

Subject:	Housing Adaptations and Investment update		
Date of Meeting:	4 March 2015		
Report of:	Executive Director Environment, Development & Housing		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Sarah Potter	Tel: 29- 0789
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 The report provides an update on Council and private sector housing adaptations investment highlighting capital funding pressures and action taken to mitigate these following Housing Committee approved recommendations 10 September 2014.
- 1.2 The report also provides an update on the proactive work being done to better manage the demand for major adaptations in Council and private sector homes in the context of the rising demand enabling disabled adults and children to live as independently as possible at home for as long as possible, and the cost benefit of timely adaptations (Better Outcomes, Lower Costs – ODI/University of Bristol).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Housing Committee note the capital expenditure to date and commitments going forward, the action taken to mitigate pressures this year and next and the role of the Better Care Board in monitoring the allocation to the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) from 2015/16.
- 2.2 That Housing Committee note the proactive work being done to better manage demand in both Council and private sector housing and the role of the Housing Adaptations Service in making the best use of the Council's existing housing stock and opportunities to increase the supply of accessible Council housing.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Housing Adaptations Service improves the quality of life for those with physical disabilities and older people and their families and carers by enabling independent living through assessment and delivery of appropriate disabled housing adaptations and assistance across all tenures in the City. The Service discharges Council statutory housing duties, including Community Care Act & Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act requirements in relation to delivery of major housing adaptations.

3.2 Brighton & Hove has a rising demand for housing adaptations in the City as people live longer with more complex needs. £2.16m was spent on delivering 1,229 housing adaptations (Council & Private sector) in 2014/15 - including 436 major adaptations (over £1,000). The 'Better outcomes, lower costs' (ODI/ University of Bristol 2007) report and Audit Commission (2009) 'Building Better lives – getting the best from strategic housing', provide the evidence that investment in housing adaptations brings significant savings to Health and Social Care budgets, reducing residential care, hospital admissions and delayed discharges. The Audit Commission (2009) 'Building Better Lives – getting the best from strategic housing' found that spending between £2,000 and £20,000 on adaptations that enable an elderly person to remain in their own home can save £6,000 per year in care cost.

3.3 This work reduces pressures on more costly residential or supported care that would otherwise be required through children's or adults social care services and supports the following priorities in the draft Corporate Plan 2015-19 to help us deliver "*A good life - Ensuring a city for all ages, inclusive of everyone and protecting the most vulnerable*":

- Coordinate services and spending better between public services to improve equality, for example through the Health & Wellbeing Board and the Local Housing Investment Plan.
- Invest in early intervention and prevention for vulnerable families to ensure better long term outcomes and reduce the cost of expensive interventions once families reach crisis.
- Keeping children and young people safe, at home and in learning and social environments.
- Providing better care services for older and vulnerable people, focused on personal choice and staying independent.
- Ensuring the city's housing stock is well managed and good quality, to support independence, health and wellbeing, and avoid homelessness.

3.4 As part of ensuring our housing stock delivers value for money by ensuring new wheelchair housing and refurbished homes are built around the needs of the future resident(s) and the Service contributes to the following strategic actions in the draft Housing Strategy 2015:

- Work with occupational therapists and social workers to ensure that family properties are allocated and adapted in a co-ordinated manner.
- Remodel sheltered housing to ensure that it supports the right people and improves social networks and well being.
- Continue to renovate sheltered schemes to convert studios into one bed homes.
- Ensure that adaptations are done at the right time to support people to stay in their homes when they want to.

Housing Committee (14 January 2015) delegated authority to the Executive Director Environment, Development & Housing to take all steps necessary and incidental to implement the Strategy. This will include finalising our Local Housing Investment Plan, which aligned with HRA Asset Management Strategy, will review the scope for some pro-active adaptation of existing HRA stock to meet Life-time Homes and wheelchair accessibility criteria. This is aligned to our Housing Strategy commitment to further explore how Housing can work in

partnership with health, social care and voluntary sector providers to meet shared priorities, keeping all options under review.

