

Individual Executive Member Decision

Housing Grants and Loans Policy

Committee considering report:	Individual Executive Member Decision for amendments made to the Housing Grants and Loans Policy
Date ID to be signed:	24 March 2021
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Hilary Cole
Forward Plan Ref:	ID4034

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to request individual member decision sign-off for the updated Housing Grants and Loans Policy.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 For an Individual Executive Member Decision to approve the amendments to the Housing Grants and Loans Policy so that it can be adopted and implemented.

3. Implications

- 3.1 **Financial:** This Policy will enable redistribution of the grant to a wider range of residents and ensure that the funds are applied fairly to enhance quality of life for our residents.

3.2 **Policy:** The changes to the policy are to reflect the changes to the internal service structure and as such, how grant and loan applications are now administered and processed. The changes comply with our obligation as a Local Authority under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 to provide Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) to eligible residents within West Berkshire. This will enable them to live in their homes and to live as independently as possible. Also, under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance)(England and Wales) Order 2002 (RRO), Local Authorities are given more flexibility in respect of how they issue loans and other forms of assistance providing that we have a published policy that sets out how we intend to do so.

- 3.3 **Personnel:** These changes will affect the Home Improvement Agency Team

3.4 **Legal:** There are no legal implications for these changes and the policy remains compliant with the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 which is the legislation that governs DFGs.

3.5 **Risk Management:** These changes better manage risks of individuals abusing the system and enables more vulnerable residents to access funding.

- 3.6 **Property:** No affect

4. Consultation Responses

The Home Improvement Agency team were consulted on the changes and the majority of the changes reflect the current and updated service structure and delivery. Revision of this policy is required at least every five years and adoption of the previous version of this policy took place in 2016.

Members:	N/A
Leader of Council:	N/A
Overview & Scrutiny Management Commission Chairman:	N/A
Ward Members:	N/A
Opposition Spokesperson:	N/A
Local Stakeholders:	N/A
Officers Consulted:	All officers in the Home Improvement Agency Team
Trade Union:	N/A

5. Other options considered

5.1 None required

6. Introduction/Background

6.1 This policy supports the aims of the Council's Housing Strategy to enable every resident to have access to a home that meets their needs. The purpose of this policy is to explain the Mandatory and Discretionary Housing Grants and Loans that are available to West Berkshire residents to assist them with the costs of adaptations, essential repairs and home improvements.

6.2 The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (RRO) came into force in July 2002. This Order repeals much of the previous prescriptive legislation governing the provision of the renewal grants to homeowners and replaces it with a wide-ranging power to provide assistance for Housing Renewal. The grants and loans within this policy are offered in accordance with the Regulatory Reform Order.

6.3 The Home Improvement Agency (HIA) Team will work in partnership with statutory and voluntary organisations to deliver these forms of financial assistance. It will work across all council departments, in particular Development and Planning, Adult Social Care and the Disabled Children's Team to promote the financial assistance outlined in this policy and assistance offered by other organisations.

6.4 These priorities contribute to the vision set out in the Housing Strategy to enable every resident to have access to a home that meets their needs. They also contribute to the Council's Strategy to support the Health and Wellbeing of West Berkshire residents.

7. Supporting Information

7.1 A copy of the updated policy accompanies this report and the changes made to it are indicated in the document control section.

8. Options for Consideration

8.1 Not applicable as the changes to the policy are governed by the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and changes outside of this cannot be made.

9. Proposals

9.1 It is proposed that the updated policy is authorised and signed-off by the Portfolio member as an individual member decision.

10. Conclusion

10.1 The policy has been amended to reflect the changes to the Housing Service team structure and in-house service delivery since the adoption of the previous policy. Revision of this policy is required at least every five years and this updated version will allow more disabled and vulnerable residents access to housing Grants and Loans.

Background Papers:

Housing Grants and Loans Policy

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☐ No: ☒

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission or associated Task Groups within preceding six months	<input type="checkbox"/>
Item is Urgent Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Report is to note only	<input type="checkbox"/>

Wards affected: All

Strategic Priorities Supported:

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the above Council Strategy priorities by enabling redistribution of the grant to a wider range of residents and ensure that the funds are applied fairly to enhance quality of life for our residents.

Officer details:

Name: Janet Weekes
Job Title: Housing Services Manager
Tel No: 2225
E-mail Address: Janet.weekes1@westberks.gov.uk

11. Executive Summary

11.1 See above

12. Appendices

12.1 Appendix A – Data Protection Impact Assessment – Stage One

12.2 Appendix B – Equality Impact Assessment – Stage One

12.3 Appendix C - updated report

Appendix A

Data Protection Impact Assessment – Stage One

The General Data Protection Regulations require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) for certain projects that have a significant impact on the rights of data subjects.

Should you require additional guidance in completing this assessment, please refer to the Information Management Officer via dp@westberks.gov.uk

Directorate:	Place
Service:	Development and Planning
Team:	Housing services
Lead Officer:	Aimee Connor
Title of Project/System:	Housing Grants and Loans Policy
Date of Assessment:	02/03/2021

Do you need to do a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)?

