

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Cabinet	
MEETING DATE:	13th July 2011	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 2269
TITLE:	Housing Renewal Policy	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: Home Health and Safety Policy 2011 (adaptations, repairs and improvements)		

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 The Council is required to adopt and publish a Housing Renewal Policy. This policy is periodically reviewed and revised as required. It sets out how Housing Services will provide assistance, including financial assistance, to help low-income, elderly, disabled and other vulnerable residents to undertake essential repairs and adaptations.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet agrees that:

2.1 The proposed Home Health and Safety Policy 2011 attached to this report is adopted as the Council's Housing Renewal Policy.

2.2 The budget allocations detailed within the policy are applied in conjunction with this policy.

2.3 The policy is reviewed in 1 year.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The funding for the Home Health and Safety Policy 2011 is detailed in the Medium Term Financial Plan previously adopted by the Council. The total funding amounts to £165,000, which includes, £45,000 from Housing Services efficiency savings and £120,000 for Housing Renewal allocated from new monies for adult social care and which has come to the Council from the Department of Health.
- 3.2 The policy also relies on a Disabled Facilities Capital Grant allocation of £422,000 from Government and a Council revenue contribution of £578,000.

4 CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- *Building communities where people feel safe and secure*
- *Promoting the independence of older people*
- *Improving life chances of disadvantaged teenagers and young people*
- *Sustainable growth*
- *Addressing the causes and effects of Climate Change*

The policy deals with Council assistance to remove serious housing health and safety hazards such as problems keeping homes warm, dangerous stairs and steps and serious home security issues. The policy also deals with the administration of the Disabled Facilities Grant which provides assistance to install adaptations and equipment to help maintain independent living. Assistance to install certain energy efficiency measures is also included in the policy. The assistance is subject to eligibility criteria which are related to low income and vulnerability.

5 THE REPORT

- 5.1 The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England & Wales) Order 2002 provides local authorities with a general power to offer assistance to improve housing conditions. This assistance may take the form of financial grants, loans or any other type of help and support thought appropriate. Prior to making such assistance available it is a requirement that the Council must adopt and publish a Housing Renewal Policy. All applications for housing grants, loans and other forms of housing assistance will be judged against this policy.
- 5.2 Since 2003 the Council has adopted an annual Housing Renewal Policy. The proposed Home Health and Safety Policy 2011, contained in the appendix, is a revised and updated version of our current Housing Renewal Policy. A significant focus of the policy is the improvement of unsuitable homes occupied by low-income, disabled, elderly and otherwise vulnerable households. The policy explains how Housing Services propose to improve the health and safety of homes through six schemes:
- advice and home visits – to help vulnerable people decide what work is required to remedy serious hazards and property defects;
 - disabled facilities grants – working with the Occupational Therapy Service to help disabled people make their homes safe and suitable to live in;

- urgent repairs grants - to fast track an urgent small repair for vulnerable people and help prevent illness or accident;
- home improvement loans – to help vulnerable people afford repairs and safety improvements that help to keep them safe and well at home;
- home insulation and top up heating/insulation grants to help households with low income keep their homes warm and energy efficient;
- community alarms grant – to help vulnerable people feel safer in their homes by providing community alarms and key safes.

5.3 The main revisions to the existing policy are firstly, tighter eligibility criteria which aims resources at removing serious housing health and safety hazards within the homes of older people, and secondly, the introduction of a new scheme to deliver urgent repairs quickly. These changes driven by an increased focus on the health and wellbeing of B&NES residents, the loss of the capital grant from Government for Housing Renewal, together with the views of staff and service users on improvements to the service.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 The report author and Lead Cabinet member have fully reviewed the risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

7 EQUALITIES

7.1 The proposed policy will assist vulnerable households in B&NES access financial assistance to carry out essential repairs and safety improvements and adapt their homes to meet their needs. It is proposed that resources for essential repairs and safety improvements will be aimed at low income residents that are over 60 years of age or a have a relevant disability affecting their ability to work. An equalities impact assessment has been undertaken on this Policy which will be discussed with the Lead Cabinet member for Housing.

8 RATIONALE

8.1 The implementation of the policy will enable financial assistance to be allocated according to Council priorities and current housing need.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 Two options were considered for eligibility criteria for access to a low cost loan to remove serious housing health and safety for vulnerable households. The two options considered for eligibility as vulnerable were a) on low income; or b) on low income and over 60, disabled or with a long term life limiting illness. Option b) is proposed in the policy.

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 Ward Councillor; Cabinet members; Parish Council; Staff; Other B&NES Services; Service Users Stakeholders/Partners; Section 151 Finance Officer; Monitoring Officer

10.2 The consultation was carried out using individual and group meetings, telephone and email.

11 ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION

11.1 Social Inclusion. Good quality, suitable housing increases social inclusion, particularly for children and older people on low income. It also assists with the maintenance of good health and comfort, reducing social exclusion caused by poor health and poor living conditions. These factors should reduce the demands on Primary Care Trust.

11.2 Sustainability. Relatively small scale targeted intervention can prevent housing falling into excessive disrepair. Also energy efficiency improvements reduce carbon dioxide emissions and the likelihood of fuel poverty.

11.3 Young people. Good quality suitable housing improves the health and educational outcomes for children and young people.

11.4 Customer focus. This policy aims to help meet the housing needs of residents in B&NES.

11.5 Health and Safety. The policy is underpinned by actions in the Housing and Wellbeing Strategy to improve the health, safety and wellbeing of vulnerable households in B&NES.

12 ADVICE SOUGHT

12.1 The Council's Monitoring Officer (Divisional Director – Legal and Democratic Services) and Section 151 Officer (Divisional Director - Finance) have had the opportunity to input to this report and have cleared it for publication.

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Sponsoring Cabinet Member	Councillor Tim Ball
Background papers	None
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	