



**Prosperous Communities
Committee**

Tuesday 31st January 2023

Subject: West Lindsey Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) Policy 2023

Report by:

Assistant Director Homes and Communities

Contact Officer:

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Purpose / Summary:

To set out the Disabled Facilities Grant current position and adopt the Disabled Facilities Grant Policy

RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. Members agree to adopt the West Lindsey Disabled Facilities Grant Policy 2023

IMPLICATIONS

Legal:

West Lindsey have a statutory duty under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 to undertake mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants.

In December 2021, the Government published their Adult Social Care reform white paper which sets out a 10-year vision for adult social care and details a number of potential changes to DFG legislation. A full copy of the white paper can be found at the below link with details of the proposed DFG amendments detailed at section 4.2

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1061870/people-at-the-heart-of-care-asc-reform-accessible-with-correction-slip.pdf

(N.B.) Where there are legal implications the report MUST be seen by the MO

Financial : FIN/134/23/SJB

The Council received a grant of £794k for 2022/23, to fund the costs of Disabled Facilities grant works in the district. 15% of the grant is allocated for revenue costs the Council incurs in managing the grant and 85% on the authorised works. During 2022/23 the demand, complexity of requirements and increase in costs has seen the Council contribute an additional £300k from capital receipts and £234k for S106's.

The table below shows the position as at the 31st December, and current projections indicate that the revised budget will be fully spent by the 31st March 23 with an additional £295k of work committed by the 31st of March 23 and completed during 2023/24 which will be funded from 2023/24 grant.

Total Spend	£785,904
Total committed (approved not spent)	£281,234
Total	£1,067,138
Revised Budget available	£1,266,080
Remaining Allocation to the 31 st March	£198,942
Further projected spend	£493,548
Projected to be completed by the 31 st March	£198,942
Projected to be completed after the 1 st April	£294,606

The Council's housing stock had previously been transferred to a Housing Association, this has resulted in the grant being required to cover the work undertaken in these properties as well as the private sector, which otherwise would have been funded from the Housing Revenue Account.

(N.B.) All committee reports MUST have a Fin Ref

Staffing : N/A

(N.B.) Where there are staffing implications the report **MUST** have a HR Ref

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :

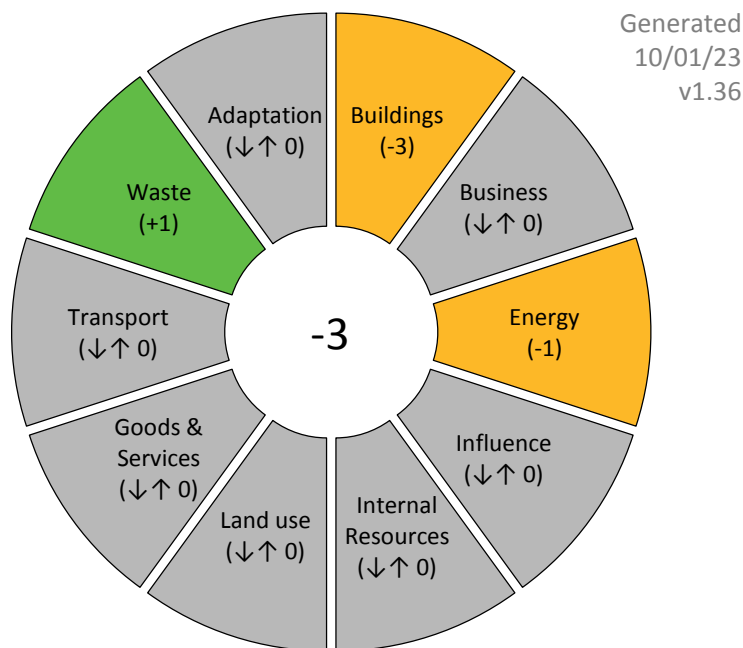
Equality Impact Assessment part 1 undertaken and attached at appendix 2

NB: Please explain how you have considered the policy's impact on different groups (for example: young people, elderly, ethnic minorities, LGBT community, rural residents, disabled, others).

Data Protection Implications :

N/A

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities :



West Lindsey District Council will be net zero by 2050 (26 years and 11 months away).

