

DECISION ITEM



REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DIRECTORATE	ENVIRONMENT HEALTH AND HOUSING COMMITTEE	7 JUNE 2016	4
DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT TASK AND FINISH GROUP			

PUBLIC ITEM

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

SUMMARY

Environmental, Health and Housing Committee on the 5th January 2016 agreed a review of the delivery of the Disabled Facilities Grant to improve effectiveness and members were appointed to the DFG Working Group. The purpose of the DFG Working Group was to review the practices and procedures of the administration of the Disabled Facilities Grant. Three sessions were held on 1st, 15th April and 13th May 2016.

This report details the structure and items discussed by the DFG Working Group, conclusions the Group came to and outcomes to be taken forward.

A Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is made available to help meet the costs of necessary adaptations to the homes of disabled people. The provision of a DFG is a statutory requirement and a disabled person has a right to make an application for assistance. The council has a statutory duty to approve, subject to a means test of the applicant, all valid applications. Funding for DFG's is via the 'The Better Care Fund' (BCF). For 2016/17 the BCF will provide £848,621 for the delivery of DFG's in Fylde. Previous funding for 2015/16 was £468,000.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To note the contents of the report and conclusions and recommendations from the DFG Working Group as set out in section 15 of the report.
2. That annual monitoring of the outcomes of the review is undertaken by the committee to ensure the service is operating effectively
3. To consider and recommend to Council a fully funded Capital Budget Increase of £380,621 for the DFG Capital Scheme in 2016/17 due to an increased DFG allocation via the Better Care Fund.
4. To consider and recommend to Council a fully funded revenue budget increase of £15,000 in 2016/17 for additional staffing resources to be met from the additional DFG revenue fee income that will result from the additional capital funding estimated to be the same amount.
5. That members consider in light of the comments of the working group whether to agree targets to achieve effective monitoring of PM97a and PM97b throughout 2016/17

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS

Minutes of Environmental, Health and Housing Committee 5th January 2016

It was therefore RESOLVED

1. To note the report and to endorse a review of the delivery of the Disabled Facilities Grant to improve effectiveness;
2. To appoint the following members to the Disabled Facilities Grant Working Group – Councillors Ben Aitken, Viv Willder, Richard Taylor, Maxine Chew, and Heather Speak, with a recommendation to the Finance and Democracy committee that Councillor Karen Buckley be appointed to the Working Group; and
3. That the report and recommendations of that Working Group be reported back to the both the Environment, Health and Housing committee and the Finance and Democracy Committee upon its conclusion for due consideration.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

Spending your money in the most efficient way to achieve excellent services (Value for Money)	√
Delivering the services that customers expect of an excellent council (Clean and Green)	√
Working with all partners (Vibrant Economy)	√
To make sure Fylde continues to be one of the most desirable places to live (A Great Place to Live)	
Promoting Fylde as a great destination to visit (A Great Place to Visit)	

BACKGROUND

1. A Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is made available to help meet the costs of necessary adaptations to the homes of disabled people. The provision of a DFG is a statutory requirement and a disabled person has a right to make an application for assistance. The council has a statutory duty to approve, subject to a means test of the applicant, all valid applications.
2. The legislative provisions relating to DFG are contained in The Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.
3. The relevant legislative provisions include;
 - S24(1) - makes it a mandatory duty to approve a qualifying application
 - S34 – The Council have to notify an applicant of approval/refusal within 6 months of date of application
 - S35 – Where a grant has been approved the Council shall pay the grant either in whole or by instalments
 - S36 – Councils have a discretion to delay payment to a period no later than 12 months from date of the application
 - The legislative provisions are absolute and are not dependent on the level of resources made available.
 - Funding for DFG's is primarily through a grant from central government, along with a usual annual contribution from Progress Housing and through the reinvestment of grants that are repaid by properties that are sold within a defined period of time following receipt of grant.

