

Wiltshire Council

Environment Select Committee

3 September 2019

Housing Aids and Adaptions

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek consideration of a review of the Council's and its partners' approaches to meeting the needs of households who need to live in a home adapted to meet their needs. It is suggested the review should focus on major adaptions and aids.

Background

2. There are a number of ways that the housing needs of households who require a home to be adapted to meet their needs can be met.
 - Prioritising applications for rehousing via the Council's allocation policy Homes4 wilts
 - Adapting Council properties in the Council's Housing revenue account and registered providers adapting homes without use of disabled facility grants.
 - Provision of disabled facility grants
 - Commissioning of bespoke housing via registered providers
 - Planning policy for new build housing.

Main Considerations for the Council

3. Ensuring that homes are available that meet the needs of disabled households addresses the Council's business plan objectives of growing the economy and protecting the vulnerable.
4. Homes4 Wilts
The Council operates a choice based letting system Homes4 wilts where households bid for affordable housing owned by the Council and registered providers. The Council is required to give reasonable preference for some applications for rehousing as set out in Part 6 of the 1996 Housing Act. Households with a medical or welfare need to move will have their application placed in one of the four bands depending on the urgency of their need to move. The following table sets out the

households with a medical, welfare need to move to a more suitable home by band and bedroom size where either ground floor home or an adapted or accessible home are required. In 2018/19 there were 76 properties advertised and let to households who required a home adapted to meet their needs. The average waiting time for a disabled household to move home from application date to re-housing is 9.53 months (290 days) compared to a non-disabled household average waiting time of 8.28 months (252 days).

Table setting out the households with a welfare or medical need who require either ground floor accommodation or an adapted or accessible home

Adapted assessed only (all will have a ground floor need)

	1 bedroom	2 bedroom	3 bedroom	4 bedroom+	Total
Band 1	6	12	3	0	21
Band 2	33	20	5	3	61
Band 3	87	60	14	4	165
Band 4	10	9	1	0	20
OMR	4	5	2	0	11
	140	106	25	7	278

Ground floor need

	1 bedroom	2 bedroom	3 bedroom	4 bedroom+	Total
Band 1	11	12	3	1	27
Band 2	47	25	7	0	79
Band 3	166	101	14	2	283
Band 4	41	19	1	0	61
OMR	26	13	3	2	44
	291	170	28	5	494

If a property is constructed to an accessible standard, or has major adaptations making it suitable for a person with a physical disability and/or visual impairment, it will be matched to applicants with specific needs for the type of property advertised. Connections to parishes would not apply as the need for the adaptations in the property would override any connection to the area in which the property is located.

5. **Adapting the Council's housing stock**

Within the Council's housing revenue account business plan there is a provision of £2.3m over the next five years to fund adaptations and over the 30 year plan a total of £8m. In 2018/19 there were a total of 67 adaptations undertaken as broken down in the table below. The Council has 1070 (about 20% of the housing stock) properties that have an element of aids or adaptations. These range from properties with a ramp and handrails only through to properties with ramps, handrails, wet rooms, widened doors throughout, door and window automation, stairlifts.

Level access showers	35
Automation of doors or windows	5
Bathroom Adaptations	3
Front door widening and ramped access	12
Wash / dry WC	2
Multiply adaptations	3
Wetroom	1
Stairlifts	6
	67

6. Adaptations undertaken by registered providers without use of disabled facility grants. There are some registered partners who operate in Wiltshire who are prepared to undertake minor adaptations to properties that they will fund themselves. This may be such adaptations as level access showers. The registered provider may undertake minor adaptation works to a property before a customer moves in. If a registered provider is not prepared to fund works they will advise their customer to apply for a disabled facility grants.
7. Disabled facility grants (DFG).
The Council is required under Housing Grant Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 to provide disabled facility grants to households who own or rent their homes but not to tenants of the Council. The grant is towards work to the property that will enable it to meet the household's needs for the foreseeable future. The grant is for a maximum of £30,000 and is means tested for adults but not for children. The Council does provide discretionary grant funding above that level subject to fulfilment of additional criteria. A further grant of £10,000 can be signed off at manager level, but there is no maximum figure as this would be considered a fettering of the council's discretion. A grant to help with a move to more suitable housing can also be provided.

The total annual DFG budget is £3,033,313, funded by a grant from the Government. In 2018/19, 229 DFG works were completed.

The Council assesses works required via an occupational therapist. The works can be administered by private surveyor practice or by the Home improvement agency, in both cases the actual building work is undertaken by external building companies / specialist suppliers. The home improvement agency is currently being brought back in house, as it was previously part of a tendered service and it is more economic for the Council to provide the service.

8. Provision of bespoke new build affordable housing by registered providers.
Where specific housing needs are identified, it is possible to commission new build solutions by registered providers. At present there are 11 homes in construction that will meet specific housing needs for households who have a member who has a disability and hence, need for adapted housing. All these units are negotiated as part of affordable housing obligations on qualifying developments and as such, there is no cash cost to the Council in the provision of these units.
9. Planning policy for new build housing
Core Policy 45 requires new housing to be well designed to address local housing need, incorporating a range of different types, tenures and sizes of homes to create mixed and balanced communities. Core Policy 46 requires new housing to meet the specific needs of vulnerable and older people, and wherever practicable, accommodation should seek to deliver and promote independent living. However, there are currently no adopted planning policies in place to secure specific adaptability standards either in open market housing or affordable housing. Consequently the delivery of new affordable housing built to adapted/adaptable standards under Buildings Regulations Part M4(2) – accessible and adaptable dwellings, and M4(3) – wheelchair user dwellings, is dependent on successful negotiation between the Service Development & Enabling Team and developers on a site by site basis, using evidence of need from the housing register as a basis for that negotiation. Provision of new adapted/adaptable housing in open market stock is entirely dependent on the developer. During 2018-19 there were 27 new affordable homes delivered as adaptable accommodation in Wiltshire, ie. Part M4(2), which were the result of successful developer negotiations based on evidence of need. There were no new affordable homes delivered as wheelchair user dwellings, ie. Part M4(3). .

Safeguarding Considerations

10. There are no safeguarding implications stemming from this report.

Public Health Implications

11. Clearly, the provision of adapted housing that meets the needs of households with a disability or medical condition will improve the households's quality of life.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

12. There are no direct environmental and climate change implications stemming from this report.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

13. Households who have a disability and required adapted housing will be a group with protected characteristics. This will need to be considered as part of the review of the provision of adapted housing.

Financial Implications

14. There are no direct financial implications stemming from this report.

Conclusions

15. The conclusions reached having taken all of the above into account.

Proposal

16. It is suggested that a task group of the Environment Select Committee is established, to review the Council's approach to meeting the needs of households who require adapted housing.

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