

Individual Executive Decision Notice

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| Report title | Request for a Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant | |
| Decision designation | GREEN | |
| Cabinet member with lead responsibility | Councillor Cabinet Member for Adults, Cabinet Member for City Assets and Housing | |
| Wards affected | Graiseley; | |
| Accountable Director | Emma Bennett, Executive Director of Families, Ross Cook, Director of City Housing and Environment | |
| Originating service | City Housing and Assets | |
| Accountable employee | David Payton | Housing Insight Officer |
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| Report to be/has been considered by | Cabinet Member Briefing – Adults | 10 January 2022 |
| | Cabinet Member Briefing – City Assets and Housing | 12 January 2022 |

Summary

To consider a request for discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant funding.

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

That the Cabinet Member for Adults and Cabinet Member for City Assets and Housing, in consultation with the Executive Director of Adults and the Service Director of City Housing and Environment.

1. Agree to the provision of a discretionary grant for the case detailed in the report below at a total cost of £6,735 (subject to any unforeseen costs which may increase the amount required), up to the maximum grant available of £8,500

Signature
Name of Cabinet Member

Date:

Signature
Name of Director

Date:

Signature
Name of Cabinet Member

Date:

Signature
Name of Director

Date:

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 which prescribes the award of mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) previously gave local authorities the power to award discretionary grant, in addition to the mandatory grant, for the purpose of making a dwelling suitable for the accommodation, welfare or employment of a disabled person. Subsequently, the introduction of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order in 2002 removed this power and replaced it with the discretion for local authorities to introduce their own policies for the award of discretionary grants, with regard to local circumstances.
- 1.2 The City of Wolverhampton Council Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy approved at Cabinet on 17 February 2021 outlines the council's current discretionary policies under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002. There are a number of agreed discretionary grants within the policy designed to assist with the installation of straightforward adaptations, however, the policy approved in February 2021 removed a previous eligibility criteria (receipt of Personal Independence payment - PIP) for applicants under the age of 65, meaning that a cohort of younger people do not now qualify for these discretionary grants. The Council has a legal requirement to consider any request for assistance outside of existing policy to provide additional discretionary funding. This report deals with such a request.

2.0 Request for Assistance

- 2.1 Mrs J is a 59-year-old woman living with her husband, who is her main carer, in a privately-owned property. Mrs J has a progressive neurological condition and is prone to falls, particularly in the bathroom and is only able to bathe with the assistance of her husband or her sister.
- 2.2 Mrs J was assessed by an Occupational Therapist in 2019, who recommended the installation of level access shower to enable Mrs J to be fully independent with bathing. This type of adaptation would normally be funded via a Small Adaptations Grant (up to a maximum grant of £8,500); however, Mrs J is not eligible for this as she is under 65 and does not receive any means tested benefits.
- 2.3 Mrs J is not eligible for mandatory DFG assistance due to her husband's income of £26,000 from self-employment and a private pension. Mrs J's own income is a small pension of approximately £4,600 per year and PIP.

3.0 Evaluation of alternative options

- 3.1 In the above case, the alternative options are as follows: -
 - A. Consider the award of a mandatory DFG, however in this instance the applicant is not entitled to this due to her husband's income. The means test for a DFG is set by national legislation and cannot be varied.

- B. Request that grant applicant obtains finance through a loan option available on the financial markets. The personal and financial circumstances of the applicant mean that this is not an option that they are able to pursue.
- C. Advise the applicant to source additional funding from charity, family or friends. Currently the adaptations service does not have the resource to provide additional support to applicants in sourcing external funding. If an applicant must seek their own sources of personal funding this inevitably leads to lengthy delays and in many cases, work never progresses. In this case funding is only being requested for mandatory work, which would normally be funded via a Small Adaptations Grant.

4.0 Reasons for decision

- 4.1 For the case outlined above it is requested that agreement is given to approve a discretionary grant to the full cost of the installation of the level access shower at £6,735 and subject to any unforeseen works that arise during the installation. The maximum grant available is £8,500 (as per the Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy).
- 4.2 Officers have considered this case and consider that approval of funding should be given for the following reasons:
 - A. The facilities to be provided are to fulfil the mandatory requirements of access and use of bathing facilities. (Housing Grants Construction & Regeneration Act 1996, Section 23 (f) i.e. there is nothing over and above the mandatory requirements that would normally be provided.
 - B. Under the previous Housing Assistance policy criteria Mrs J would have been eligible to receive funding for a Small Adaptations Grant and she was advised of this when she first enquired about the grant, therefore she agreed to proceed based on that information
 - C. The applicant is unable to fund the costs herself.
 - D. The cost of the work is considered reasonable as assessed by officers.
- 4.3 There is sufficient budgetary provision within the 2021-2022 financial year to enable this discretionary grant to be financed (see 5.1 below).

5.0 Financial implications

- 5.1 The approved Housing Capital Programme includes a budget of £ 4.7 million for Disabled Facilities Grants and discretionary grants in 2021-2022. There is therefore sufficient budget to fund the expenditure of approximately £6,735 recommended in this report. This investment may also mitigate a risk of additional costs of care and cost to the health service resulting from potential falls.

6.0 Legal implications

Mrs J is not eligible for discretionary assistance under the current Housing Assistance policy. This case is an exception to be considered outside the policy and normal procedures, and Councillors do have the power to refuse the discretionary grant, however, for the reasons outlined in Section 4 above, it is recommended that the grant be approved.

[TC/25112021/E]

7.0 Equalities implications

7.1 An equalities analysis is not required as this report is for a one-off decision affecting one applicant and is not intended to set a precedent. In future, any proposed full policy report will require an appropriate analysis

8.0 Climate change and environmental implications

8.1 There are no climate change or environmental implications of this report.

9.0 Human resources implications

9.1 There are no human resources implications in this report.

10.0 Corporate Landlord implications

10.1 There are no corporate landlord implications for this report.

11.0 Health and Well-being implications

11.1 This report has implications for the health and well-being for Mrs J in that the provision on the necessary facilities will significantly improve her well-being and will significantly reduce the risk of falls.

12.0 Covid-19 Implications

12.1 Any work to be undertaken to the property will be in accordance with Government guidelines for working safely during coronavirus.

13.0 Schedule of background papers

13.1 Private Sector Housing Assistance policy - 17 February 2021.

14.0 Appendices

14.1 Appendix 1: [Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy - 17 February 2021](#)