

DECISION RECORD ¹

Officer Key Decisions are subject to the Council's Call-In Procedure (Annex 9 of the Council's Constitution <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/about-the-council/freedom-of-information-and-council-data/open-data-statistics-about-hertfordshire/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/who-we-are-and-what-we-do.aspx>)

Subject: To approve Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants Policy & Charging Policy

Staff Contact:
Steven Lee-Foster, Operations Director, ACS

Tel: 01992 555748

Executive Member: Richard Roberts

Portfolio: Adult Care & Health

1. **Decision**

To approve amendments to the Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant (DDFG) Policy, and the implementation of a Charging Policy for the Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency (HHIA), in line with recommendations made in the outcome of the internal audit completed by HCC's SIAS in June 2019.

2. **Reasons for the decision**

The member authorities of the HHIA (Broxbourne Borough Council, East Herts Council, North Hertfordshire District Council, Stevenage Borough Council and Watford Borough Council) have delegated their statutory responsibility for the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (as amended) to Hertfordshire County Council. The discretionary policy complements the mandatory grants policy, and in April 2018 was approved by the member authorities to enable the County Council to provide discretionary grants on the member authorities' behalf.

The revised version of the DDFG policy now proposed has been developed following recommendations made in the outcome of the internal audit completed by HCC's Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS) in June 2019.

The Charging Policy has been developed in response to the internal audit of the HHIA. The audit identified that the HHIA is currently failing to generate the volume of work and income levels required from projects that would allow them to run as a cost neutral operation. The HHIA undertakes a significant amount of work – including on behalf of registered providers – that does not generate income. This work is, in most cases, necessary to fit within the overall aims of the HHIA, but the fee basis for specialist work, general fees, and detailed work that does not progress have not to date been in place.

The Charging policy outlines our approach to fees and charges for works to improve HHIA's income generation, in line with the Housing Renewal Grants (Services and Charges) Order 1996 and other legislation.

Both policies will be reviewed annually. The amendments to the DDFG Policy and the implementation of the Charging Policy, will go some way to address the issues flagged in SIAS' audit report.

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3. **Alternative options considered and rejected**²

The DDFG policy relates to the provision of discretionary disabled facilities grants. The members of the HHIA, including the County Council, wish to extend the range of support available and use the powers available to increase discretionary support. The option of not developing the DDFG policy was considered, but the HHIA member authorities wish to extend the range of support available, and simplify certain aspects of the application process in relation to the means-test.

4. **Consultation**

(a) **Comments of Executive Member**^{3 4}

The Executive Member has read and digested both policies and is in approval of the amendments to the DDFG policy and the implementation of the Charging policy.

(b) **Comments of other consultees**⁵

The Adult Care Services Management Board has read and digested both policies and are in approval of the amendments to the DDFG policy and the implementation of the Charging policy.

The policy has also been endorsed by the member authorities of the HHIA.

5. **Following consultation with, and the concurrence of the Executive Member, I am proceeding with the proposed decision.**

Signed:

Title: ... Date: 25/9/19

6. **Copies of agreed document to:**

- All consultees
- Chairman, and Vice-Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Hard & electronic copy available for public inspection both at County Hall and on www.hertfordshire.gov.uk Democratic Services - Room 213 County Hall. democratic.services@hertfordshire.gov.uk

¹ for guidance see Chief Legal Officer's note "Taking Decisions"

² details of any alternative options considered and rejected by the officer at the time the decision was made

³ record any conflict of interest declared by any Executive Member consulted. If an Executive Member declares a conflict of interest DO NOT PROCEED without seeking advice from the Chief Legal Officer

⁴ If the matter has general significance for the Council and/or is, or is likely to be, controversial, then the officer shall consult the appropriate Executive Member before proceeding. In some cases it will be necessary to consult more than one Executive Member, and in some cases the Leader of the Council will need to be consulted

⁵ If the matter has local significance, but no general significance for the Council and no controversial aspects, the officer shall consult or inform the local member in writing (or by e mail) and proceed. It is essential that all officers responsible for delivering services ensure that local members are kept well briefed on issues affecting their areas.