

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	2 May 2017
Subject:	Disabled Facilities Grants Review Monitoring Report
Report of:	Peter Tonge, Head of Community Services
Corporate Lead:	Rob Weaver, Deputy Chief Executive
Lead Member:	Councillor J R Mason, Lead Member for Clean and Green Environment
Number of Appendices:	One

Executive Summary:

The report provides an update on progress against actions contained in the Scrutiny Review of Disabled Facilities Grants Report, arising from a review by the Overview and Scrutiny Working Group approved by the Executive Committee on 6 April 2016.

Recommendation:

To CONSIDER progress made against the recommendations arising from the Disabled Facilities Grants Review.

Reasons for Recommendation:

To improve the way that Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) are delivered in Tewkesbury Borough.

Resource Implications:

The recommendations will continue to be implemented using existing resources.

Legal Implications:

DFGs are mandatory grants up to a maximum of £30,000 per applicant. It is a statutory function delegated to local housing authorities in England. This function is delivered at this Council by the Environmental Health team.

Risk Management Implications:

If the Council does not have a robust and timely DFG process fit for 21st century living those

who require adaptations will have to wait for lengthy periods of time to either return to or continue living at home.

If the Council does not have effective arrangements for administering DFGs then a reputational risk of failing to comply with statutory requirements exists, leading to potential of Ombudsman or judicial review.

The Council has routinely contributed from capital funds so there are financial risks to ineffective administration.

There could also be customer dissatisfaction leading to increased complaints.

Performance Management Follow-up:

A further update on progress will be provided at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in six months in November 2017

Environmental Implications:

None.

1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

1.1 Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) 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;
- level access showers for people who cannot use a conventional shower or bath; and
- installation of wet rooms and adaptation of home for downstairs living.

1.2 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.

1.3 A review of the way in which Tewkesbury Borough Council delivers DFGs was undertaken by a Working Group of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2015/16.

1.4 This was essentially to ensure that the scheme is 'fit for purpose' and cost-effective. The resulting report set out the findings from the review and made recommendations in respect of possible ways in which processes could be improved.

1.5 The review report was considered at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 23 February 2016 and adopted at the meeting of the Executive Committee on 6 April 2016.

2.0 CURRENT POSITION AND PROGRESS

2.1 The table at Appendix 1 shows the updated progress against actions contained within the original review report. All outstanding actions are intrinsically connected to the funding and delivery of DFGs which is under review by both central government and the Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group.

2.2 The County Council and all six districts will continue to work collaboratively in determining

the future delivery of DFGs within Gloucestershire.

- 2.3** The contract to deliver the Gloucestershire “Safe at Home” Home Improvement Agency service comes to an end in July 2017 and the services within it will be decommissioned. Home Improvement Agency services are also known as HIAs, Care & Repair or staying put schemes. Home Improvement Agencies are located throughout the country and they assist elderly people to improve, repair, maintain, or adapt their home.
- 2.4** In Gloucestershire, five of the six District Councils contributed to the HIA. The transition phase is currently being undertaken as a countywide initiative involving all necessary partners to ensure the service continues to be delivered to an acceptable standard. It is anticipated that this transition work will be completed to coincide with the end of the Safe at Home contract in July.
- 2.5** A further countywide project is underway, to explore a coordinated delivery model option for DFGs. Gloucestershire County Council is the lead and is coordinating this work stream. An update on this is expected in August 2017.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 3.1** The Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is responsible for the funding of DFGs through the Better Care Fund (BCF). The BCF is a programme spanning both the NHS and local government which seeks to join-up health and care services, so that people can manage their own health and wellbeing, and live independently in their communities for as long as possible.
- 3.2** The BCF was created to improve the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in our society, placing them at the centre of their care and support, and providing them integrated health and social care services, resulting in an improved experience and better quality of life.
- 3.3** The DoH/DCLG policy framework 2017 - 2019 Integration and Better Care Fund policy framework details the arrangements in two tier areas:
“In two-tier areas decisions around the use of the DFG funding will need to be made with the direct involvement of both tiers working jointly to support integration ambitions. DFG funding allocated by central government should be passed down by the county to the districts (in full, unless jointly agreed to do otherwise) to enable them to continue to meet their statutory duty to provide adaptations and in line with these plans; as set out in the DFG Grant Determination Letter due to be issued by DCLG in April 2017.”
- 3.4** The downward trend of O.T referrals and applications for DFG funding continued in 2016/2017. A total of 98 enquiries were received of which 71 progressed through to approval. It is important to note that this means it is likely that 71 individuals or families could remain living in their homes in the community. Early figures indicate a reduction in applications for DFG’s is occurring across Gloucestershire.
- 3.5** The DFG position for TBC for 2016/2017 was an outturn of £312,781.87. The DFG funding received from the county in August 2016 was £497,000. In strict financial terms this gives an accrual of £184,218.13. However, the value of approved grants with works not yet completed and paid is £177,303.24.
- 3.6** The current years funding has yet to be announced but it would appear that the Better Care Funding allocation will not necessitate this Council to top up from its own capital resource.

4.0 CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Environmental Health will continue to work collaboratively with all partners involved in the DFG process, the key partners being the County Council and the CCG.

5.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

- 5.1 Provision of DFGs directly links to two of the four priorities of the Tewkesbury Borough Council Housing Strategy 2017 – 2021

Priority 3: Meet the housing needs of specific groups

Priority 4: Improving the health and well-being of local people

6.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES

- 6.1 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/605164/integration_and_BCF_policy_framework_2017-19.pdf (DFGs page 17)

Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996: part 1, Chapter 1: Disabled Facilities Grants.

7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Human/Property)

- 7.1 Within existing

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

- 8.1 Effective outcomes positively impact the health and welfare of the most vulnerable people living within our borough

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

- 9.1 Effective outcomes positively impact on the cost of providing adaptations in ensuring a safe and healthy home environment for applicants.

10.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS

- 10.1 Executive Committee Report and Minutes, 6 April 2016

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Report and Minutes, 26 November 2016

Background Papers: None

Contact Officer: Yvonne Hope, Interim Environmental Health Manager
01684 272117 yvonne.hope@teWKesbury.gov.uk

Appendices: Appendix 1 - Disabled Facilities Grants Review Revised Action Plan 2017