4. Funding for DFG's is via the 'The Better Care Fund'. The fund was announced in June 2013 to drive the transformation of local services to ensure that people receive better and more integrated care and support. The fund will consist of at least £3.8 billion to be deployed locally on health and social care through pooled budget arrangements between local authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups.
5. Lancashire's Better Care Fund (BCF) plan includes improvements that will reduce unnecessary hospital admissions, provide better care for people in their community when they are discharged from hospital, improve end of life care and cut down the amount of paperwork people need to fill in when accessing health and social services.
6. For 2016/17 the BCF will provide £848,621 for the delivery of DFG's in Fylde. Previous funding for 2015/16 was £468,000.
7. Environmental, Health and Housing Committee on the 5th January 2016 agreed a review of the delivery of the Disabled Facilities Grant to improve effectiveness and members were appointed to the DFG Working Group. The purpose of the DFG Working Group was to review the practices and procedures of the administration of the Disabled Facilities Grant. Three sessions were held on 1st, 15th April and 13th May 2016. An agenda of information discussed at each session can be found in Appendix 1.
8. The outcomes and actions from each of the first two sessions formed the basis for discussion at session 3. The table at Appendix 2 provides information regarding progress to date, and those actions that had been completed by the time of meeting 3. It was noted that in relation to a couple of tasks that the work could take several months to complete the work to a meaningful degree as it was reliant on receiving suitable information from other sources including other district councils.
9. Task no.18 related to exploring the options for Fylde BC to employ its own Occupational Therapist. At session 2 an update information had been received from Lancashire County Council that there were plans to recruit 20 Occupational Therapists across Lancashire from June 2016. As such the Working Group felt that it was not the right time to pursue a pilot scheme regarding a Fylde appointed Occupational Therapist. It was recommended that the Councillor representatives on the Fylde and Wyre Health and Wellbeing Board (Councillor D Collins) and the Lancashire Health and Wellbeing Board (Councillor Willder) raise these concerns at the earliest opportunity, as it was outside the scope of the working group.
10. The Working Group discussed possible target setting as a way of monitoring the Fylde's performance regarding processing DFGs. However as there were a number of key factors outside the control of the Council, namely the amount of funding received from the Better Care Fund, and the number of applicants coming forward, it was deemed that a target would be largely meaningless.
11. On the same agenda is the year end exception report and 2015/16 PM 97a and 97b are to be reported on. There is a need for members to consider approaches that could be adopted in order to achieve effective monitoring of PM97a and PM97b throughout 2016/17.

12. Details included in the exception report are in the table below.

<p>PM97a: The length of time for applicants on the waiting list for a Disabled facility grant (weeks) was 52, the target is 0, and last year's comparison figure was 78.</p> <p><i>The length of time on the waiting list has reduced compared to the previous year, this has been achieved through an increase in DFG grant money. Targets for 2016/17 will be set by another report going to this committee on the 7th June 2016.</i></p>
<p>PM97b: The number of applicants on the waiting list for a Disabled facilities grant was 53, the target is 0, and last year's comparison figure was 80.</p> <p><i>The number of applicants on the waiting list has reduced since the previous year, this has been achieved through an increase in DFG grant money.</i></p> <p>PM97b: The number of applicants on the waiting list for a Disabled facilities grant is being replaced Percentage of the total DFG Budget committed (quarterly)</p> <p><i>To monitor DFG Budget committed throughout the year. Targets for 2016/17 will be set by another report going to this committee on the 7th June 2016.</i></p>

13. The Working Group agreed that it was essential to define clearly the different stages of the process, such as waiting list, holding list, statutory duties, etc. as it could be confusing and potentially misleading for the wider committee members. It was also agreed that for clarity the diagram circulated at the previous meeting should be included in the report going forward to committee (attached at Appendix 3).
14. The group noted the work of a Lancashire-wide prioritisation policy, so that all residents were treated the same regardless of which district they lived in. Fylde BC had taken the lead on this approach and that the draft policy was to be discussed at the next district meeting. The Working Group agreed that the policy should be attached to this report to committee (as set out below).

Lancashire suggested prioritisation criteria linked to BCF remit (see paragraph 14 above)
<p>1. URGENT (P1)</p> <p>The applicant has an urgent need for an adaptation such as :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To facilitate hospital discharge/prevention of hospital readmission 2. Under the recommendation of the Occupational Therapist acting on behalf of the social services authority. 3. Provision of independent or safe access to essential facilities and to the property without which there would be a potential breakdown of the current situation. 4. Service user and/or carer at high risk of physical injury needing alternative care arrangements until/unless work is completed
<p>2. NON URGENT (P2)</p> <p>The applicant has a need for a DFG however the need is not an urgent priority such as :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Under the recommendation of the Occupational Therapist acting on behalf of the social services authority. 2. Works which prevent long term admission to residential care 3. Improve the service user's long term ability to remain at home