The way in which adaptations are undertaken is through standard methods of construction which do not take into account the most energy efficient way of working but simply the most cost effective method to ensure the property meets the needs of the disabled client. The budget is set for DFG's from central government and already does not go far enough to meet the needs of all customers, so ensuring value for money and the adaptations are undertaken in the most cost effective way is priority over the method of construction.

Stairlifts can be refurbished and reused when no longer required but they do also require the use of additional energy to utilise.

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations :

N/A

Health Implications:

Adapting a persons home to meet their needs ensures they are able to live safely and independently within their own home. Not only does this have physical health benefits but being in a safe and secure home that meets your needs can also improve your mental health and wellbeing.

DFG's are a preventative tool which ensures people are as safe as they can be in their home environment and reducing the risks of accidents and injury while in the home.

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

Wherever possible please provide a hyperlink to the background paper/s
If a document is confidential and not for public viewing it should not be listed.

Risk Assessment :

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

No

x

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

x

No

1. Introduction

- 1.1 A Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is a means tested grant designed to help meet the costs of adaptations to a property for a disabled occupant. In summary, in order to qualify for a DFG:
- The required adaptations need to be necessary and appropriate (as determined by LCC Adult Social Care) to meet the needs of the disabled person; and
 - It must be reasonable and practicable (as determined by West Lindsey) for the relevant works to be carried out.
- 1.2 The maximum mandatory award for a DFG is £30,000. As this grant is means tested, some people may have to pay a contribution towards the required work themselves. Applications on behalf of disabled children are not subject to a means test.
- 1.3 Funding for DFG's is received from Lincolnshire County Council through the Better Care Fund. The Better Care Fund (BCF) programme supports local systems to successfully deliver the integration of health and social care in a way that supports person-centred care, sustainability and better outcomes for people and carers.

2 Background

- 2.1 In 2018, West Lindsey adopted a Housing Assistance Policy 2018-2022 which detailed not only delivery of mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) but also offered a number of discretionary grants that increased the offer of assistance to disabled people to adapt their homes to meet their needs along with a range of other grants including:
- Hospital discharge grants
 - Resettlement grants
 - Healthy homes grants
- 2.3 In 2018, the DFG budget received from The Better Care fund had been increasing over time and in turn the allocated funding allowed West Lindsey to offer additional financial assistance over and above mandatory grants.

3. Legislative framework

- 3.1 The Housing, Construction and Renewal Act 1996 sets out West Lindsey's statutory duty to deliver DFG's. The act requires West Lindsey to deliver Mandatory DFG's in line with published guidance for local authorities which was updated in March 2022 and can be found at this link <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disabled-facilities-grant-dfg-delivery-guidance-for-local-authorities-in-england>
- 3.2 The Adult Social Care Reform White Paper published in December 2021 proposes some major changes to DFG's including:
- Increasing the upper limit of funding available under a mandatory DFG

- Looking at the way in which DFG funding is allocated to local authorities
- Funding a new service to make minor repairs and changes in people's homes
- Considering how best to align the means test with changing reform.

3.3 To date, there is no timeframe for when any of these proposed amendments will come into place. There was a pledge as part of the release of this white paper that an amended means testing regime would be consulted on in 2022 which is yet to take place.

3.4 In March 2022, The Government released new DFG guidance which brought together a number of documents in one place to set out how mandatory DFG's should be delivered. No amendments have been made to any of the statutory requirements with the new guidance.

4. West Lindsey DFG Position

4.1 The discretionary element of the Housing Assistance Policy 2018-2022 had to be put on hold at the beginning of the 2022 financial year due to funding constraints. The funding has not increased year on year to keep up with high demand for adaptations and ever-increasing costs. The removal of the offer for discretionary grants however has still not provided relief from the budget pressures.

4.2 In November 2022, Corporate Policy and Resources Committee approved £300,000 of West Lindsey reserves to be allocated to delivering mandatory DFG's to mitigate the pressure on the budget. The pressures on the budget at 31st December are as follows:

Total Spend	£785,904
Total committed (approved not spent)	£281,234
Total	£1,067,138
Revised Budget available	£1,266,080
Remaining Allocation to the 31 st March	£198,942
Further projected spend*	£493,548
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*This is a total of the average spend on the type of grant included within the referral.

4.3 There are a number of contributing factors to this additional pressure which include the following:

- Increase in labour costs for contractors
- Increased demand and therefore shortage in supply of contractors which has impacted price
- Shortage and significant increase in material costs
- Improved ways of working after T24 review, speeding up adaptations and creating a bottleneck of approvals meaning more are approved

quicker (this has been built into the above projection of spend for the rest of the year.)

