



Cabinet 3 December 2008

Report of the Policy Development Committee: Review of Homes Assistance Policy (Dec08/08)

1. Following the outcomes of the Private Sector Housing Stock Condition Survey, a working group which included Members of the Committee has reviewed the Council's Homes Assistance Policy. The aim of the policy is to set a framework for the provision of assistance and support to property owners and occupiers, particularly those that are unable to meet the cost of repair or renewal from their own resources.
2. The review proposed two new grants to address the problem of fuel poverty, both targeted at low income households. The working group also reviewed the Council's existing grant provision, and recommended that three grants should be removed from the Homes Assistance Policy. Minor amendments were also recommended to the remaining existing grant provision, and full details of all recommended changes are contained in Section 8 of Report Z362, and incorporated in the revised draft Policy attached as Appendix 1 to that report.
3. In addition, as part of the Council's budget setting process, consideration was given by the working group as to funding requirements for the provision of the grants under the revised policy. The recommendation concerning funding was considered by the Committee as a capital growth bid, and will be brought to Cabinet as part of the wider budget report which will be finalised after the meeting of the Committee on 14 January 2009.
4. The Committee **RECOMMENDS** that subject to the approval of full Council:-
 - (1) **the Homes Assistance Policy 2003 be amended as detailed in Appendix 1 to Report Z362 so as to offer the following assistance:-**
 - (a) **Thermal Comfort Grant: a grant to fund the cost of energy efficiency measures in the homes of owner-occupiers on low incomes but who do not qualify for assistance under the Warm Front scheme;**
 - (b) **Warm Front Top-Up Grant: a grant to fund the additional cost of energy; efficiency measures carried out under the Warm Front scheme where the costs of the measures exceed Warm Front's contribution;**
 - (c) **Healthy Homes Grant: the new grant to remain largely the same as the existing grant but without the energy efficiency element, and subject to the amendment referred to in (2) below;**

- (d) **Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant (Top-Up): the grant to be reinstated;**
 - (e) **Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant (Relocation): the grant to be reinstated;**
 - (f) **Decent Homes Grant: the grant to remain unchanged, and subject to the amendment in (2) below; and**
 - (g) **Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant: other than the introduction of a charge on the property the grant to remain unchanged.**
- (2) **references in the Healthy Homes Grant and the Decent Homes Grant to qualifying benefits, be amended:-**
- (i) **after Child Tax Credit the words 'with an income of less than £15,460' be inserted;**
 - (ii) **after Working Tax Credit the words 'with an income of less than £15,460 and which must include a disability element' be inserted; and**
 - (iii) **the second paragraph be deleted in each case.**
- (3) **the Discretionary Renovation Loan (owner occupiers), Discretionary Renovation Grant (Landlords) and the Private Sector Leasing Grant be removed from the existing Homes Assistance Policy;**
- (4) **other than the Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant, eligible works for the above grants be determined by the Head of Environmental Health and Housing Services; and**
- (5) **Disabled Facilities Grants in respect of owner/occupier applications that exceed £5,000 be subject to a charge on the property for 10 years from the 'certified date' of the grant. The Council will demand the repayment of the grant subject to the conditions specified in the Homes Assistance Policy.**

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