15. In conclusion the group made the following recommendations which are drawn from the outstanding actions in Appendix 2. The working group recommended:
- to formally express concerns to Lancashire County Council as to the unacceptable delays in the assessment of applicants by the occupational therapist service and that plans to reinvest in additional staffing resources are introduced as soon as possible. Councillor

representatives on the Fylde and Wyre Health and Wellbeing Board and the Lancashire Health and Wellbeing Board to also raise these concerns at the earliest opportunity

- II. that Lancashire County Council consider the urgent introduction of a self-assessment tool to enable anyone enquiring of a disabled facilities grant to be able to self assess themselves financially so they decide at the earliest stage whether they may qualify for assistance for a DFG
 - III. that early consideration is given to the DFG function being audited again soon so as to provide assurance that the service is operating as efficiently as possible to maximise the resources allocated
 - IV. that all key processes within the DFG function are examined and assessed by the council's Time Lean team so as to ensure the service is operating as efficiently as possible to maximise the resources allocated
 - V. that further work is undertaken to establish how Fylde compares with average prices for adaptations across Lancashire and in doing so understand where any commissioning efficiencies can be achieved
 - VI. an annual monitoring report is produced and considered by the Environment, Health and Housing Committee.
16. The working group were pleased that the council's DFG allocation via the Better Care Fund had increased significantly from £468,000 to £848,621. The council's budget for 2016/17 contains provision for the original figure of £468,000 as the final grant settlement was not known at the time the budget was set. Accordingly is proposed to recommend to Council a fully funded Capital Budget Increase of £380,621 for the DFG Capital Scheme in 2016/17 due to an increased DFG allocation via the Better Care Fund. To cover the Councils costs in the management of the DFG works the Council retains a 10% management fee in respect of each scheme. The approved income budget for these services in 2016/17 is £35,000.
17. As additional applications are processed by the Occupational Therapist Service it will increase the workload for the housing team to process and manage additional adaptations, beyond the current resource allocated. As a result it will be necessary to employ an additional resource on a flexible basis from within the agreed 10% management fee charged. For this a fully funded revenue budget increase of £15,000 in 2016/17 for additional staffing resources is proposed to be met from the additional DFG revenue fee income that will result from the additional capital funding estimated. If approved this would result in a revised income budget for 2016/17 for the administration of DFGs of £50,000.

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	<p>This report outlines the conclusions and recommendations of the DFG Working Group and proposes a number of financial recommendations to the Committee as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Committee is requested to consider and recommend to Council a fully funded Capital Budget Increase of £380,621 for the DFG Capital Scheme in 2016/17 due to an increased DFG allocation via the Better Care Fund; and 2. The Committee is requested to consider and recommend to Council a fully funded revenue budget increase of £15,000 in 2016/17 for additional staffing resources to be met from the additional DFG revenue fee income that will result from the additional capital funding estimated to be the same amount.
Legal	The legal implications are set out at the start of the report
Community Safety	None
Human Rights and Equalities	None
Sustainability and Environmental Impact	None
Health & Safety and Risk Management	None

LEAD AUTHOR	TEL	DATE	DOC ID
Kirstine Riding	01253 658569	18/05/2016	

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Name of document	Date	Where available for inspection
DFG Working Group Notes from session 1 and 2.	1 st and 15 th April	https://fylde.cmis.uk.com/fylde/MeetingsCalendar/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/901/Committee/19/Default.aspx
The Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996	1996	http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/53/contents

The following Appendices are included in this report:

- Appendix 1: Disabled Facilities Grants Working Group Agenda
- Appendix 2: DFG Outcomes and actions
- Appendix 3: Stages of the DFG process

Appendix 1

Disabled Facilities Grants Working Group Agenda

Purpose: To review the practices and procedures of the administration of the Disabled Facilities Grant

Timespan: 3 meetings proposed (each 2 hours in duration) – April/May

Councillors: Ben Aitken, Viv Willder, Maxine Chew, Heather Speak, Richard Taylor and Karen Buckley

Officers: Paul Walker, Kirstine Riding, Tom Birtwistle

1st meeting 2pm Friday 1st April (Reception Room)

Background/current situation

Legal background (Ian Curtis - FBC) (20 mins)

Better Care Fund - method for assessment of need and funding across Lancashire (20 mins)

How the service operates and audit review 2012 (process overview) (20 mins)

Current performance and funding spend/commitment profile – consideration of waiting list (20 mins)

Lancashire wide task and finish group (sharing of best practice) (20 mins)

Discussion and actions (20 mins)

2nd meeting 2pm Friday 15th April (Reception Room)

Referral/assessment/delivery of service

Lancashire County Council role (LCC to attend) BCF and their role within the process and procurement of equipment (20 mins)

Occupational Therapy role (Kate Kelso – OT to attend) with examples of need and work undertaken (30 mins). Before and after real life examples.

