

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	21 July 2015
Subject:	Review of Disabled Facilities Grants
Report of:	Val Garside, Environmental and Housing Services Group Manager
Corporate Lead:	Rachel North, Deputy Chief Executive
Lead Member:	Councillor J R Mason
Number of Appendices:	One

Executive Summary:

Due to changes in the way Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) are financed, the cost of adaptations, the number of different agencies involved and increasingly ageing population, it is felt appropriate that an Overview and Scrutiny Committee Working Group is formed to review the Council's approach to dealing with DFGs.

Recommendation:

- 1. To establish an Overview and Scrutiny Working Group to review the Council's approach to Disabled Facilities Grants.**
- 2. To APPROVE the proposed Terms of Reference for the Working Group as set out at Appendix 1.**

Reasons for Recommendation:

To review the Council's approach to DFGs and make appropriate recommendations for improvement.

Resource Implications:

The review will be undertaken between September 2015 and December 2015 and it is anticipated a maximum of five Working Group sessions will be held. Officer time can be built into existing resources. If for any reason more expert resource is required this can be funded from the Scrutiny budget.

Legal Implications:

None as a direct result of this report. One Legal will be able to provide advice to the Working Group or Officers as required regarding the Council's duties and powers to provide DFGs.

Risk Management Implications:

If the Council does not have in place effective arrangements for administering DFGs then there is a reputational risk of failing to comply with statutory requirements, leading to potential interventions from the Ombudsman or judicial review. The Council also contributes capital funds, therefore, there are financial risks to not administering grants effectively. There could also be customer dissatisfaction leading to increased complaints.

Performance Management Follow-up:

The number and value of DFGs administered is monitored by means of a performance indicator and this is reported to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis.

Environmental Implications:

None

1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

1.1 Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) help towards the cost of essential adaptations to homes to enable applicants to live more independently. The grant is mandatory for those who need better freedom of movement into and around their home, up to a maximum of £30,000 per applicant. It is subject to a financial means test. Examples of grants we have given include:

- providing ramps to allow a person to get in and out of their house;
- stair lifts; and
- level access showers for people who cannot use a conventional shower or bath.

DFGs are administered by the Council's Environmental Health section. To apply for a grant, applicants will first need to be assessed by an Occupational Therapist from Gloucestershire County Council who will find out if a major adaptation best meets the customer's needs.

1.2 The Council receives financial support to deliver the service but in addition, current budgeted capital expenditure is £220,000 per annum.

2.0 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP

2.1 At the Transform Working Group held on 13 November 2014, a paper on DFGs was presented, with the outcome being to refer a review of DFGs to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

2.2 There are some issues that Members will wish to identify and consider, essentially to ensure that the scheme is 'fit for purpose' and cost-effective. Potential areas of interest include streamlining the process, the role/performance of partners, costs of the service and any potential efficiencies and alternative delivery options. As the other Gloucestershire Districts work very closely on delivering a service, the review may be of interest to neighbouring authorities.

2.3 It is felt appropriate that an Overview and Scrutiny Committee Working Group is formed to review the Council's approach to dealing with DFGs. The subject area also meets the

key criteria for undertaking a scrutiny review, for example:

- the issue impacts upon one or more sections of the community;
- the issue is strategic and significant;
- the scrutiny activity can add value to the process and should lead to effective outcomes; or
- it is a community concern.

A proposed Terms of Reference can be found in Appendix 1.

3.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

3.1 None.

4.0 CONSULTATION

4.1 None.

5.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

5.1 Council Plan 2012-16 – Priority 4 (Improve the quality of the housing stock): ‘Work with Public Health to develop new approaches to enablement and adaptations for disabled people’.

6.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES

6.1 Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996; Part 1, Chapter 1: ‘Disabled Facilities Grants’.

7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Human/Property)

7.1 Officer time to help facilitate the review.

8.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (Social/Community Safety/Cultural/ Economic/ Environment)

8.1 Effective outcomes will have a positive impact on the most vulnerable people living in the Borough.

9.0 IMPACT UPON (Value For Money/Equalities/E-Government/Human Rights/Health And Safety)

9.1 Effective outcomes will also have a positive impact on the cost of providing adaptations and will help ensure a safe and healthy environment for applicants.

10.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS

10.1 None.

Background Papers: None

Contact Officer: David Steels, Environmental Health Manager
01684 272172 david.steels@teWKesbury.gov.uk

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Proposed Working Group Terms of Reference