

Report to Cabinet

Subject: Better Care Fund Allocation and the Disabled Facilities Grants Service

Date: 19 May 2016

Author: Food, Health and Housing Manager

Wards Affected

All wards

Purpose

- 1) To approve an increase in the 2016/17 capital programme budget for Disabled Facilities Grants following notification of an increase in Government grant via the Better Care Fund.
- 2) To outline headline proposals to utilise the increased Disabled Facilities Grant / Better Care Fund budget.

Key Decision

This is not a key decision

Background

- 1.1 Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) are a mechanism to provide financial assistance for adaptations to dwellings occupied by disabled people. DFGs are administered by Gedling Borough Council following referral from or consultation with Nottinghamshire County Council. DFGs can either be mandatory, where specified conditions under legislation are met or discretionary for other purposes in accordance with the Council's adopted policy. The Council has not previously had the resources to offer discretionary DFGs.
- 1.2 Examples of adaptations include:
 - Providing ramps, widening external / internal door, shallow steps;
 - Adapting, or providing, suitable washing / bathing / showering /

toilet facilities;

- Ensuring the disabled person can moved around and access parts of the home so they can look after someone else;
- Facilitating the preparation of food and cooking in the kitchen;
- Installing a stairlift or a 'through the floor' lift; and
- Providing access to gardens.

- 1.3 The current approved 2016/17 DFG budget is £689,000 and is financed by Government grant of £464,000 via the Better Care Fund (BCF) and a £225,000 Gedling Borough Council contribution financed by borrowing.
- 1.4 The BCF (formerly the Integration Transformation Fund) was announced by Government in the June 2013 spending round, to ensure a transformation in integrated health and social care. The BCF is allocated to upper-tier authorities by Government and part of the allocation is ring-fenced for DFG and passed onto District Councils. In the 2015 spending review Government indicated that nationally funding for DFG will increase to over £500million per annum by 2019/20 compared to £220million in 2015/16.
- 1.5 The County Council is required to prepare and submit a BCF Plan to Government outlining how the funding will be distributed and spent. Any funding proposals outlined by the Council must be in accordance with the BCF Plan. The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health and Community Wellbeing approved a separate report supporting the Council's commitment to the BCF Plan.
- 1.6 The grant determination and conditions have now been issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government to Nottinghamshire County Council for the DFG element of the BCF and identifies an allocation of £820,019 to Gedling Borough Council. This is an increase of £356,019 for the Council to spend in accordance with the BCF Plan – which include mandatory DFG but allows spend on broader strategic capital projects subject to housing authorities being able to meet their statutory duty in respect to DFG. It is considered that the £820,019 allocation is sufficient to meet the statutory DFG and also enable contribution to wider BCF spending. Government has indicated the Better Care Fund DFG element will increase each year up-to 2019/20
- 1.7 In 2015/16 Gedling Borough Council's BCF allocation for DFG of £464,000 and this was fully spent by the service. The 2016/17 BCF

allocation of £820,019 is a welcome allocation for the Council. Historically the Council has not received sufficient DFG funding from Government to deliver the service and the Council has made the additional budget of £225,000 available to meet local demand. However, as stated above it is considered that the Council's increased BCF allocation for 2016/17 will be sufficient to meet the statutory demand for DFG and to provide an enhanced service without the need for the Council to contribute its own resources to the DFG budget.

- 1.8 Part of the reason for the increase in the DFG allocation is due to the inclusion of the Social Care Capital Grant which was £1.9 million for Nottinghamshire in 2015/16. This funding was used to support a number of schemes in the 'Living at Home' programme for 'Extra Care Housing' to provide supported housing for adults reducing the need for long term residential care.
- 1.9 Proposals for spending the monies available for wider BCF projects will need to be approved as part of the BCF spending plan and meet the definition of capital spending as required by the grant conditions. The potential project options to be put forward for consideration by the Housing and Health Integrated Commissioning Group to the Chief Executives Group and BCF Project Board are detailed at paragraph 2.2.
- 1.10 The proposed increase in the DFG budget will result in an increased workload for the administration of DFG and the wider BCF spending and it is anticipated that additional staffing resource will be required to ensure successful project delivery. Gedling Borough Council currently capitalises salaries for the administration of DFG which equates to 10-15% of the DFG budget. Any proposed increase in staffing will be funded from the increased capital grant and will remain within the set 10-15% parameter for capitalised salaries. The Chief Executive will be asked to approve the increase in staffing under delegated authority subject to approval of this capital budget increase by Cabinet.