Means testing and grant conditions/grant repayment (20 mins) overview of means testing with examples and grant repayments

Procurement and appointment and management of contractors (20 mins)

Discussions and actions (30 mins)

3rd meeting 2pm Friday 13th May (Porritt Room)

Outcome/recommendations

Concluding thoughts – observations to note/acknowledge

Recommendations

Target setting

Reporting to committee and Monitoring

Appendix 2 – Outcome and Actions DFG Working Group

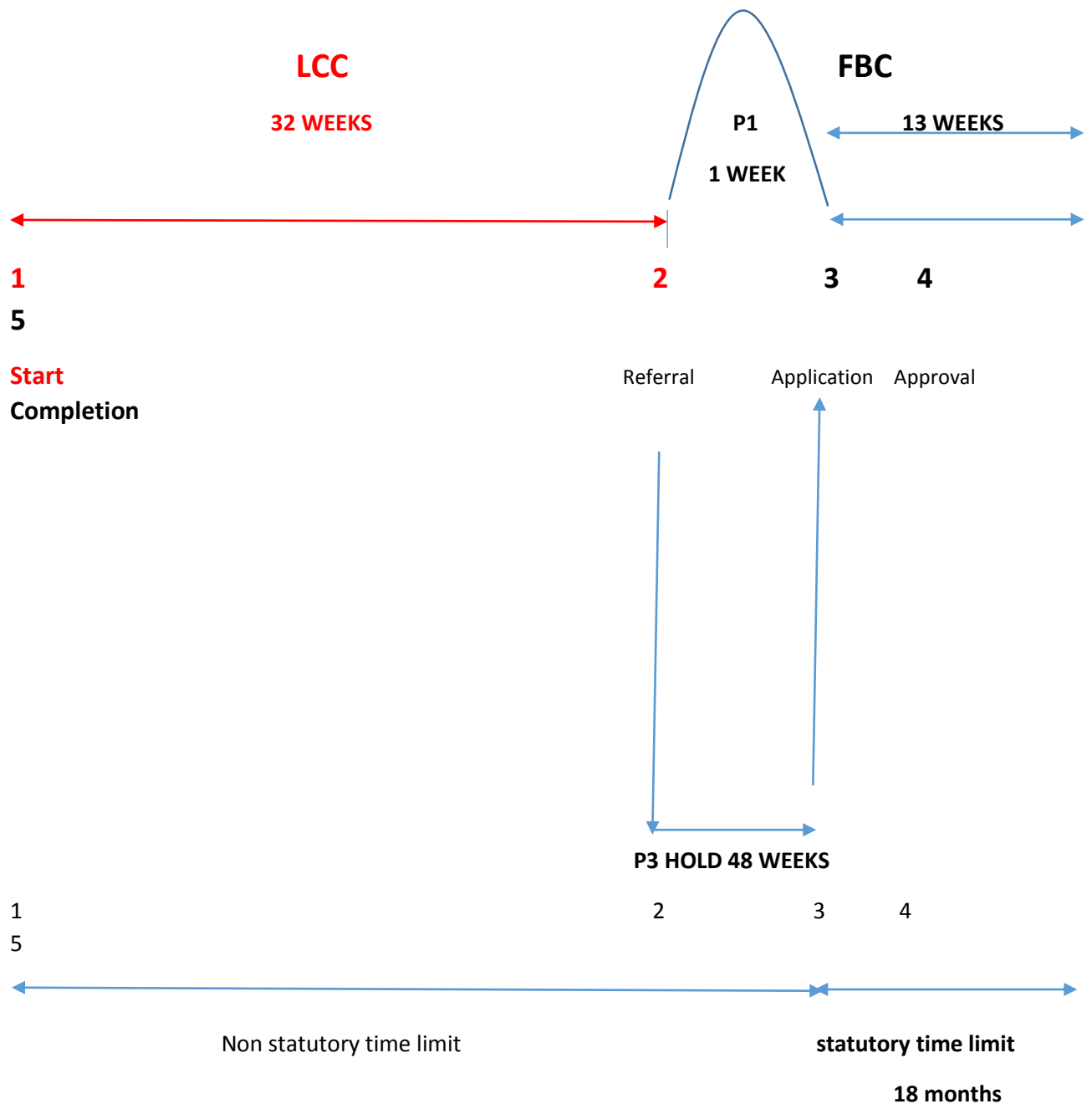
Task ID	Task Name and Details/Description	Comments	Progress Update/ Status
1.	Circulate a list of charities we contact when a contribution is required	Provided in report two.	completed
2.	That 5 sample applicant/contractor files be made available for the next meeting of the group to enable the group to gain a better appreciation of the process.	Provided in meeting two. Several files and documents inspected.	completed
3.	Members requested details of the current holding list breakdown including details of age, be made available at the next meeting.	Provided in report two	Completed
4.	That officers contact other districts seeking the average price for a Level Access Shower.	Provided at meeting two	Completed
5.	That officers provide a list of ongoing DFG's and waits in comparison to statutory time limits.	Provided at meeting two	Completed
6.	That the Chairman and Vice- Chairman of the Environment, Health & Housing Committee, Councillors Ben Aitken and Viv Willder attend the next meeting of the Prioritisation Panel (PP).	Attended latest priority panel (20/4/2016)	Completed
7.	That subject to availability and/ or if appropriate, key personnel be invited to the next meeting of the working group.	Attendance at meeting two of Kate Kelso (OT) and Gary Savage (Hospital discharge manager)	Completed
8.	That a link be sent out to the Ombudsman report 'Making a house a home: Local Authorities and disabled adaptations' which was referred to in meeting one.	Link was included in the minutes for meeting one	Completed

