



# Cabinet

## REPORT

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**Councillor J Cole-Morgan : Cabinet Member for Community & Housing**

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### **Disabled Facilities Grants – Budget Virement Proposals**

#### **Executive Summary**

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) are given to disabled people by the District Council to provide equipment and adaptations in their homes to help maintain independence and dignity. The suspension of further grant approval was made at the end of August following the full commitment of this year's budget. The current financial position is a result of a number of costly grants being carried over into this financial year.

It is a requirement of the Housing Grants and Regeneration Act 1996 that the District Councils provide means tested DFG to those entitled to receive help. The provision of DFG is demand led and the Council cannot refuse financial assistance.

To ensure that DFG continue to be provided it is recommended that unspent money is transferred from the Renovation Grants budget to the Disabled Facilities Grants budget.

#### **Purpose**

This report seeks members approval to increase the budget provision for Disabled Facilities Grants with a virement from the Renovations Grant Budget.

#### **Background**

Financial monitoring of private sector Disabled Facilities Grants shows that this year's budget was committed by the end of August. We are therefore unable to provide further assistance and approve further grants under the current budget allocation. There are currently 32 clients representing an estimated £143k of DFG expenditure that have been assessed by Wiltshire Occupational Therapists as requiring adaptations. The budget allowance is £255,000, however, as a result of a reduction in central government funding to £143k this year the actual budget now stands at £238,330.

#### **Options**

The options to the Council are either to increase the budget to address the needs of residents or do nothing.

Doing nothing is a possibility as the legislation allows the Council 6 months to make the approval from the time a complete application is received. Payments could be delayed to the next financial year. Such a measure would mean that the most vulnerable would continue to live in discomfort in un-adapted properties which do not suit their needs; The most

urgent cases having the greatest difficulties. If this strategy was adopted then we would simply be delaying the matter until the next financial year when the problem has the potential to escalate.

Increasing the DFG budget by virement from the Renovation Grants Budget.

### **The risks to the Council**

Not to meet our statutory requirements. Letting vulnerable members of the community to continue to live in housing un-suitable for their needs. A virement of £75k would reduce the impact on the next year's budget.

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that Members:

1. Approve the virement of £75k from the Renovation Grants Budget to the DFG budget.
2. Approve a virement of £25K from the Renovation Grant budget to Housing Repairs Assistance budget
3. Note the need to increase the DFG budget and that this will receive consideration in the current budget setting round.

### **Background papers**

See Background Information report available on request and in the Members' room

### **Implications**

**Financial:** Virement as detailed in the recommendations. If the recommendations are accepted then any underspending from renovation grants will be recycled into other grants for 2004/05 only. Any ongoing changes to future years allocations will need to be considered as part of the portfolio planning and capital programme update from 2005/06 onwards.

**Legal:** Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996

**Human Rights:** None in this report

**Personnel:** None at this stage

**Community Safety:** Risk to applicants for DFG due to time delays.

**Environmental:** None at this stage.

**Council's Core Values:** It is likely that this proposal will meet a number of SDC core values.

- Providing an excellent service
- Supporting the disadvantaged