



**AGENDA ITEM: 8**

**CABINET:  
16 June 2015**

**EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW &  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:  
2 July 2015**

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**Report of: Assistant Director Housing and Regeneration**

**Relevant Managing Director: Managing Director (Transformation)**

**Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor J Patterson**

**Contact for further information: Mrs G. Sands (Extn. 5151)  
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**SUBJECT: DRAFT LANDLORD SERVICES DISABLED ADAPTATIONS POLICY**

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Wards affected: Borough wide

**1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To agree a draft Landlord Services Disabled Adaptations Policy for consultation purposes.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET**

- 2.1 That the draft Landlord Services Disabled Adaptations Policy be approved for consultation with tenants, residents and key stakeholders, the consultation period to expire on 1 August 2015.
- 2.2 That the call-in procedure is not appropriate for this item as the report is being submitted to the next meeting of the Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 2 July 2015.

**3.0 RECOMMENDATION TO EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

- 3.1 That the content of this report be considered and that agreed comments be referred to the Assistant Director Housing and Regeneration.

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## 4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Council has a statutory duty under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, to provide disabled facilities grants (DFGs) to eligible disabled residents to help them pay for major adaptations to their home. Adaptations for disabled West Lancashire Borough Council (WLBC) Tenants are funded from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) which is the rental income paid by tenants.
- 4.2 The number of applicants and the expenditure for disabled adaptations for the last 4 years has been set out in the table below:

| Year    | Applications received | Applications completed | Amount spent |
|---------|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------|
| 2011/12 | 142                   | 126                    | £833,662     |
| 2012/13 | 177                   | 153                    | £488,332     |
| 2013/14 | 157                   | 139                    | £498,545     |
| 2014/15 | 122                   | 57                     | £729,111     |

- 4.3 From the table above we can see that the number of applications completed has reduced. This is mainly due to the amount being spent on extensions for individual adaptations.
- 4.4 6 applications last year were above £40k with one costing £70k. This accounted for £318k of the budget.
- 4.5 Landlord Services received 122 requests for adaptations during 2014/15 with 57 being completed, 65 cancelled or carried over to 2015/16.

## 5.0 CURRENT POSITION

- 5.1 The Private Sector Housing Disabled Adaptations Policy was approved on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2014. This policy looks to build on this and agree a specific policy for Council Tenants that is fair and equitable whilst making best use of the housing stock that is available.
- 5.2 Since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015, Landlord Services has received a further 25 referrals from the Occupational Therapist.
- 5.3 Using the number of applications received so far this year, we are estimating that 156 (13 per month) applications for disabled adaptations will be received this year. Combining this figure with the 42 applications carried forward from last year, a total of 198 applications will be in the system this year.
- 5.4 The budget this year for Landlord Services Disabled Adaptations is £652,000 with an additional £81,378 which is slippage from 2014/15.

- 5.5 Landlord Services does not currently have a cap on the amount it spends on disabled adaptations. Current practice is to pay for large adaptations which enhance the value of the property and is different to Private Sector Housing.
- 5.6 These figures show that the budget for this year is going to struggle to deliver all the applications that are expected to be received. The issue is compounded by the costly extensions that are reducing the number of the applications Landlord Services can deliver.

## 6.0 FUTURE DISABLED ADAPATIONS

- 6.1 The business plan contains projected spend on adaptations:

| Year    | Amount   |
|---------|----------|
| 2016/17 | £697,000 |
| 2017/18 | £735,000 |
| 2018/19 | £664,000 |
| 2019/20 | £718,000 |

It is important to note, that this has not been approved by Council and is a projected spend.

- 6.2 Due to the ageing population the number of applications we expect to receive is increasing. In addition to this, the number of individuals with multiple chronic illnesses being cared for in the community is increasing. This is likely to increase over the coming years due to government policy to encourage care in the community.
- 6.3 We therefore need to review whether we are making best use of the housing stock to ensure that funds are available for adaptations where these are necessary.
- 6.4 Introducing a limit of £30,000 on the amount of financial support that we provide tenants is consistent with the Private Sector housing DFG Policy that has already been agreed and provides a similar level of service in the public and private sectors. This limit will help us control expenditure to ensure funds are available for all that need this service.

## 7.0 POLICY OBJECTIVES

- 7.1 The draft policy will provide clarification for officers and stakeholders on a number of issues such as maintenance, maximum funding, mutual exchanges and Right to Buy applications.
- 7.2 The draft Landlord Services Disabled Adaptations Policy will assist officers in delivering an adaptations programme to WLBC tenants. It will also ensure fair, equitable and consistent treatment for all disabled tenants who require the Council's assistance in adapting their home.

## **8.0 CONSULTATION PROCESS**

8.1 It is suggested the draft Landlord Services Disabled Adaptations Policy is listed on the consultation page of the Council's website. The following stakeholders will be encouraged to comment:

|                                    |                                    |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Tenants                            | Public                             |
| Lancashire County Council          | WL Physical Disability Partnership |
| Citizens Advice Bureau             | WL Clinical Commission Group (CCG) |
| Help Direct, Disability West Lancs | Age UK                             |
| West Lancs CVS                     | Neighbouring local authorities     |
| Access Matters                     |                                    |

8.2 It is proposed that the consultation will take place until 1<sup>st</sup> August 2015.

## **9.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY**

9.1 There are no negative sustainability impacts associated with this report and, in particular, no significant impact on crime and disorder. The report has no significant links with the Sustainable Community Strategy.

9.2 Adopting the policy will speed up the number of adaptations that WLBC can deliver. This can then enable our tenants to live in their homes longer creating a sustainable tenancy and a more sustainable community.

## **10.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 The budget has been set. The best way to make use of the budget is to find a fair and equitable way to distribute the money. Setting a maximum cap on any adaptation will allow the budget to help more tenants to tap into this resource.

## **11.0 RISK ASSESSMENT**

11.1 The implementation of this policy provides a positive opportunity to ensure that this service area is managed in an effective and efficient manner, and will promote greater consistency between the public and private sectors in how disabled residents are treated.

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### **Background Documents**

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this report.

### **Equality Impact Assessment**

There is a direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore an Equality Impact Assessment is required. A formal

equality impact assessment is attached as an appendix to this report, the results of which have been taken into account in the Recommendations contained within this report.

**Appendices**

A - Draft Landlord Services Disabled Adaptations Policy

B - Equality Impact Assessment

C - Minute of the Landlord Services Committee (Cabinet Working Group) held on 11 June 2015

D – Minute of Cabinet held on 16 June 2015