

Bolsover District Council

Meeting of the Executive on 31st July 2023

Disabled Facilities Grant Application

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Health & Licensing

Classification	This report is public
Report By	Ken Eastwood Joint Assistant Director, Environmental Health
Contact Officer	Samantha Bentley Service Manager, Environmental Health

PURPOSE/SUMMARY OF REPORT

To give consideration to the use of discretionary powers to provide additional funding as a top up to a mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). A Mandatory DFG has a maximum ceiling of £30,000. The award of any additional funding is discretionary and hence referred to as a Discretionary DFG.

The requests for discretionary funding are very rare. However, due to the increased cost of works, it is now becoming far more common for the cost of works to exceed the £30,000 maximum.

REPORT DETAILS

1. Background

- 1.1 A mandatory grant of £19,970.06 has already been completed. The remaining works to carry out bathroom adaptations are to the value of £11,787.20, which would take the total cost to £31,757.26. As the cost of carrying out works to a suitable standard exceeds the maximum amount, the Council has the power to add to it by providing a grant or a loan.
- 1.2 Officers cannot make this discretionary decision and the Council should not fetter its discretion by simply stating that it does not consider the provision of top-up grants.
- 1.3 The need to consider discretionary funding is very rare. As costs of work have increased, it is becoming more common for standard DFGs to exceed the cost of £30,000. In respect of adaptations for adults, charitable grants can sometimes be found for small contributions, or the family often help with the top up costs.

2. Details of Proposal or Information

Purpose of the grant

- 2.1 Elements of a mandatory DFG have already been completed. These works included a step lift and a stairlift. The step-lift is to allow access in and out of the property and the stairlift now allows access to the bedroom.
- 2.2 The further works required are to provide ground floor bathroom adaptations, including a level access shower. However, the floor level needs to be changed to remove a step and so the costs are higher than normal due to these additional works.

Applicant and property circumstances

- 2.3 The service user qualifies for mandatory DFG with no financial contribution to make, due to being in receipt of a 'passporting benefit'. This is a means tested benefit.
- 2.4 The service user is an amputee with various health issues, who lives alone in a private rented property.
- 2.5 The landlord has given their permission for all works to be completed in order to allow the tenant to 'remain in his home safely and live with dignity'.

Costs

- 2.6 A tender exercise undertaken by the Disability Design Team at Derbyshire County Council has been undertaken for all items of work required and prices are within the estimated costs.

Considerations

- 2.7 The maximum mandatory grant of £30,000 has been in place for many years and has not been amended to reflect increases in the cost of materials and workmanship. However, we understand this is nationally under review and subject to lobbying.
- 2.8 Under the current development of a new private sector housing strategy, discretionary interventions will be considered and one such intervention may be the proposal to provide some amount of top up grants on Mandatory DFGs to reflect the higher costs associated with many adaptations.
- 2.9 Provision of top up funding has not previously been provided in this way as small amounts of top up funding can normally be found via charitable grants and client contributions. By awarding top up funding, this may set a precedent for future cases. However, this is an area of increasing need, and the annual budget gives more than sufficient scope to provide this discretionary award and any future applications.
- 2.10 As the property is privately rented, the Mandatory DFG does not have any repayment liability should the tenant leave. However, in the case of

discretionary DFG, a condition could be imposed requiring the top up funding to be repaid should the tenant choose to leave the property.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 The provision of top up funding by grant, would mean that the customer can have the remaining works completed, making the works that have already been completed worthwhile. As the value of the top up funding is quite low, this could be awarded as grant, negating the need to enter into charges and administrative duties which may make the total income versus costs negligible.

4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 4.1 We have tried to identify other sources of funding from charitable grants but have been unable to identify anything appropriate.
- 4.2 The provision of top up discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant could be refused. The provision of further funding is completely discretionary.
- 4.3 A further top up loan could be provided to cover the remaining costs of the works. The provision of top up funding by loan, would mean that the customer can have the remaining necessary works completed to their property, making the works already completed worthwhile. A condition could be imposed which requires the top up funding to be repaid within a fixed period of time, where the tenant chooses to leave the property.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That a top up grant be provided in this case, with those costs above the £30,000 grant ceiling being awarded to cover the total costs of the remaining works.

Approved by Councillor Anne Clarke, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Health and Licensing

IMPLICATIONS:

Finance and Risk: Yes No

Details:

Should it be approved, the costs of this further top-up grant would be financed from the Disabled Facilities Grant budget held by the Council. It would form part of the capital programme and be added to the medium-term financial plan.

On behalf of the Section 151 Officer

Legal (including Data Protection): Yes No

Details:

As support is discretionary there are no legal obligations to provide a grant. The Council does need to act reasonably when exercising any discretion.

On behalf of the Solicitor to the Council

Environment: Yes No

Please identify (if applicable) how this proposal/report will help the Authority meet its carbon neutral target or enhance the environment.

Details: Not Applicable

Staffing: Yes No

Details:

There are no staffing implications contained within this report

On behalf of the Head of Paid Service

DECISION INFORMATION

Is the decision a Key Decision? A Key Decision is an executive decision which has a significant impact on two or more District wards or which results in income or expenditure to the Council above the following thresholds: BDC: Revenue - £75,000 <input type="checkbox"/> Capital - £150,000 <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Please indicate which threshold applies</i>	No
Is the decision subject to Call-In? <i>(Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)</i>	No

District Wards Significantly Affected	None
Consultation: Leader / Deputy Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Executive <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SLT <input type="checkbox"/> Relevant Service Manager <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Members <input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes Details: Portfolio Holder and Chief Executive

Links to Council Ambition: Customers, Economy and Environment

Promoting equality and diversity and supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged people

DOCUMENT INFORMATION

Appendix No	Title

Background Papers

(These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below.)