

**Report to Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Growth and Economy**

**Subject:** Discretionary Disabled Facilities ‘Top Up’ Grant for DFG/0100/21

**Date:** 16<sup>th</sup> August 2022

**Author:** Food, Health and Housing Manager

**Wards Affected**

Carlton Hill Ward

**Purpose**

To seek approval to award a Discretionary Disabled Facilities ‘Top Up’ Grant beyond the amount of £10,000

**Key Decision**

Not a key decision

**Recommendation(s)**

**THAT:**

**The Portfolio Holder authorises the approval of a Discretionary Disabled Facilities ‘Top Up’ Grant for circumstances outside the current policy**

**1 Background**

1.1 M is 69. He suffered a stroke 2 years ago which has affected his left hand side. He also finds it hard to communicate. This has left M at risk of falls, which happen on a regular basis. M moved in with his son, daughter-in-law and five grandchildren (ages 5-15) a year ago for the family to care for him just over a year ago. Daughter in law provides the majority of the care. M spends most of his time in bed in his room on the first floor due to the difficulty in getting up and down the stairs and his risk of falling. There is no spare room on the ground floor for a bed room and there are no toilet

	<p>facilities.</p> <p>The occupational therapist has recommended a ground floor bedroom and bathroom for M. A stairlift and adapting the family bathroom was considered and then decided against due to one of the children having challenging behaviour and possibly breaking the stairlift.</p>
1.2	The Occupational therapist has submitted a referral to the council to create a ground floor bedroom with access to the bathroom and adaptations to create level access showering facilities.
1.3	M's test of resources calculation returned a result of 'NIL' contribution towards the cost of any works.
1.4	Due to the complexity of the works involved, the applicant has appointed an architect, who project manage the works from start to finish, This includes site surveys, sending for planning, building control and visiting site when works commence. The total cost of the work (following a competitive tendering exercise), including architects fees is £64,448 The total grant available is £40,000 (£30,000 mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant and £10,000 discretionary 'top up' grant). This results in a shortfall of £24,448.
1.5	Due to almost all major building works exceeding the £40,000 limit, the Nottinghamshire district councils are supportive of increasing the discretionary top up limit to £20,000 but this is not yet in place.
1.6	Paragraph 24.7 of the Private Sector Housing Grants and Assistance policy states " <i>the Portfolio Holder may, at his absolute discretion, where he considers that there are exceptional and compelling reasons, authorise the Grant or Assistance where an application would normally be refused</i> ".
1.7	<p>Approval is sought to offer a discretionary 'top up' grant of £34,448 this is £24,448 over and above the current adopted discretionary grant limit of £10,000. The exceptional and compelling circumstances as per the grant policy are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• M is currently living and sleeping on the first floor of the property and has no quality of life. Family members are risking their health and that of M, assisting him up and down the stairs when required to do so. M has had a number of falls since the grant process started.</li> <li>• Family are unable to fund the extra costs as they extended the property themselves when they moved in 5 years ago to suit their family at the time. They are unable to get a loan due to the current economic conditions. Son of M is a taxi driver and Daughter has</li> </ul>

	<p>just had to take a part time job to make ends meet.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The family are unable to move to a more suitable property as there is limited affordable housing stock for a family of 8. The family had already extended the property into the loft space in the past and are currently upgrading other parts of the property as and when they can afford. Moving would have massive financial implications and it is likely further adaptations would be required.</li> <li>• The cost of building works have increased significantly in recent years since the policy was adopted.</li> <li>• There is sufficient grant funding available and the proposed discretionary grant is only a small increase from the current adopted policy.</li> <li>• The family are settled where they live and 5 children attend local schools.</li> <li>• Without further funding the scheme would not proceed which could have an adverse effect on the quality of life for M and his family. The adaptation will allow M to receive the care he requires in a safe and dignified manner and have his bedroom and bathroom in a safe space on the ground floor. There is less of a likelihood of falls, especially on stairs.</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	<b>Proposal</b>
2.1	The Portfolio Holder authorises the approval of £34,448 Discretionary Disabled Facilities 'Top Up' Grant for circumstances outside the current policy. This grant will be in addition to a mandatory Disabled Facilities grant of £30,000.
<b>3</b>	<b>Alternative Options</b>
3.1	The family have little funds to allocate to the project themselves as M's son is in low paid employment. M's daughter cares for their 5 children as well as M but has now had to take on part-time work to help pay the bills. The family have carried out home improvements themselves in the past but these are unsuitable for their father's needs. The test of resources outcome suggests the family should not have to pay towards the cost of a mandatory disabled facilities grant which is in conjunction with the discretionary assistance.
<b>4</b>	<b>Financial Implications</b>

4.1	The extra cost of the contribution towards M's grant works is low when compared to the quality of life benefit he will receive and the potential savings in cost for rehousing and potential further adaptations to other properties.
4.2	In line with our policy total of £44,448 land charge will be applied to the property, to be recovered if sold within 10 years. This is to help ensure that M remains at the property long term and allows Gedling Borough Council the potential to recover some of the costs if this is not the case.
4.3	It is proposed that the £34,448 Discretionary Disabled Facilities grant 'top-up' grant would be funded from the Council's Better Care Fund allocation for Government which covers both Discretionary and Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants. There is currently sufficient budget available to fund these grant eligible works.
<b>5</b>	<b>Legal Implications</b>
5.1	Disabled Facilities Grants are governed by the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, and a statutory maximum of £30,000 is prescribed in respect of such grants. The Council has no discretion to award a higher amount. The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order however provides a wider grant giving power to local authorities provided a clear policy in respect of such assistance is adopted. The Council's policy in respect of Housing Assistance grants does provide the Portfolio Holder with the authority to award grants which would usually be refused where there are exceptional and compelling reasons to do so. The Portfolio Holder must be satisfied that such exceptional and compelling reasons exist.
<b>6</b>	<b>Equalities Implications</b>
6.1	The proposal would support a household which falls within a protected characteristic (disability) but would not have a more wider reaching impact beyond the individual property concerned. If the proposal was not supported it could be argued that the householder is adversely affected by the decision.
<b>7</b>	<b>Carbon Reduction/Environmental Sustainability Implications</b>
7.1	The proposed extension will be constructed in line with Building Regulations, there are no adverse sustainability implications of this proposal
<b>8</b>	<b>Appendices</b>

8.1	None
<b>9</b>	<b>Background Papers</b>
9.1	The Private Sector Housing Grants and Assistance Policy 2017
<b>10</b>	<b>Reasons for Recommendations</b>
10.1	<p>The priorities within the current Gedling Plan include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing hardship and provide support to the most vulnerable</li> <li>• Improve health and wellbeing</li> </ul> <p>Approving the grant will directly improve the health and wellbeing for M and his family.</p>

**Statutory Officer approval**

**Approved by:**

**Date:**

**On behalf of the Chief Financial Officer**

**Approved by:**

**Date:**

**On behalf of the Monitoring Officer**