

Single Member Cabinet Decision

Executive
Forward Plan
Reference

E 3115

Decent Homes Policy Update

Decision maker/s	Cllr Paul Myers, Cabinet Member for Economic and Community Regeneration
The Issue	<p>The Decent Homes Policy sets out how Housing Services will provide financial assistance to help residents, including low-income, elderly, disabled and other vulnerable residents, to undertake certain improvements to their homes. Eligible work includes home adaptations for independent living, essential repairs and improvements, and energy upgrades. Assistance to help bring empty homes back into use is also covered by this policy.</p> <p>The Decent Homes Policy was last updated in 2016 and Housing Services have become aware of policy areas which would benefit from greater flexibility and clarity.</p>
Decision Date	11 th February 2019
The decision	The Cabinet Member agrees that the amended Decent Homes Policy be formally adopted.
Rationale for decision	<p>The proposed changes to the Decent Homes policy will benefit a wide range of residents by helping to fund improvements to housing conditions and energy efficiency which might otherwise not go ahead. They will mean that the policy is more effective in helping a wider range of home owners and tenants to live independently in warm, safe and more energy efficient homes. Improving the safety and suitability of homes can improve health and wellbeing and reduce costs to the health service in the long run.</p> <p>The policy now enables homeowners and tenants to benefit from home energy improvements with no upfront costs and makes the Wessex Empty Property loan more attractive to empty property owners. It provides in a single policy all housing related assistance under the Regulatory Reform Order 2012, including empty homes assistance.</p>
Financial and budget implications	<p>The schemes within the Decent Homes Policy, including Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs), are funded from the following sources:</p> <p>The DFG programme is funded via the DFG element of the Government's Better Care Fund. The 2018/19 budget is £1,209,006. Other schemes with an overall budget of £120,000 are funded through the Better Care Fund pooled budget arrangements with Health and Social Care.</p> <p>Wessex Consortium loan fund held by Wessex Resolutions CIC.</p> <p>Some of the changes have the potential to create a very modest uplift</p>

	<p>in resource demand. In the case of DFGs this relates solely to the ability to fund the professional costs associated with a withdrawn DFG application. Based upon experience demand is likely to be low, subject to agreement and funded within the existing DFG budget. Some of the changes will also stimulate further demand for Wessex loans. The scheme is self-financing, and as such, any increase in demand will not have an impact upon resourcing requirements. It should also be noted that demand is capped according to the available capacity within the scheme.</p> <p>Other changes are all subject to the availability of funding and subject to annual budget limits. As such the changes will not have any negative impacts upon resourcing.</p>
Issues considered (these are covered in more detail in the report)	Customer Focus; Sustainability; Property; Young People; Equality (age, race, disability, religion/belief, gender, sexual orientation); Health & Safety;
Consultation undertaken	Staff; Other B&NES Services; Service Users; Local Residents; Community Interest Groups; Youth Council; Stakeholders/Partners; Section 151 Finance Officer; Chief Executive; Monitoring Officer
How consultation was carried out	A 6 week public consultation exercise was carried out using the Council Website on the proposed changes to the policy. Further consultation was undertaken with Wessex Resolutions CIC and the West of England partners. No objections were raised.
Other options considered	The option of not updating the policy was rejected because this would limit the effectiveness of the policy. Other options for further widening the eligibility for improvement loans were considered but rejected in favour of maintaining focus on lower income households.
Declaration of interest by Cabinet Member(s) for decision, including any dispensation granted:	
Any conflict of interest declared by anyone who is consulted by a Member taking the decision:	
Signature of Decision Makers	

Date of Signature	
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Subject to Call-in until 5 Working days have elapsed following publication of the decision
