

CABINET
30TH SEPTEMBER 2024

**COMMUNITIES, HOMES AND REGENERATION
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE TASK AND FINISH GROUP
REPORT – ADAPTATIONS POLICY**

To provide Cabinet with the findings and recommendations of the Communities, Homes and Regeneration Scrutiny Task and Finish Group on the Council's Adaptations Policy

Cabinet is being asked to consider the findings of the Communities, Homes and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee's Task and Finish group and the following recommendations:

- 1) That the Council's Cabinet be requested to consider re-introducing means testing for medium scale Disabled Facilities Grants
- 2) That the amended Draft Adaptations Policy (attached as Appendix 1 to the report) incorporating the Group's suggested amendments for change be adopted subject to the Cabinet's consideration of recommendation 1 above.
- 3) Grant Repayment Conditions on all DFGs over £5,000 if the property is sold within 10 years of completion of the adaptation with only the following exemptions:
 - a) Financial hardship
 - b) Moving for employment reasons
 - c) Moving into residential care
- 4) Adaptations for foster children placed in Carmarthenshire by another Local Authority will only be considered if the criteria in the policy are met.
- 5) That staffing is reviewed to ensure adequate resources are available to deal with the ongoing high demand for the service.

Reasons:

The Adoption of the Amended Adaptations Policy will assist the Council in managing the demand for Disabled Facilities Grants

Cabinet Decision Required YES

Council Decision Required NO

CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER:- Councillor Linda Evans – Homes and Deputy Leader

Directorate: Name of Head of Service: Linda Rees Jones Report Author: Kevin Thomas	Designations: Head of Administration & Law, Democratic Services Officer	Tel: Email addresses: 01267 224010 lrjones@carmarthenshire.gov.uk 01267 224027 kjthomas@carmarthenshire.gov.uk
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Communities, Homes and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group Report – Adaptations Policy

At its meeting held on 28th September 2023 the Communities, Homes and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee agreed to establish a Scrutiny Task & Finish Group on the operation of the Council's Adaptations Service within the Community Department's Housing Property and Strategic Projects Division to examine both the current backlog of work and the processes with a view to improving service delivery for both the public and contract holders (tenants).

In selecting this topic for review the committee identified:

- The Council had a statutory duty under the Housing Grant Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 to provide adaptations for those who qualify for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). Adaptations for Council Tenants are provided according to the same framework as DFG's.
- The provision of adaptations can assist with timely hospital discharge and can help prevent accidents such as trips, slips and falls thereby also assisting the social care sector by reducing the need for homecare and residential care.
- The number of requests for adaptations had increased significantly and that with an aging population it was anticipated that demand would increase in the future.
- The increase in demand had resulted in a backlog of clients awaiting an Occupational Therapist (OT) to assess the applicant and the technical officer to cost and order the work. The Home Adaptation Team are currently working overtime to deal with the demand.

Main Scope and Aims of the Group

The main Scope and Aims of the group were agreed as follows:

- To focus on reviewing the current policy and current high demand for the services and to contribute to the development of a new Home Adaptation Policy.
- To discuss the current demand for home adaptations
- To discuss the current service delivery model
- To consider the impact of removing the means test for Disabled Facilities Grants
- To examine the resources available, budgetary, and staffing, required to meet demand.

The Group, having examined the current processes and demand on the Adaptations service, came to the following conclusions and recommendations.

Conclusions

1. The Adaptations Service was facing increased demand for Disabled Facilities Grants resulting in a backlog of applications awaiting processing.
2. Current staffing resources were contributing to a backlog of applications but that a business case was being prepared for additional staff.
3. The removal of means testing for medium scale DFGs had resulted in an increased demand for grants and that it's re-introduction could reduce both the level of that demand and the resultant call on diminishing resources. The Council's Cabinet should consider re-introducing means testing for medium scale applications. If adopted, that would result in a loss of Welsh Government grant funding of £122,763. However, based on the last 2 years' data on repeat applicants because of the removal of means testing, this would result in a net increase in budget of £164,701 per year.
4. The terms of the award of a DFG to a foster child placed within Carmarthenshire by another local authority should be clearly set out and detailed within the Council's adaptations policy.
5. The terms for the requirement of repayment of a DFG and any exceptions thereto should be clearly set out within the Council's Adaptations Policy.
6. The current Traffic Light System used to assess the feasibility of a council property for adaptations should be replaced with a system based on meeting an individual's need if the circumstances warranted as set out within option 3 in this report.
7. That while the demand for DFG's was of concern, the decision on the prioritisation of grant awards based on need should be undertaken by the Council's professional officers

Recommendations

1. The Council's Cabinet be requested to consider re-introducing means testing for medium scale Disabled Facilities Grants
2. That the amended Draft Adaptations Policy, attached as Appendix 1 to the report, incorporating the Group's suggested amendments for change be adopted subject to the Cabinet's consideration of recommendation 1 above.
3. Grant Repayment Conditions on all DFGs over £5,000 if the property is sold within 10 years of completion of the adaptation with only the following exemptions:
 - a. Financial hardship
 - b. Moving for employment reasons
 - c. Moving into residential care
4. Adaptations for foster children placed in Carmarthenshire by another Local Authority will only be considered if the criteria in the policy are met.
5. That staffing is reviewed to ensure adequate resources are available to deal with the ongoing high demand for the service.

The attached report details the Task and Finish Group's findings and recommendation to the Cabinet for approval.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?	YES 1) Task and Finish Report 2) Amended Adaptations Policy (Appendix 1)

IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report:

Signed: Steve P Murphy

Head of Law Governance & Civil Services

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets	Bio-diversity & Climate Change
YES	NONE	YES	NONE	YES	NONE	NONE	NONE

1. Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities

The Task & Finish Group recommends a change in policy, as set out in the Report

Finance

If means testing is reinstated for medium Disabled Facilities Grants it would result in a loss of additional WG grant funding of £122,763. However, based on the last 2 years' data on repeat applicants because of the removal of means testing, this would result in a net increase in budget of £164,701 per year.

Risk Management Issues

Without changes to Policy, there is a risk that the Authority would have reduced funding to respond to the need for adaptations in the County.

CONSULTATIONS

I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below:

Signed: Steve P Murphy

Head of Law Governance & Civil Services

1. Scrutiny Committee request for pre-determination

N/A

2. Local Member(s)

N/A

3. Community / Town Council

N/A

4. Relevant Partners

N/A

5. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations

N/A

**CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO
HOLDER(S) AWARE/CONSULTED**

YES

Include any observations here

**Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information
List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:**

THESE ARE DETAILED BELOW OR THERE ARE NONE (Delete as applicable)

Title of Document	File Ref No.	Locations that the papers are available for public inspection
None	N/A	N/a