

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 6th June, 2019

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Joe Baker (Chair), Councillor Debbie Chance (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Salman Akbar, Joanne Beecham, Michael Chalk, Peter Fleming, Andrew Fry, Mark Shurmer and Jennifer Wheeler

Officers:

Derek Allen, Sue Hanley and Steve Shammon

Democratic Services Officers:

J Bayley and F Mughal

5. PRIVATE SECTOR HOME REPAIR ASSISTANCE POLICY - PRE-SCRUTINY

The Strategic Housing Manager and Private Sector Housing Team Leader presented the Private Sector Housing Assistance report for Members' consideration, which proposed an update of the current policy.

The Strategic Housing Manager informed Members that the policy had been updated in line with recommendations from an internal Audit that was conducted during 2017/2018; which highlighted that the existing policy needed to be updated in order to reflect changes around the loan limits, which was set at £10,000 per applicant, and local land charges to mitigate any risks.

The policy was aligned with Bromsgrove District Council's and Worcestershire County Council's policies. Although it was recognised that the Councils were not the same it was deemed to be best practise as a whole to adopt the same policy across local authorities in the same area.

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Chair

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Following the presentation of the report Members discussed the proposed changes to the policy in some detail and highlighted a number of points:

- The grant would potentially help those who needed adaptations to their homes to make it suitable for a disabled person.
- Members raised concerns about delays to work previously delivered in the Borough. The Private Sector Housing Team Leader explained that sometimes delays occurred when referrals were not submitted to the operational service in a timely manner. These issues had now been resolved nonetheless.
- Customers applying for minor adaptations could apply for the Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant.
- The policy was not required to align with neighboring authorities, however, the government encouraged authorities to work in partnership.
- The policy was positive as this offered a wider range of assistance to people with disabilities and would potentially benefit the local community.
- Members noted the grant had been underspent in previous years and there was a possibility that people were not aware that this grant was available. Members were informed that there was better engagement with partner organisations, such as Fire Services and hospitals to make people aware of the grant.

Members welcomed the policy, recognising that better communication was needed in order to make the public aware that they could potentially apply for a Disability Facility Grant from the Council for adaptations in their homes.

RECOMMENDED that

Officers explore options to communicate the availability of Disabled Facility Grants to the public.

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 7.36 pm