- 3.5 Housing Committee 18 June and 10 September considered update reports on the outturn in 2013/14 and commitments in 2014/15 and options to mitigate the future capital funding pressures identified, particularly on the Disabled Facilities Grant.
- 3.6 In September Committee approved a number of recommendations including consulting with housing association partners to seek a greater contribution from them toward the overall cost of adaptations to their homes, greater use of the Adaptations Framework to achieve better value for grant and the Health & Wellbeing Board monitoring the allocation for the DFG as part of the governance arrangements for all schemes in the Better Care Fund. Committee also approved the consultation with Council tenants and key stakeholders on the introduction of an adaptations policy for Council tenants.
- 3.7 The total DFG adaptations budget for 2014/15 is £1.075m funded by Central Government Grant (£0.751m), re-profiled budgets (£0.137m) and a contribution from private sector housing capital programme (£0.186m). In addition, in certain circumstances DFG applicants who are required to make a contribution to (all or part of) the cost of the works may qualify for financial assistance under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 (CSDP) and this is funded by Adult Social Care (£0.100m). The September report to Committee highlighted the commitments against the DFG already exceeding the 2014/15 budget.
- 3.8 The current DFG spend is £1,120,944 with a forecast spend at year end £1.2m. Therefore, there is currently a forecast overspend of £0.125m for 2014/15.
- 3.9 To mitigate pressures this year all new DFG approvals are on terms that payment of the grant, or part of it, will not be made before the new financial year
- 3.10 The Better Care Fund is created from 2015-16 and includes £220m DFG funding, the indicative allocation in Brighton & Hove £0.911m. The Health & Well Being Board on 9 December 2015 considered, 'Housing Adaptations Update – Extract from the Proceedings of the Housing Committee meeting held on 10 September 2014' and resolved 'that the Board agrees that the allocation for the Disabled Facilities Grant will be monitored by the HWB as part of the governance arrangements for all schemes in the Better Care Fund'.
- 3.11 The level of commitments (grants approved but not yet paid) currently stands at £1.12 m, for 2015/16. Given that the budget for 2015/16 is currently £0.911m, this means that not only is there a pressure in the current financial year, but going forward also.
- 3.12 To mitigate pressures going forward all eight of our housing association partners in the City have been contacted with the proposals to seek a contribution from them toward the cost of major adaptations. These negotiations are at a preliminary stage. Based on the DFG investment in 2014 and a 40% contribution from each of the eight partners and largest housing associations in the City the contribution is estimated at £0.217m as outlined in the table below.

Applicant	DFG investment 2014	40% contribution sought based on overall costs
Affinity Sutton	£226,715.48	£90,686
Hanover	£1,845	
Anchor	£9,892.46	
Amicus Horizon	£25,682.67	£10,273
BHSCH:	£6,737.94	
Brighton Lions	£5,504.25	
Guinness	£41,851.89	£16,740
Hyde Martlett	£73,337.14	£29,334
MOAT	£56,663.91	£22,665
Orbit	£27,750.95	£11,100
Places for People	£9,974.12	
Raglan	£5,306.22	
Sanctuary	£72,107.70	£28,843
Southern Housing Group	£17,839.90	£7,135
Sussex Housing and Care	£18,784.81	
TOTAL	£599,994.44	£216,776

- 3.13 In terms of delivery options, greater use of the Council's Adaptations Framework for private sector work would improve the value for grant and speed up delivery from Occupational Therapy assessment to completion of works. Negotiation with the local Home Improvement Agency (HIA), who provides the technical support to DFG applicants, has resulted in the first works being ordered through the Framework. In 2015/16 the Housing Adaptations Service will monitor the HIA's use of the Framework to see it maximises the value and capacity provided for private sector work.
- 3.14 Last year in Council homes where the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) funds adaptations, Housing invested £1,194,849. The HRA Adaptations budget for 2014/15 is £1.150m.
- 3.15 The current HRA Adaptations budget spend is £0.885m and year end forecast £1.150m. Rising demand and the disproportionately high rate of referrals into the Housing Adaptations Service for Council tenants (9.8% of the housing stock in the city accounts for over 50% of referrals) is reflected in the number of Council adaptations delivered and the level of investment.
- 3.16 Committee approved the consultation with tenants and stakeholders and this work, linked to the Housing Strategy, will start in the new financial year. Although the main DFG budget cannot be used for the funding of adaptations to local authority properties the DFG framework and mandatory aspect of the grant applies across the tenures. The draft policy for consultation will reflect the DFG guidance setting out the type of work the HRA adaptations funding can cover, although it is not proposed to introduce means testing for Council tenants.
- 3.17 The Housing Adaptations Service also works pro-actively to manage the demand for adaptations and making best use of the Council's own housing stock, through:

