

Report To:	CABINET	Date:	10TH SEPTEMBER 2018
Heading:	AIDS & ADAPTATIONS POLICY		
Portfolio Holder:	COUNCILLOR JOHN WILMOTT – CABINET MEMBER (OUTWARD)		
Ward/s:	ALL		
Key Decision:	YES		
Subject to Call-In:	YES		

Purpose of Report

To advise Members of the Council's approach to assisting residents who require an aid or adaptation to their home to help them retain their independence and to seek approval of the associated Aids and Adaptations Policy.

Recommendation(s)

To approve the Aids & Adaptations Policy, as attached at appendix A

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

The Council is keen to ensure that residents are given the assistance they need to remain independent in their home for as long as practically possible.

The Council understands that not only does this protect the wellbeing and dignity of residents, it also reduces demand on other public sector services, such as hospitals, nursing and residential care.

Underlying this commitment is a need for a clear and transparent Policy. Residents, health professionals, officers and Members all need to be aware of who we can assist and in what ways we can assist.

This new Policy brings together existing policies and practices within one document. It also introduces changes to existing ways of working to try and ensure a level of consistency across all tenures.

Alternative Options Considered

(with reasons why not adopted)

To continue with a Disabled Facilities Grants Policy for private sector residents and a separate Policy for Ashfield District Council tenants. This was rejected because operating two separate policies is not to the benefit of residents or to the efficiency of the service. Both policies were also in need of updating.

Detailed Information

The Aids and Adaptations Policy, as attached at appendix A, sets out the support the Council is able to offer disabled residents who need help to remain independent in their home.

Ideally, we would have a uniform approach across all tenures and the same help would be available if you were a private sector resident or a council tenant. However, the legislation, regulations and funding associated with adapting private homes is different to that associated with Council properties and therefore the Policy is split into 2 separate sections. Part 1 deals with aids and adaptations to private sector properties. Part 2 deals with adapting Council properties.

Where possible we have tried to align the two sections with there being common principles and criteria to ensure a fair and consistent approach across all tenures.

Part 1 of the Policy, support to private sector residents through Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) is very much based upon existing rules and regulations. All local authorities have a statutory responsibility to deliver DFG's and so practice and processes are well established. The only area of flexibility relates to the discretionary DFG, which is a top up grant of up to £10,000 for large scale works that exceed the maximum statutory grant of £30,000.

The DFG process works very well. The Council's DFG Team works closely with Nottinghamshire County Council's Occupational Therapy Service to deliver circa 100 property adaptations per year. The service is funded by Better Care Funding, which is awarded by Central Government and administered by Nottinghamshire County Council.

Part 2 of the Policy, relating to adapting Council properties, is a locally agreed service. This section of the Policy has been written to reflect local needs and ensures we are helping as many residents as possible whilst remaining within budget. The demand for adaptations is high and consistently exceeds the limited budget available, meaning the Policy needs to be clear on who we can help and who we cannot.

Within Part 2 there are a number of changes to existing practices, including an intention to conduct a test of resources (means test) for applicants, the introduction of additional rent charges when an adaptation has increased the property footprint (property extension) and the implementation of service charges to cover ongoing servicing and maintenance costs associated with adaptations. These changes should ensure we are achieving value for money and assisting those tenants in most need.

Within Part 2 there is a focus on making the best use of the Council stock and utilising properties with pre-existing adaptations to meet the needs of residents. This is not always possible and the Policy explains the process the Council will follow in these exceptional circumstances.

Consultation on the new Aids and Adaptations Policy has been conducted with the Council's Tenant Gateway group and the County Council's Occupational Therapy Service. Their feedback and comments have been incorporated into the final version. Tenants were in broad support of Part 2, our approach to adapting Council properties, including the changes outlined above.

Implications

Corporate Plan:

This policy supports the council housing vision to: "ensure the population of Ashfield are living in or can access homes that are affordable, warm and within a safe community that promotes the health and wellbeing of residents"

Legal:

The provision of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) is mandatory under the provisions of Section 23 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.

Finance:

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	N/A
General Fund – Capital Programme	Section 1 costs are met through DFG's in the Council's Capital Programme.
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	N/A
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	Section 2 costs are met via the HRA Capital Programme.

Risk:

Risk	Mitigation

Human Resources:

Equalities:

This policy has a positive impact for older and/or disabled residents as it provides them with assistance to live independently, feel safe and/or improve the thermal comfort of their home.

Other Implications:

(if applicable)

Reason(s) for Urgency

(if applicable)

Reason(s) for Exemption

(if applicable)

Background Papers

(if applicable)

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