

Wiltshire Council

Environment Select Committee

3 March 2021

**Executive Response to the Report of the
Housing Aids and Adaptations Task Group**

Purpose of the report

1. To present the Executive response to the final report of the Housing Aids and Adaptations Task Group to the:
 - Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Heritage, Arts and Tourism, Housing, and Communities.

Background

2. Due to the streamlined overview and scrutiny arrangements under COVID-19, the Environment Select Committee is, exceptionally, considering the Final Report of the Task Group at the same meeting as it is receiving the Executive Response.

Executive response to the Task Group's recommendations

1. **In order to ensure that a future adaptable affordable homes policy in Wiltshire is robust, efficient and delivers greater accessibility to affordable housing for disabled households, to work closely with the other local authorities, such as BANES and South Gloucestershire, who have already implemented adaptable and affordable housing policies by:**
 - a) **Learning about the issues faced by these local authorities in reviewing their Local Plans**
 - b) **Understanding how developers responded to the adaptable affordable housing policies put forward**
 - c) **Understanding how these adaptable affordable housing policies are enforced**
 - d) **Reviewing how council service areas, such as social care and revenues and benefits, have provided evidence to support a locality's need for adapted affordable housing**

Executive response:

A review of the policies of neighbouring local authorities for accessible and adaptable housing has been undertaken.

Local Plan Review

The Swindon and Wiltshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2017 states that the evidence supports the need for all dwellings to meet Category M4(2) requirements, providing that this does not compromise viability, and that a minimum of 7% of all market housing and 10% of affordable housing should need to meet Category M4(3) requirements.

The proportion of adaptable units which the policy can require is dependent on viability testing which will be undertaken as part of the Local Plan viability test. It is proposed to recommend a policy requirement for all Affordable Housing to meet M4(2) standards unless site conditions (such as a sloping site) dictate that this would not be possible. The policy will also enable the ability to negotiate M4(3) standards where there is demonstrable need. potential changes to the policies will be subject to viability testing. Viability Assessment work is scheduled to take place at the next stage of the Local Plan Review, following the current consultation which ends on 9 March.

Further detail relating to the Adapted Housing requirement will be included in the proposed Affordable Housing SPD

- 2. In order to speed up the Disabled Facilities Grant process, from the initial Occupational Therapist's assessment through to the completion of work, to work with other local authorities to:
 - a) Draft a document which outlines the average cost for the most commonly requested aids and adaptations – e.g. a stairlift or wet room****

Executive response:

The costs of adaptations such as a stair lift or level access shower vary across a range due to the unique nature of works required to meet individual needs and the peculiarity of individual properties. The current range of costs for a stair lift are from £ 1k to £ 6k and level access showers from £ 3.1k to £ 5.3K. so as not to mislead customers as to average costs it is suggested that a range is provided and explanation of the complexity of adaptation covered.

- 3. In order to reduce the number of delayed transfers of care, to work closely with the Reablement team within Adult Social Care and publicise the Council's Aids and Adaptations policy, so that those seeking to return to their home are aware of the provision available**

Executive response:

The Housing occupational therapists and Housing occupational therapist assistants (new posts) specifically address the joined up working between Adult social care staff

and for example the reablement teams. Housing staff involved in DFG regularly attend adult social care staff team meetings to promote the service and respond to issues.

- 4. In order to ensure that disabled households are not waiting longer than general needs households to access affordable housing, to consider operating a direct let process for Disabled applicants through the Councils Housing Allocations Policy, which would run in line with to the current banding structures. This will be developed through the Preferred Development Partnership to encourage all housing providers with stock in Wiltshire to accept direct lets of clients who have a high need for properties that are adapted or would be suitable for adaptation**

Executive response:

This issue is being addressed via the selection of preferred partner registered providers with a report being presented to cabinet in March 2021 for consideration. If agreed and preferred partners agree to the commitment to meet the needs of disabled households then Homes 4 Wiltshire will establish shortlists of households who require a move to an adapted home on a geographical basis so that households can be matched to a suitable property and adaptations undertaken. It should be recognised this will limit choice for households who have a need for an adapted home as they will receive direct offers rather than bidding for a home.

Proposal

- 3. To note the executive response to the Report of the Housing Aids and Adaptations Task Group**

Cllr Richard Clewer, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Heritage, Arts and Tourism, Housing, and Communities

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