- Monthly case review with the Home Improvement Agency (HIA) also providing a broader housing options advice and support service (target reduction in the demand for DFG funded adaptations by 10%);
- Close links with Housing Development and Planning colleagues on accessible housing design, informing local Planning policy and commissioning new build wheelchair adapted housing under the Affordable Housing Development Programme working in partnership with the Homes & Communities Agency, Registered Providers and private developers, in addition to working closely with the Estate Regeneration Team on delivering new accessible council homes. Ensuring adaptations likely to cost over £10k are scrutinised at a multi-disciplinary Major Adaptations Panel which provides support around the clinical reasoning and decision making and input from Homemove to consider housing options.
- The Service dedicating OT hours to support the Homemove and letting teams, accompanying applicants to viewings of Council properties making the best use of the existing housing stock and investment in adaptations.
- Via other mainstream capital investment programmes include collaboration on sheltered housing refurbishments and Decent Homes and the Loft and Extensions project, relieving overcrowding and providing adaptations. (2013/14 contribution £0.066m from Housing Adaptations Service).
- Investment in increasing the supply of accessible Council homes as part of the empty homes investment, identifying properties suitable to adapt.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 Alternative options to the recommendations approved by Committee in September were set out in the September Update Report.
- 4.2 Committee noted that without reviewing alternative funding and delivery options it was likely that the capital provision will be fully spent and defer grant approvals and the payment of grants.
- 4.3 The scope to include fully adapting for wheelchair use some Council properties identified as being 'suitable to adapt' when they become empty for re-letting could be considered based on evidence of the level of demand on the Housing Register. The Housing Adaptations Service has begun a mapping exercise of those areas in the City most suitable to adapt and taken this to the Tenants Disability Network (TDN) to get greater resident involvement in identifying the most suitable to adapt Council homes. This would extend the scope and provision of the pilot in 2013/14. Analysis of the demand for wheelchair accessible homes and the cost benefit of delivering through the empty home route rather than in response to a Community Care Act assessment for a particular client would need to be explored.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Initial community engagement has been carried out with the Tenants Disability Network on both the mapping exercise (special meeting convened 19/1/15), and the intention to consult through Area Panels on the introduction of an Adaptations Policy for Council tenants (agenda item at TDN meetings 15/12/14 and 2/2/15).
- 5.2 An initial contact has been sent to the eight housing association partners we are seeking to negotiate with on their greater contribution toward the overall costs of adapting their homes.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Committee is asked to note the update on investment and the action taken to mitigate the capital funding pressures following Housing Committee approved recommendations 10 September.
- 6.2 Committee note the Health & Wellbeing Board accept the recommendation to monitor the allocation to the DFG as part of the governance of all schemes under Better Care from 2015/16.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 The report outlines the various changes in the funding for Housing Adaptations within the general fund. For 2014/15, the budget for Disabled Adaptations totals £1.075m which has been funded by re-profiled budgets of £0.137m (money not spent last year); Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) funding of £0.751m and a contribution from the Renovation Grant capital budget of £0.187m. For 2015/16 the current funding is £0.911m (a reduction in budget of £0.164) which is the indicative amount of DFG for Brighton and Hove, now held within the Better Care Fund. The report outlines the various measures being taken to reduce costs and increase funding. These form part of an action plan to tackle this problem and alleviate the financial pressures going forward.
- 7.2 At a time that the service is seeing a potential reduction in future funding, there is also a likely overspend of £0.125m in 2014/15. Action is already being taken to reduce this potential overspend using the measures outlined in this report and by minimising spend over the last weeks of the financial year, where possible. If resources cannot be identified to fund this overspend, it will have to be funded from 2015/16 DFG resources, thereby further reducing the amount available for 2015/16.