	Yes	No
<p>Will you be processing SENSITIVE or “special category” personal data?</p> <p><i>Note – sensitive personal data is described as “data revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, or trade union membership, and the processing of genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a natural person, data concerning health or data concerning a natural person’s sex life or sexual orientation”</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>Will you be processing data on a large scale?</p> <p><i>Note – Large scale might apply to the number of individuals affected OR the volume of data you are processing OR both</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>Will your project or system have a “social media” dimension?</p> <p><i>Note – will it have an interactive element which allows users to communicate directly with one another?</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>Will any decisions be automated?</p> <p><i>Note – does your system or process involve circumstances where an individual’s input is “scored” or assessed without intervention/review/checking by a human being? Will there be any “profiling” of data subjects?</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>Will your project/system involve CCTV or monitoring of an area accessible to the public?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>Will you be using the data you collect to match or cross-reference against another existing set of data?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>Will you be using any novel, or technologically advanced systems or processes?</p> <p><i>Note – this could include biometrics, “internet of things” connectivity or anything that is currently not widely utilised</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

If you answer “Yes” to any of the above, you will probably need to complete [Data Protection Impact Assessment - Stage Two](#). If you are unsure, please consult with the Information Management Officer before proceeding.

Appendix B

Equality Impact Assessment - Stage One

We need to ensure that our strategies, policies, functions and services, current and proposed have given due regard to equality and diversity as set out in the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act), which states:

- “(1) A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:**
- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;**
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; this includes the need to:**
 - (i) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;**
 - (ii) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;**
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it, with due regard, in particular, to the need to be aware that compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others.**
- (2) The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.**
- (3) Compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others.”**

The following list of questions may help to establish whether the decision is relevant to equality:

- Does the decision affect service users, employees or the wider community?
- (The relevance of a decision to equality depends not just on the number of those affected but on the significance of the impact on them)
- Is it likely to affect people with particular protected characteristics differently?
- Is it a major policy, or a major change to an existing policy, significantly affecting how functions are delivered?
- Will the decision have a significant impact on how other organisations operate in terms of equality?
- Does the decision relate to functions that engagement has identified as being important to people with particular protected characteristics?
- Does the decision relate to an area with known inequalities?
- Does the decision relate to any equality objectives that have been set by the council?

Please complete the following questions to determine whether a full Stage Two, Equality Impact Assessment is required.

What is the proposed decision that you are asking the Executive to make:	Individual Executive Member Decision for amendment to the Housing Grants and Loans Policy
Summary of relevant legislation:	The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (RRO) came into force in July 2002.
Does the proposed decision conflict with any of the Council's key strategy priorities?	No
Name of assessor:	Aimee Connor
Date of assessment:	02/03/2021

Is this a:		Is this:	
Policy	Yes	New or proposed	No
Strategy	No	Already exists and is being reviewed	Yes
Function	No	Is changing	Yes
Service	No		

1 What are the main aims, objectives and intended outcomes of the proposed decision and who is likely to benefit from it?	
Aims:	To implement minor procedural amendments to the Housing Grants and Loans Policy.
Objectives:	To improve the distributions of Grants and Loans to the most vulnerable
Outcomes:	To contribute to improving residents quality of life
Benefits:	To distribute fund fairly and to a wider group of vulnerable residents

2 Note which groups may be affected by the proposed decision. Consider how they may be affected, whether it is positively or negatively and what sources of information have been used to determine this. (Please demonstrate consideration of all strands – Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex and Sexual Orientation.)		
Group Affected	What might be the effect?	Information to support this
Age	None	Changes are internal processing only

Disability	None	Changes are internal processing only
Gender Reassignment	None	Changes are internal processing only
Marriage and Civil Partnership	None	Changes are internal processing only
Pregnancy and Maternity	None	Changes are internal processing only
Race	None	Changes are internal processing only
Religion or Belief	None	Changes are internal processing only
Sex	None	Changes are internal processing only
Sexual Orientation	None	Changes are internal processing only
Further Comments relating to the item:		

3 Result	
Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could contribute to inequality?	No
Please provide an explanation for your answer: Changes are to the internal processing of Grants and Loans only	
Will the proposed decision have an adverse impact upon the lives of people, including employees and service users?	No
Please provide an explanation for your answer: Changes are to the internal processing of Grants and Loans only	

If your answers to question 2 have identified potential adverse impacts and you have answered 'yes' to either of the sections at question 3, or you are unsure about the impact, then you should carry out a Stage Two Equality Impact Assessment.

If a Stage Two Equality Impact Assessment is required, before proceeding you should discuss the scope of the Assessment with service managers in your area. You will also need to refer to the [Equality Impact Assessment guidance and Stage Two template](#).

4 Identify next steps as appropriate:	
Stage Two required	No
Owner of Stage Two assessment:	

Timescale for Stage Two assessment:	
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Name: Aimee Connor

Date: 02/03/2021

Please now forward this completed form to Rachel Craggs, Principal Policy Officer (Equality and Diversity) (rachel.craggs@westberks.gov.uk), for publication on the WBC website.