Proposals

- 2.1 It is proposed that Cabinet provides approval to increase the DFG / Better Care Fund capital programme budget for 2016/17 to £820,000 to be fully funded by Government Grant which will fully accommodate the demand for DFG;

by approval of the following virement:

Additional DFG/BCF Expenditure	£131,000
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Additional Government Grant Income (£356,000)

Reduced Gedling Borough Council Contribution £225,000

2.2 It is proposed that Cabinet notes the headline proposals to be explored to utilise the increased DFG budget and provide an enhanced service to local disabled residents:

- a) The Handy Person Preventative Adaptation Service (HPAS). The Department of Health (which is jointly responsible for BCF) is keen that the BCF is used for innovative approaches to improve health and has indicated the funding can be used for schemes such as the HPAS. HPAS is a partnership scheme to provide help and support to residents aged over 60 with low cost but high quality essential adaptations and small practical jobs. The scheme costs the service user £15 for up-to 4 hours work from a local trader plus the cost of any materials. Officers will explore with the County Council whether it is acceptable to utilise the DFG grant to fund the HPAS service and if approved this will offer an opportunity to consider removal of the Council's current approved revenue budget of £14,300 for this service. This will be subject of a future report to Portfolio Holder;
- b) The Council's Private Sector Housing Grants and Assistance policy will be revised to provide additional discretionary assistance to disabled residents in addition to the mandatory DFGs currently described in the policy. A report to Portfolio Holder will be submitted to authorise the changes to the policy. Additional discretionary DFGs include:
 - I. Discretionary 'top-up' to mandatory DFG. The maximum DFG awarded is £30,000 - some schemes such as extensions for a ground floor bathroom or bedroom exceed the maximum grant. It is proposed that an additional £10,000 will be made available to service users, making the maximum grant for one scheme to be £40,000.
 - II. Dual residency of a disabled child. In cases where families separate and a court order provides that residency of the disabled child is split between the mother and father - the Council only provides mandatory DFG to the 'sole or main residence' of the disabled applicant. It is proposed that in addition to the mandatory DFG a discretionary DFG of up-to £30,000 will be made available to the parent's property not eligible for a mandatory DFG.
 - III. Relocation assistance. A relocation grant may be available

to an applicant who owns their property if adaptations to their current home are determined not to be feasible or reasonable and they are considering relocation to a property they intend to purchase. A relocation grant of £5,000 will be made available with up-to £10,000 made available to adapt the new property.

IV. Discretionary 'wet-room' adaptation grant. Currently Nottinghamshire County Council only assess disabled residents who have a 'substantial' or 'critical' need in accordance with their 'Fair Access to Care' assessments. This has the potential to exclude clients who could be considered for a mandatory DFG as the County Council will not be assessing them further and referring them for DFG. It is proposed that residents that have been deemed to have a 'moderate need' by the County Council can be referred for a 'wet-room' or 'easy access shower' adaptation - each of these grants would typically cost under £5,000.

c) Extra Care Housing. Officers will explore in further detail whether there are sufficient funds remaining within the DFG budget to contribute to local schemes for 'Extra Care' housing. Such schemes would enable suitable housing for older residents with specific support needs to maintain their independence in a residential setting as opposed to requiring them to move into long term residential care. If considered to meet the grant conditions any proposals in respect of this will be subject of a future report to Portfolio Holder or Cabinet.

Alternative Options

- 3.1 Cabinet could decide not to establish the DFG budget but this would be difficult to justify as the Government have made the funds available based on assessment of local need.
- 3.2 Cabinet could decide to maintain the Council's contribution to the DFG budget or provide a reduced contribution but it is considered that there is sufficient resource within the DFG grant 2016/17 (through the BCF allocation) to meet demand for mandatory DFG and the discretionary proposals outlined in this report.

Financial Implications

- 4.1 The increase in Government Grant for DFGs will fully accommodate the demand for DFGs and makes it possible to reduce the Gedling Borough Council contribution to the DFG budget. The current budget for the

Gedling Borough Council contribution is financed by borrowing and its removal will result in a revenue budget saving in the region of £18,000 per annum and will be cumulative for each year of reduced borrowing. This equates to a £90,000 annual budget reduction by the end of the current MTFP i.e. 2020/21. This proposal will make a contribution to the delivery of the Council's approved Efficiency Target of £1.15m with no detriment to the current service delivery levels of DFGs. Indeed the increased grant allocation will enable the provision of an enhanced service to disabled residents.

- 4.2 As detailed at paragraph 1.6 above the Government has indicated that the Better Care Fund DFG element will increase each year up to 2019/20 and so provides some reassurance that the increased grant funding level will continue in the medium term and that savings can be achieved on an ongoing basis without reducing service level. The position will be reviewed on an annual basis as grant announcements are made.

Appendices

- 5.1 None.

Background Papers

- 6.1 None.

Recommendations

- 7.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:
- I. authorise the increase in the DFG/Better Care Fund capital programme budget for 2016/17 to £820,000 to be fully funded by Government Grant by approval of the virement as detailed at paragraph 2.1;
 - II. note the headline proposals to be explored to utilise the increased DFG budget and provide an enhanced service to local disabled residents.

Reasons for Recommendations

- To enable the Council to deliver an enhanced DFG service
- To contribute towards the Council's efficiency savings targets
- To deliver the DFG service consistently with other Nottinghamshire District Councils.
- To contribute towards the Council's objectives of 'improving health and wellbeing', and 'reducing hardship and provide support for the most

vulnerable'