Task ID	Task Name and Details/Description	Comments	Progress Update/ Status
9.	That returned quotations should provide further details of the split between materials and labour.	New schedule has been devised which requests split of materials and labour. Now being sent to all contractors.	Completed
10.	Members noted the service was last audited in 2012 and recommended that it be audited again soon.	Awaiting confirmation of this action from the working group and subsequent scheduling with the audit manager.	Not started
11.	The Working Group expressed their concerns with the LCC current procedure and requested that the implementation of a self-assessment tool should be looked at as a matter of urgency.	This item is to be taken forward to the joint working group between the districts and LCC Meeting due 26 th May.	Not started
12.	Members suggested that the detailed processes involved in the administration and delivery of DFG's should be reviewed as part of the corporate 'lean-time' approach to help facilitate support process of further service improvement and efficiency.	Preliminary discussions with Alex Scrivens. Existing process map has been shared with him. Awaiting recruitment of new members to the Time Lean group.	Underway
13.	To express this Council's concerns to LCC about the delays and ask for more resources to be presented.	E-mail sent to Catherine Whalley (Head of Service Social Care Service) 20/4/16. Confirmation that 20 additional OT's will be employed by LCC from 1 st June 2016. In addition 2 OT managers have been appointed. See email from Catherine Whalley to Paul Walker dated 21/4/16. Although the task is technically completed it is suggested this remains as a key	Completed

Task ID	Task Name and Details/Description	Comments	Progress Update/ Status
		recommendation to LCC in the final report.	
14.	To find out when the possible recruitment of further OTs is likely to happen	OT managers in place. 20 OT's to be recruited from 1 st June 2016.	Completed
15.	It was agreed further work needed to be undertaken to understand the average prices supplied from other district councils	To be taken to the joint district and LCC meeting 26 th May 2016.	Not started
16.	The Working Group requested that comparison information (i.e. over a period of years if available) was provided regarding the numbers of clients contributing to the works.	Completed to be presented if required at meeting three.	Completed
17.	The Working Group requested copy of crib sheet which is sent to OT's.	Completed and sent on the 22/4/16 with the minutes from meeting two.	Completed
18.	For Fylde and Wyre to investigate a pilot for 12-18 months to employ their own OT with a view to reduce the waiting list.	Linked to points 13 & 14. This will incur additional costs which would have to come from the main BCF grant. Members' views are sought as to whether this should be pursued.	Not started

Appendix 3 – Stages of the DFG process

Simplified process map



Key points

There are no statutory time limits in relation to (parts 1 to 3) in this process map.

Fylde average 13 weeks to complete a DFG compared to a statutory maximum of 18 months (parts 3 to 5).

P1 (high priority) are on average completed within 14 weeks (part 2-5)

P3 (low priority) Fylde hold list 48 weeks down from 78 weeks on the 31st March 2015.