

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

20th October 2010

HOME REPAIRS ASSISTANCE POLICY 2010

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Brandon Clayton, Portfolio Holder for Housing, Local Environment and Health
Relevant Head of Service	Angie Heighway, Head of Community Services
Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 To agree the proposed Home Repairs Assistance Policy 2010, a replacement for the existing Policy, this gives details of discretionary financial assistance to owners occupiers to improve housing standards.
- 1.2 The Home Repairs Assistance Policy is also in the process of being considered for approval by the other District Councils within Worcestershire.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Committee is asked to RECOMMEND that

the Home Repairs Assistance Policy attached at Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 From 1st June 2010 the delivery of the Disabled Facilities Grants, Kickstart and 'Lifetime Loans', now to be called Home Repairs Assistance, has been undertaken through the newly commissioned Home Improvement Agency, Worcestershire Care & Repair, managed by Festival Housing.
- 3.2 The Home Repairs Assistance Policy covers assistance given to bring properties in the private sector (owner-occupied) up to the Decent Homes standard or to respond to Housing & Health Safety Rating System (HHSRS) category one hazards. This financial assistance is offered as an interest-free loan. It is critical to the council meeting its decent homes targets for vulnerable occupiers and funding will be used to assist those households where work is less than £5k or who do not qualify for Kickstart funding.
- 3.3 Over the previous three years the Council has provided 138 loans for decent homes work to be undertaken.

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4. KEY ISSUES

4.1 The Home Repairs Assistance Policy seeks to meet the following aims;

- a) Increasing the percentage of vulnerable persons in the private sector whose accommodation meets the 'Decent Homes' standard.
- b) Ensuring adequate conditions in rented accommodation.
- c) Reduce the number of households living in fuel poverty.
- d) Meeting the statutory duties of the Council to respond to health and safety issues in housing.
- e) Meeting the recognised local needs and circumstances identified in the current Housing Strategy, Empty Property Strategy, Community Safety Partnership Strategy, Redditch Sustainable Community Strategy, Worcestershire Sustainable Community Strategy, and Worcestershire Supporting People Strategy 2010, regarding house conditions and their affect upon health and safety.

4.2 Officers from across the County have worked to produce a common policy for the provision of Home Repairs Assistance. This common policy means home owners will receive a standardised service regardless of where they live.

4.3 Through the use of a loan, the Council is able to maximise the use of resources, as the funding pot is, in time, replenished whilst still bringing properties up to decent homes standard.

4.4 Applicants for Home Repairs Assistance from the Council will only be considered if it is confirmed that the Kickstart Scheme is not suitable.

4.5 The introduction of Kickstart and maximum entitlement of Home Repairs Assistance being restricted to £5k should mean greater numbers of households are able to be assisted.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Council's current budget is £150,000 for decent homes assistance for owner occupiers.

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6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Regulatory Reform Order (2002) gave Local Authorities the freedom to determine individually the financial assistance they offer with the exception of Disabled Facilities Grants providing they adopt a policy outlining the assistance they offer.

7. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This policy will replace the Housing Assistance Policy 2005.

8. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES

- 8.1 Enterprising Community – Raising the standards of private sector housing by assisting occupiers improve their property to meet the 'Decent Homes' standard especially vulnerable occupiers.
- 8.2 Safe - Improved the safety of private sector properties by tackling HHSRS cat1 hazards.
- 8.3 Clean and Green – Assisting occupiers to improve the thermal efficiency of their properties and reducing households living in fuel poverty.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT INCLUDING HEALTH & SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

There is a risk that if the proposed Home Repairs Assistance Policy is not approved, then the new Home Improvement Agency will have to operate a number of different policies across the county which will cause inequalities in service delivery.

10. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS

Customers will have increased opportunities through the use of the Kickstart Scheme.

11. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

An equalities impact assessment has been undertaken in-conjunction with the other local authorities in Worcestershire.

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12. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS, PROCUREMENT AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

All works undertaken using Council funding will be required to follow procurement procedures agreed with the Home Improvement Agency.

13. CLIMATE CHANGE, CARBON IMPLICATIONS AND BIODIVERSITY

Assisting occupiers to improve the thermal efficiency of their properties will reduce the amount of fuel they require.

14. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

None.

15. GOVERNANCE/PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

None.

16. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS INCLUDING SECTION 17 OF CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998

None.

17. HEALTH INEQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

Improving the standard of properties will have a positive impact on the occupier's health and well being.

18. LESSONS LEARNT

None.

19. COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Consultation has taken place with the Home Improvement Agency and the local authorities within Worcestershire.

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20. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT

Portfolio Holder	Yes
Chief Executive	Yes
Executive Director (S151 Officer)	Yes
Executive Director – Leisure, Cultural, Environmental and Community Services	Yes
Executive Director – Planning & Regeneration, Regulatory and Housing Services	Yes
Director of Policy, Performance and Partnerships	Yes
Head of Community Services	Yes
Head of Resources	Yes
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	Yes
Corporate Procurement Team	Yes

21. WARDS AFFECTED

All wards.

22. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Home Repairs Assistance Policy 2010

23. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Housing Assistance Policy 2005

24. KEY

AUTHOR OF REPORT

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