

Report of the Chief Executive

DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT STAFFING1. Purpose of report

To seek approval for making the temporary part time Grants Caseworker permanent and the appointment of a second Grants Officer within the Private Sector Housing team.

2. Detail

In the last few years, there has been a steady increase in the capital allocation awarded to district councils from central government for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) resulting in a number of discretionary grant schemes being introduced, as well as the continuation of mandatory DFGs. Broxtowe has usually been in a position to deal with applications for mandatory DFGs in a timely fashion and so prevent the creation of a waiting list. The Council currently employs a full time equivalent (FTE) Grants Officer and one temporary 0.6 FTE Case Worker (1.6 FTE), who have been managing the process.

Recently many grant applications have been more complex lengthening the time for grants to be processed and the waiting time for potential grant applicants in some cases is now several months. The number of applicants (currently 79) who are waiting for their grants to be processed is continuing to rise. This situation is clearly unacceptable. In addition, as detailed below, we are carrying forward a significant underspend. Carry forward amounts can also be assigned to local priorities for assisting individuals with renewals, repairs and low level adaptations.

The Grants Caseworker conducts a means test assessment, assists applicants and is the point of contact for applicants and other relevant agencies throughout the process. The Grants Caseworker also takes ownership of applications for stair lifts allowing the Grants Officers to concentrate on progressing all other projects. In order to remove the waiting time for DFG applications to be processed, it is proposed to appoint a second Grants Officer. Appendix 1 includes financial information relating to the DFG staffing report. Appendix 2 benchmarks staff numbers with other councils in the county.

3. Financial Implications Summary

Existing employee costs of approximately £53k will increase to £90k with the additional officer requested. All costs of administration and applicant grant determination have been charged to the programme in accordance with DFG regulations.

Annual allocation of funding for this grant has risen by 87% from 2010/11 to 2021/22. The scope of the grant has also increased to further the main aim of helping to meet the cost of adapting homes of older and disabled people to enable independent living and prevention of factors which affect health and wellbeing. This is to support cost avoidance or delay in the NHS and/or social care services. Proposals for future awards are uncertain as they are contained in wider proposals on Social Care funding which have been delayed by the Government. Awards are published on an annual basis only, at present, with no visibility of future funding.

Recommendation

Committee is asked to RESOLVE that:

- 1. The permanent appointment of the temporary Grants Case Worker (0.6 FTE) be approved.**
- 2. The appointment of a second Grants Officer be approved.**

Background papers: Nil