- Increase in the complexities of people’s requirements, both adults and children
- Backlog in Occupational Therapist (OT) referrals meaning peoples health conditions are deteriorating while waiting for assessments and therefore preventing further issues
- Increase in number of referrals from OTs
- Lack of availability for suitable alternative accommodation and leading to the necessity for people to stay in their properties and requiring adaptations

4.4 Many of the above factors are legacy issues that have come from the Covid-19 pandemic which we expected to see reduce by this point but with no clear sign of change on the horizon, if anything, costs of the adaptations in particular are still rising rapidly.

4.5 The main contributing factor to the increase in spend is the cost to deliver the adaptations themselves. The below table shows the increase in grant average per adaptation over the past 4 years.

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Increase	% Increase
Level Access Shower (LAS)	£5,050	£5,100	£5,250	£5,755	£705	14%
Ramp	£4,800	£4,600	£5,350	£5,850	£1,050	21%
Level Threshold door (LAT)		£1,335	£1,550	£1,735	£400	29%
Straight Stair lift	£1,995	£2,080	£2,000	£2,580	£585	29%
Curved Stair lift	£4,400	£4,950	£5,300	£5,280	£880	20%
Through Floor Lift	£11,985	No installs	£11,685	£13,513	£1,555	13%
Wash/ Dry toilet	£4,600	£4,180	£4,500	£6,380	£1,780	39%
Kitchen	No installs	£7,050	£8,000	£10,695	£3,645	52%

4.6 The national DFG budget was set in 2021/2022 at £573m and is planned to remain at that level until 2025. There is no indication this budget is going to increase based on the current financial climate and so it is a sensible assumption that West Lindsey DFG budget will remain at the same level until 2025.

4. West Lindsey DFG Policy 2023

4.1 Lack of funding can not be a reason to refuse or not undertake a mandatory adaptation. With the above detailed budget pressure in mind alongside the pending review of DFG legislation, it would not be a sensible approach to implement a new Housing Assistance Policy which detailed how discretionary grant funding would be awarded.

- 4.2 However, the legislative framework and the guidance documents are both lengthy and open to interpretation, so it is important that West Lindsey has an adopted approach to undertaking mandatory DFG applications. In light of this, officers have developed a Disabled Facilities Grant Policy.
- 4.4 The West Lindsey DFG policy can be found at appendix 1. This policy will give our customers and partners a clear understanding of DFG's in West Lindsey.
- 4.5 The policy will be scheduled for review in three years, however, should there be any major amendments to policy or budget allocations, the policy will be updated accordingly.
- 4.6 Alongside that, should our budget position change and all DFG budget is not being allocated, a discretionary policy will be developed in conjunction with our partners to ensure that residents of West Lindsey can benefit from an extended offer of discretionary grants.

5. Countywide DFG Position

- 5.1 At the meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee on 26th January 2021, members agreed that West Lindsey would work towards the objectives set out in the Homes for Independence Blueprint.
- 5.2 The delivery of the blueprint is overseen by the Housing Health and Care Delivery Group, a subgroup of the Health and Wellbeing Board, tasked with the responsibility of delivering the blueprint delivery plan. Actions are further allocated to working groups, in this instance The Lincolnshire Healthy and Accessible Homes Group.
- 5.2 One of the delivery objectives within the Homes for Independence Blueprint delivery plan states, *"We will maximise the financial resources available to tackle poor housing standards and ensure they are effectively targeted"* and one of the actions under that delivery objective is *"Revisit and complete a countywide discretionary housing assistance policy."*
- 5.3 Whilst West Lindsey has agreed to work towards the objectives within the adopted Blueprint, it is clear at this time due to above detailed budget pressures that West Lindsey DFG funding cannot be extended to deliver on this action and therefore West Lindsey will not be in a position to move forward with collaboration on the Countywide Housing Assistance policy at this time.
- 5.4 Lincolnshire County Council who hold the Better Care Fund have been approached for additional funding to cover the deficit in funding for mandatory grants and potentially allow WLDC to deliver discretionary grants, but no additional funding has been allocated at this time with none committed in the future.

5. Recommendation

- 5.1. Members agree to adopt the West Lindsey Disabled Facilities Grant Policy 2023.**