

**Decision Session – Cabinet Member for  
Health, Housing and Adult Social Services**

**13<sup>th</sup> June 2013**

Report of Steve Waddington, AD, Housing and Community Safety

**Private Sector Assistance Policy**

**Summary**

1. To request the amendment of the Private Sector Assistance Policy to ensure that we are targeting our assistance to help those who have limited financial means especially disabled people, older people and children and young persons

Recommendation: to adopt the proposed Private Sector Assistance Policy

**Background**

- 2 The Cabinet Member approved the last private assistance policy in June 2011 and it is overdue for review. The proposal seeks to amend the policy by recognising:
  - a) The significant changes to funding of energy efficiency measures with the launch of the Green Deal and the complimentary energy company obligation (ECO) by withdrawing the two energy efficiency grants. It should be noted that work continues both locally and regionally to develop an interim scheme which aims to deliver the ECO whilst the Leeds City Region Green Deal model is developed to be launched next year.
  - b) That Children’s Social Care provides support to a small cohort of children and young people, whose have exceptional complex health or additional health needs in relation to their behavioural difficulties. Support is offered to these young people by The Family Intervention Rapid Support Team (FIRST) programme is a joint initiative between Children’s Social Care at City of York and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service at Lime Trees. It has a primary aim of identifying family situations in which there are

young people with learning disabilities and particularly challenging behaviour. Referrals for FIRST intervention with a Clinical Psychologist are considered by the Joint Agency Panel. The secondary aim is to devise a programme of support, which enables the young person and parents to find ways to reduce the effect of the challenging behaviour upon the overall family functioning. The desired outcome is to reduce the likelihood of a disruption for the young person in their care at home or their school placement. This may be achieved by the coordination of a range of services and provision from all agencies involved with the young person and family.

The FIRST programme has been running for 18 months and it will be funded for a further 3 years. It is envisaged that the Clinical Psychologist will work with approx 6 young people and their families intensively. There have been 12 young people, who have been supported by a FIRST intervention. There have been 2 instances in which the provision has included an application for a DFG grant. These have been successful interventions, which have contributed to the avoidance of local disruption and the need for a high cost out of city placement. There has been 1 instance thus far, where the proposed adaptation was not eligible under DFG criteria, while the outcome of providing the adaptation would significantly assist the local package of support. It is envisaged that there will be approximately 1 instances per annum, in which an adaptation may be positively indicated, but it would fall outside the DFG criteria. It is intended to set a cap of £15k as the adaptations, which don't fall under Disabled Facilities Grant are mainly to social spaces in family homes, which should not reach the higher costs of bedrooms and bathrooms.

- c) We have helped disabled applicants or families with disabled children move to more suitable homes which either require no adaptations or are significantly easier to adapt. Some of these grants have been quite significant, the largest being over £25k. The proposed amendment seeks to bring the grant in line with other repayment conditions attached to grant aid, by attaching a 10 year grant repayment condition (there is currently no time repayment condition) which would mean that the grant should be repaid if the applicant move within that period.
- d) The changes to the auto qualifying criteria as a result of the coalition government's welfare reform.

## **Consultation**

- 3 There has been limited to consultation with officers from Adult, Children and Education and City and Environment Services but takes account of work at regional level regarding the Green Deal/ECO.

## **Options**

4. The options available to the Cabinet Member are:

### **Option 1.**

To revise the existing policy in line with this review including the:

- i. Withdrawal of the energy efficiency grants available from the council following the launch of the Green Deal and the Energy Company Obligation.
- ii. A change to the eligibility criteria for the discretionary adaptations grant to help support young persons identified by the FIRST programme
- iii. To attach 10 year repayment conditions to grant assistance to help disabled applicants move to a more suitable conditions.
- iv. To amend the auto qualifying means tested benefit regarding council tax benefit to Local Council Tax support and continue to keep under the review the proposed changes as the Universal Credit is phased in for York residents from early 2014 to 2017.

**Option 2** - Maintain the current policy with no revisions

**Option 3** to amend the above proposals

## **Analysis**

- 5 Option 1 enables the councils to provide a grants and assistance policy which maximises our resources by ensuring that the range of grants is brought along side other grants and support offered by the council and its partners.
6. Option 2 without the changes to Private Sector Assistance Policy we will not be able to legally deliver a programme. The programme

will not be able to help vulnerable families and compliment the first programme.

## **Council Plan**

7. The Private Sector Assistance Policy considered in this report is directly relevant to the Council Plan priorities of
  - Building Strong Communities,
  - Protecting Vulnerable People and
  - Protect the Environment.
  
8. The Council Plan recognises that more people will live for longer in their own homes and it is important to ensure that there continues to be a focus on independence through the disabled facilities grant and complimentary adaptations programme. The amendment to include adaptations for young persons who are supported by the FIRST programme particularly aims to support families who may be struggling with children with very complex behavioural difficulties. In addition this revised policy seeks to maximise the funding available through national programmes such as the Green Deal and by recycling the limited funding available to maximise the number of vulnerable residents which we can help.

## **Implications**

- **Financial** – To be delivered within resource which have already been identified.
  
- **Human Resources (HR)** – There are no human resources implications
  
- **Equalities** An Equalities Impact Assessment was completed for the Private Sector Housing Strategy 2008-13. It is intended that a further assessment will be completed when the strategy is refreshed later this year. This revised policy is in line with the outcome of the current strategy in that it aims to help those people in need those on the lowest incomes, disabled, the elderly or those who have children under the age of 5.
  
- **Human rights** – There are no human rights implications

- **Legal**- It is a legal obligation for the council to review its grants and assistance policy
- **Crime and Disorder**-There are no Crime and disorder implications
- **Information Technology (IT)** – There are no IT implications
- **Property** – There are no direct property implications
- **Other**- There are no other implications

### **Risk Management**

9. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy there are no risks associated with Option's 1 or 2 of this report. The main risk that has been identified in this report is not maximising the funding available to the residents of York

### **Recommendations**

10. Cabinet Member is asked to approve Option 1 as set out in paragraph 4 to review the existing policy.

Reason: So that the council can continue to improve the health and safety and wellbeing of residents who want to remain independent in their own home. To encourage the private sector housing stock to be maintained, reducing the carbon emissions and maximising existing housing stock.

## Contact Details

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### Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

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Report  
Approved

Date 30/5/13

**Specialist Implications Officer(s)** *List information for all*

**Wards Affected:**

All

**For further information please contact the author of the report**

**Background Papers:**

**Annex 1 the revised Private Sector Assistance Policy**