

APPENDIX M

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL **CORPORATE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 24 JUNE 2013** **EXECUTIVE – 2 JULY 2013**

Title:

HOME IMPROVEMENT POLICY

[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Keith Webster]
[Wards Affected: All]

Summary and purpose:

To introduce a revised Private Sector Home Improvement Policy for Waverley under the terms of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002 for approval by the Executive and Council and implementation with effect from 1 July 2013.

How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:

The Home Improvement Policy relates to three of the Council's corporate objectives, value for money, leisure and lives and understanding our residents' needs.

Finance/Risk Management Implications:

It is essential to revise the home improvement policy because, while it remains in place, the Council is under a duty to consider applications for Waverley Home Improvement Grants of up to £5,000 and Equity Share Schemes of up to £30,000. The revised policy includes Disabled Facilities Grants and Safe and Warm Grants with agreed budgets of £454,000 and £30,000 respectively. The condition requiring repayment of the grant, without exemption, where the subject property is sold within ten years of completion of the works, will allow the Council to recoup a higher level of grant repayment than currently received from the Waverley Home Improvement Grant.

Legal Implications:

The revised Policy will allow the Council to meet its obligations under the Housing Assistance Order and plays a significant role in meeting the requirement in the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 to report on energy conservation measures that the authority considers practicable, cost-effective and likely to result in significant improvement in the energy efficiency of residential accommodation in its area.

Introduction

1. In July 2003, the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002 came into force, giving local authorities powers to provide assistance in the form of grants, loans, technical support and advice. Each local authority is required to set out the forms of assistance it will provide in an adopted policy.

2. Government Circular 05/2003 provides guidance on how local authorities should apply the Housing Assistance Order and advised that it would consider that an Authority was failing in its duty as a housing enabler and in its legal responsibility to consider the condition of the local private sector stock if it did not make some provision for assistance.
3. Waverley Borough Council formally adopted the current Home Improvement Policy on the 4th February 2003 and it came into effect on 18th July 2003. It has not been reviewed since 2007. An update of the Home Improvement Policy is one of the action points in the Housing Service Plan 2013/14.
4. The proposed Home Improvement Policy comprises:
 - Disabled Facilities Grants
 - Safe and Warm Grants
5. A comparison between the existing policy and the proposed policy is attached at Annexe 1.
6. A Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is a mandatory grant to enable older and vulnerable people carry out adaptations to meet their needs. The 2011 Census showed an increase of 2% in the proportion of people aged over 65 in Waverley since 2003 and a 42% increase in the number of people receiving disability benefits. It is anticipated that the overall trend will be an increase in the uptake of DFGs.
7. The Safe and Warm Grant is a discretionary grant that provides for energy efficiency and home security measures to be provided to improve the well-being of vulnerable households and reduce fuel poverty. Households who would previously be eligible for national schemes, such as Warm Front, will now be signposted to the alternatives provided by the Green Deal.
8. The purpose of this report is to introduce a revised Home Improvement Policy that will allow the Council to assist vulnerable home-owners to improve the thermal efficiency and safety of their homes, through low level funding supplemented by robust grant repayment conditions. The proposed new Policy is attached at Annexe 2.

Resources

2013/14	DFGs	Safe and Warm Grants
External funding	256,717	0
Capital programme	193,283	30,000
Total	450,000	30,000

9. In 2013/14, £30,000 is set aside for Safe and Warm Grants which incorporates the £20,000 budget for fuel poverty and a further £10,000 from savings made to the DFG budget.
10. It is expected that in future years, the majority of funding for discretionary Safe and Warm Grants will be funded from the repayment of existing grants. In 2012/13, the Council received £18,375 in grant repayments.

Consultation

11. Consultation on the proposed Home Improvement Policy will take place with Surrey Adult Services, Guildford and Waverley Care and Repair, Foundations, AgeUK Waverley and the CAB.
12. Comments received have been taken into account as part of the policy development and the final draft is now presented to the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee before seeking approval from Executive and Council.

Next steps

13. During the current year, consideration will be given to opportunities to reduce the use of DFGs where alternative solutions to meet the needs of older and vulnerable people may be more appropriate, for example, covering the costs of relocation and these will be presented to CMT for discussion.

Recommendation

It is recommended to the Council that the Home Improvement Policy for Waverley be approved for implementation with effect from 17 July 2013.

Background Papers

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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