
SUBJECT:	<i>Disabled Facilities Grant</i>
REPORT OF:	<i>Healthy Communities Portfolio – Cllr Graham Harris</i>
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	<i>Martin Holt, Head of Healthy Communities</i>
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WARD/S AFFECTED	<i>All</i>

1. Purpose of Report

To seek approval to increase the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) capital programme for 2016/17 to meet increased demand.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Members agree to recommend to Cabinet and Council to increase the Council's contribution to the overall Disabled Facilities Grant capital programme to £100,000 enabling a funded programme of £546,000 to be delivered in 2016/17.

That Members agree a further increase to the Capital Programme to reflect any additional funding received via the Better Care Fund.

That Members recommend to Cabinet that subject to annual review, that the Council increases its contribution to the annual DFG programme to £100,000/annum to meet future demand

2. Reasons for Recommendations

2.1 The existing budget of £390,000 is insufficient to meet current demand. At the end of June 2016, there was just £100,000 uncommitted but £120,000 of applications ready or nearly ready for approval. There are a further 31 live enquires (estimated expenditure of £400,000) many of which will become due for approval during the course of 2016/17.

2.2 Delaying expenditure to the next financial year may put vulnerable residents and their carers at greater risk of accidents, and will impact on the Council's ability to respond to demand in future years.

2.3 The Council's contribution has varied over the last three years, dependant on the level of demand and the funding received from the Better Care Fund and through the Paradigm Housing contribution. This has enabled the council to reduce its Capital budget contribution during 2014/15 and 15/16 for the DFG programme, there being

sufficient resources to meet demand. Historically the Council has supported the programme with additional funding of between £45k and £100k.

2.4 The Council's contribution for the last three years is detailed in the table below.

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Capital Expenditure	422,656.58	296,970.85	475,274.52
DFG	244,717.00	250,987.00	340,016.15
Paradigm	90,000.00	90,000.00	90,000.00
Funded by Capital Reserves	87,939.58	0	45,258.37
Balance	0	- 44,016.15	0

2.5 The increased demand for DFG has arisen due to the increasing elderly and vulnerable population and the removal of a case backlog by the occupational therapy service.

3. Content of Report

3.1 The Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is a mandatory, means-tested grant to fund adaptations to the homes of disabled people to ensure they have access into and out of their home and to the essential facilities within it. Grants are given for works which are recommended by an Occupational Therapist.

3.2 In 2016/17 the approved capital programme for DFGs is £390,000. The Council receives government subsidy from the Better Care Fund to help fund DFGs and since 2006, the Council has also secured a discretionary annual capital contribution from Paradigm Housing Group towards adaptations to the homes of their tenants. Historically Chiltern District Council has contributed up to £100,000/annum to ensure that a fully funded DFG programme of £390,000 is available.

3.3 The Council has been notified that the Better Care Fund will allocate £337,000 to the DFG programme for 2016/17 and Paradigm Housing Group has confirmed a contribution of £90,000, making £427,000 available in total. As this funding is greater than the budget amount in the capital programme there is currently no allocation for CDC to contribute to the programme.

3.4 However, demand for DFGs increased significantly in 2015/16 as the Occupational Therapy service commissioned agency OTs to tackle long waiting lists for assessments and also developed new services to ensure people could be assessed more quickly. Compared to 2014/15, referrals increased by 30%. Demand has returned to more normal levels since January 2016, with an average of 8 referrals per month being received.

3.5 One of the difficulties in managing the DFG budget is that it is not possible to require completion of work in the same financial year as the grant is approved. It is common practice to over-commit grants in each financial year, to prevent a stop-start situation occurring. Owing to the increase in demand during 2015, there was £235,000 outstanding commitment at the end of the 2015/16 financial year. As at 30 June 2016, £347,000 had been paid or committed, leaving just £100,000 of the remaining funding unallocated. However, there were 18 applications (to the value of £120,000) ready for approval and a further 31 applications being processed, with an estimated expenditure requirement of £400,000.

3.6 Whilst the Council is legally able to delay issuing grant approvals for up to six months and defer payments for up to 12 months, these approaches give rise to a number of risks:

- DFG applicants are, by their nature, vulnerable people and adaptations are often urgently needed. Delaying approvals or payments puts these people and their carers at risk of accidents and leaves them housed in unsatisfactory conditions for longer periods.
- The ability to respond to DFG applications in future years will be impacted by deferring current demand to next year's programme.
- The Council will fail to meet its own performance targets to approve DFGs within 30 days of receipt of an application.

3.7 In order to manage the demand for DFG resources, the following actions have already been taken:

- Implementation of a discretionary repayment clause to allow reclaim of DFG funds in the event properties are sold within 10 years of completion of the work
- Promotion of Flexible Home Improvement Loan to enable home owners to carry out pre-emptive adjustments to their homes to make them suitable for older age
- Implementation of a protocol with Paradigm Housing Group to ensure better consideration of a move to a more suitable property before major adaptations are agreed

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- As already referred to, additional resources secured from Paradigm Housing towards adaptations for its tenants

3.8 Even with these measures in place, additional funding will be required to be able to continue to deliver adaptations during 2016/17.

3.9 Additional funding is being sought from Bucks County Council via the Better Care Fund in accordance with the DFG grant determination letter from the Department of Communities and Local Government. This indicated that £545,000 was to be made available to Chiltern District Council to meet its statutory obligations. However, the Better Care Fund managers decided to use their discretion to allocate some of this funding to other projects. Bucks County Council has been made aware of the shortfall of funding for DFGs and a request made for the full allocation of £545,000. At the time of preparation of this report, an outcome is still awaited to this request.

3.10 Even if this additional Better Care Funding is forthcoming, there is still likely to be a shortfall to meet the current level of demand. Agreement is therefore sought to increase the capital programme to a level which reflects the full amount of funding available including the CDC funding of £100,000 to enable the Council to continue to deliver DFGs and minimise the impact of delays on vulnerable households.

4. Consultation

4.1 Not applicable

5. Options

5.1 The Council could delay issuing grant approvals for up to six months and/or defer payments for up to 12 months. However, this is not recommended for the reasons outlined in Paragraph 3.6 above.

5.2 The other option is that the Council could increase its contribution by less than 100k

6. Corporate Implications

6.1 Finance: The 2016/17 DFG programme of £409,725 is funded through a combination of government subsidy, and a contribution from Paradigm Housing. In 2015/16, CDC was only required to contribute £45k to fund the £390,000 programme. Historically the council has contributed between £60 and £100k to the programme dependant on demand.

6.2 Legal: The Council has a statutory duty to approve applications for Disabled Facilities Grants. The current demand for DFG expenditure exceeds £390,000 budget.

6.3 Social Inclusion: DFG recipients are vulnerable residents who are at risk of accidents and unsuitable living conditions if they are unable to access adaptations.

7. Links to Council Policy Objectives

This links to the 'Working towards safe and healthier local communities' aim of the Joint Business Plan 2014-19.

8. Next Step

If agreed, the capital programme will be amended for 2016/17. The programme for future years will be considered in the usual way.

Background	None except as referred to in this report
Papers:	