Finance Officer Consulted: Monica Brooks Date: 20/02/15

Legal Implications:

- 7.3 The Housing, Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 governs Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs). The grants are mandatory and are available from local housing authorities such as the council for essential adaptations to give disabled

people better freedom of movement into and around their homes and to give access to essential facilities within the home. A local housing authority cannot approve an application for a DFG unless they are satisfied

- (a) that the relevant works are necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled occupant, and
- (b) that it is reasonable and practicable to carry out the relevant works having regard to the age and condition of the dwelling.

A local housing authority must notify an applicant for a grant as soon as reasonably practicable, and, in any event, not later than six months after the date of the application concerned, whether the application is approved or refused. The maximum grant that can be paid is £30,000. It is means tested. Where the costs of the eligible works exceed the £30,000 grant limit, the council may use its discretionary powers under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002.

A council must give a written decision on a grant application within 6 months. As part of the approval, the council is entitled to approve it on terms that payment will not be made before a date specified in the notification of their decision on the application, which cannot be more than 12 months later. Approving a grant as set out in paragraph 3.9 is therefore within the council's powers."

Lawyer Consulted: *Name Liz Woodley* *Date: 16/02/15*

Equalities Implications:

- 7.4 The action taken to mitigate the pressures on the DFG, the greater contribution toward costs from housing association landlords, the greater use of Adaptations Framework and monitoring of the Better Care Fund allocation to the DFG from 2015/16 will, if realised, protect and continue to prioritise the funding for private sector housing adaptations enabling older and disabled people to live as independently as possible for as long as possible in their own homes. The risk if not realised is that disabled adults and children will wait longer for grant approvals and essential adaptations work to start and be completed increasing the risk of falls and injury in the home, avoidable admissions to hospital, early entry into residential care and higher packages of care with implications for Health and Social Care budgets.
- 7.5 The introduction of an adaptations policy for Council tenants and the associated community engagement and consultation, will ensure greater clarity and parity with the DFG framework regarding the type of work that the HRA Adaptations budget can cover and where the Council cannot be satisfied the work is both necessary and appropriate, reasonable and practicable taking into consideration the characteristic of the property, those circumstances in which adaptations may be not be approved and the housing options, advice and support that is available.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.6 Action taken to mitigate the pressures identified help ensure the delivery of timely adaptations and the continued investment in the social housing stock in the City. This investment meets the needs of the current and future occupiers where rented homes are re-let through the Council's Homemove scheme and given the

appropriate mobility rating; mobility properties ring fenced to those on the Housing Register with a matching need.

- 7.7 The introduction of an adaptations policy for Council tenants will help to ensure that the investment is in the suitable to adapt property.
- 7.8 The pro-active work to commission Lifetime and wheelchair accessible homes and makes the best use of new and sustainable materials and technologies and the pro-active work to invest in the Council housing stock will avoid waste and duplication of repair and adaptations.

Any Other Significant Implications:

- 7.9 These are included in the body of the report where possible.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. None.

Documents in Members' Rooms

1. None.

Background Documents

1. None.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 1.1 None.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 1.2 These are included in the body of the report where possible.

Public Health Implications:

- 1.3 The delivery of housing adaptations contributes to the independent living agenda, promotes choice and independence enabling disabled adults and children to live as independently as possible, managing the risk of injuries and falls within the homes by facilitating access to or provision of essential facilities such as an accessible bathroom for safe bathing and toileting, kitchen for the preparation of food, safe access in to and out of the home and the provision of adequate heating or lighting for comfort and safety.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 1.4 This work reduce pressures on more costly residential or supported care that would otherwise be required through children's or adults social care services and supports the following priorities in the draft Corporate Plan 2015-19 to help us deliver "*A good life - Ensuring a city for all ages, inclusive of everyone and protecting the most vulnerable*".
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