

**To:** City Executive Board  
**Date:** 23 January 2018  
**Report of:** Head of Planning, Sustainable Development and Regulatory Services  
**Title of Report:** Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptation Policy - Consultation

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	This report seeks approval from members to implement the proposed changes to the Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptation Policy.
<b>Key decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Executive Board Member:</b>	Councillor Mike Rowley, Board Member for Housing
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Meeting housing needs, Strong and active communities, An effective and efficient council.
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Private Sector Housing Policy 2016-19
<b>Recommendation: That the City Executive Board resolves to:</b>	
1. <b>Approve</b> the draft Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptation Policy.	

<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix 1	Current - Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptation Policy 2008
Appendix 2	New - Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptation Policy 2017 – v2
Appendix 3	Risk register
Appendix 4	Equalities Impact Assessment
Appendix 5	New - Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptation Policy 2017 – v3

## **Introduction and background**

1. The first draft of the proposed Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptation Policy was approved for consultation by the City Executive Board on the 18th October 2017.
2. The main proposed changes to the existing policy are to:
  - Create a new discretionary Adapted Homes Grant with a maximum value of £5,000 that is available for DFG applicants without a means test. This is to help people who cannot afford or believe they cannot afford their assessed contribution towards the DFG.
  - Increase the maximum amount for a Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant to £10,000. This is to help the people on low incomes where the costs exceed the £30K grant maximum.
  - Introduce a new discretionary Safe and Secure Grant up to a maximum of £1,000 to reduce falls to vulnerable people and assist with hospital discharge.
2. The consultation took place between 18th October - 16 November 2017 and this report provides information on the response and the proposed changes to the draft policy.

## **Consultation**

3. The consultation was carried out by an on-line questionnaire on our consultation portal.
4. Emails were sent out to all out stakeholder groups who work with our client group with information on the proposal and a link to the consultation with a paper version attached to give out to clients if they prefer.
5. A consultation poster was produced and these were placed in prominent places around the area. We also created an email footer telling people about our consultation both gave clients the opportunity to respond on-line, by post or in person.
6. Emails were sent out to all members asking them to let their constituents know about the consultation and outlining the proposals, again a paper copy was given in case people wanted to respond using this method.
7. At various events we attended we gave out flyers outlining the consultation, giving the link and paper copies of the consultation. We also took paper copies out to any clients we visited over this period to enable them to respond.

## **Headline results**

8. The main findings of the policy are as follows:
9. Q1 - 91% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the aims of the new policy are contribute to reducing hospital admissions and speeding up hospital discharge.
10. Q2 - 91% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Council should increase the Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant from £5K to £10K, to reflect the increase in building costs since the initial policy in 2008.

11. Q3 - 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Council should create a new Safe and Secure grant to help reduce falls for the most vulnerable people of Oxford City.

12. Q4 - 59% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Council should create a new discretionary Adapted Homes Grant (Section 4) with no means testing. 28% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with this question.

a) Comments received with this question include the following:

- (i) "I believe this will significantly contribute to the aim of reducing hospital admissions/enabling discharge. Will speed up applications. Will also reduce the number of clients who withdraw from DFG process on financial grounds and as a result remain at high risk of injury or other risks to health that could result in hospital admission"
- (ii) I disagree somewhat with regards to this. If someone can afford the adaptations (and the means test used for the DFG is fit for purpose) then why should they not pay. Also If there is surplus money, could we not offer extended warranties; service and maintenance on items being installed."

b) In answer to (ii) The government has agreed that the DFG means test is outdated and not fit for purpose as it has been unchanged since 1996. They have asked that local council address this using their powers under the RRO in order to meet local priorities.

13. Q5 - 54% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the maximum value of or the Adapted Homes Grant should be £5,000. 14% Disagreed or strongly disagreed with this question.

a) Comments received with this question include the following:

- (i) Do you need to look back at how many cases needed stairlift AND bathroom adaptations (a common combination) as £5K would not cover cost of both"
- (ii) A Level access shower or curved stairlift can hit the £5000 mark, perhaps needs to be 6K or 7K to enable 1 adaptation"

14. In 2016/17 we had 6 double adaptations at an average cost of £6,791.92, In 2017/18 we had 7 double adaptations at an average cost of £7,090.10.

15. In response to the comments made in the consultation we are proposing an amendment to the maximum Adapted Homes Grant to £8K to cover these occasional double adaptations, the additional cost impact will be small and we currently have extensive funds to cover this increase. In addition, the Adapted Homes Grant is a discretionary grant so it can be withdrawn at any time if funds are limited.

## Recommendations

16. Following the consultation we are asking the board to consider approving the draft Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptation Policy with the following change:.
- a) Amend the maximum Adapted Homes Grant to £8K
17. In addition, it will be made more explicit in the introduction to the policy that the HIA, as required by the contract with the Oxfordshire County Council, will offer advice and information to older, disabled and vulnerable clients regardless of whether they are eligible for financial assistance.

## Financial implications

18. The Council is duty bound to approve complete mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) applications. The Council has not contributed towards the DFG budget since 2015 as all the funding for DFG now comes from the Better Care Fund (BCF).
19. The expectation is that the increased funding provided to the Council will be used in innovative ways to meet the aims of the BCF to reduce costs especially around hospital admissions and delayed discharge. The primary reason for updating the policy is to enable the council to fully spend and commit its funding allocation under the BCF. There financial implications are that the Council will have a more flexible policy to enable increased spending to help people in accordance with the aims of the Council and the BCF.
20. No additional staff will be required to deliver the proposed changes and the costs of management and administration of the grants are covered by the fund.
21. The future budget for discretionary housing assistance provided to the Council from the Government has yet to be decided and will form part of the 2018/19 budget process.

## Legal issues

22. No legal issues have been identified.

## Level of risk

23. A risk register is attached as Appendix 3.

## Equality Impact Assessment

24. An EIA has been completed and attached as Appendix 4

<b>Report author</b>	Becky Bell
Job title	HIA Manager
Service area or department	Planning, Sustainable Development and Regulatory Services
Telephone	01865 529192
e-mail	<a href="mailto:rbell@oxford.gov.uk">rbell@oxford.gov.uk</a>

**Background Papers: None**

- 1 [http://insight.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/system/files/documents/20160329\\_Needs%20Analysis%20for%20Older%20People%20in%20Oxfordshire\\_FINAL.pdf](http://insight.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/system/files/documents/20160329_Needs%20Analysis%20for%20Older%20People%20in%20Oxfordshire_FINAL.pdf)
- 2 <http://wwwFOUNDATIONS.UK.com/media/4718/preparing-a-policy-under-the-regulatory-reform-order-formatted.pdf>
- 3 [https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/field\\_publication\\_file/exploring-system-wide-costs-of-falls-in-torbay-kingsfund-aug13.pdf](https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/field_publication_file/exploring-system-wide-costs-of-falls-in-torbay-kingsfund-aug13.pdf)
- 4 <https://www.rcn.org.uk/-/media/royal-college-of-nursing/documents/publications/2007/november/pub-002771.pdf>
- 5 <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/bcf-planning-requirements-faqs.pdf>

This page is intentionally left blank