the different needs of customers and improving the cost effectiveness of services.

4. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no specific risk issues for members to consider arising from this report.

5. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

- 5.1 At the meeting on the 24th September 2012 Members of the Committee considered the delivery of support mechanisms and assistance for vulnerable people. Concern was expressed about the explanation given on the number of urgent cases and also the number of cases on the waiting list. Clarification was also sought on how the allocation of grants is assessed.
- 5.2 Disabled Facilities Grants were previously considered by a Scrutiny Task & Finish Group in 2010 and their report from November 2010 is attached as Appendix A for information.
- 5.3 Disabled Facilities Grants are available to residents if they or someone living in their property is disabled. It is a grant towards the cost of providing adaptations and facilities to enable the disabled person to continue to live there. Such grants are given by local councils under Part I of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. The grant is a mandatory grant with funding provided directly from Central Government. There is a maximum grant available of £30,000 and costs for any works above this amount must be met by the client.

- 5.4 Applications for disabled adaptations are made directly to Lancashire County Council social Services who make an initial assessment. Minor adaptations (under £500) are dealt with directly with the customer, those clients requiring more substantial adaptations are referred on to the Occupational Therapy Service who then arrange a home visit assessment.
- 5.5 The Occupational Therapist assesses the client's needs and agrees with the client the best methods for meeting these needs. At this point a recommendation is made to Social Services.
- 5.6 Dependent upon the client's needs, the Occupational Therapist will prioritise the case so that the Council's Disabled Facilities Grant budget can be targeted at the most urgent and needy cases.
- 5.7 Following the Scrutiny Task & Finish Group report the Council currently directs 75% of its Disabled Facilities Grant budget to urgent referrals, the remaining 25% to referrals not classed as urgent.
- 5.8 Once we receive the referral, we acknowledge receipt to the client within 5 days. An officer would normally arrange to visit a case classed as urgent within 4 weeks. Cases classed as non-urgent are placed on a waiting list and visited in date order of when the recommendation was received.
- 5.9 The purpose of the visit is to assess whether the recommended adaptation is reasonable and practicable considering the age and condition of the property.
- 5.10 The Council offers a service to assist customers with the process, the application forms, selection of a contractor and helping to ensure the works are completed properly. However, customers do not have to use this service and may choose to appoint their own architect and agent.
- 5.11 A booklet explaining the process is available on the Council's webpage and is sent in hardcopy to all applicants. A copy is attached as Appendix B for information.
- 5.12 The budget that the Council received to deliver Disabled Facilities Grants in 2012/2013 is £353,000 and is assessed on an annual basis across the Country. Rossendale Borough Council has been able to add a further £251,000 towards this budget from its housing capital reserves in order to address the backlog of grant applications. However, our ability to continue to do this will fall under pressure from the public sector spending review.
- 5.13 So far this year we have approved 97 grants to the value of £493,500. There are currently 30 applications at various stages i.e. estimates coming back, certification from owners, plans in for building and planning permission to the value of £ 180,500 which represents a funding gap of £69,500.
- 5.14 Of the 97 DFGs approved to date, 63 are for people over 60, 27 are for people under 60 and 7 are for people under 19. These age ranges are what the Government ask for when we send in the year end statistics. Of these applications 35 were categorised as urgent by the Occupational Therapist.

5.15 In addition to the above, Lancashire County Council arrange and fund minor adaptations (works classified as costing under £500.00) and at the end of September 2012, 262 jobs of this type had been carried out.

6. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

6.1 None

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 Disabled Facilities Grants provide much needed assistance towards meeting the needs of disabled persons in their own homes.