

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Health and Housing Policy Development Review Panel

Date **11 September 2014**

Report of: **Director of Community**

Subject: **DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT 2014-16**

SUMMARY

This report outlines the Council's achievement in the delivery of Disabled Facilities Grants in 2013/14, the current position with this year's programme and the challenges for 2015/16 with changes to the way DFGs are funded under the Better Care Fund.

RECOMMENDATION

That members note the position with the regards to the Disabled Facilities Grants programme in 2013/14 and the challenges for the current financial year and beyond.

INTRODUCTION

1. Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) are mandatory grants provided to enable a qualifying disabled person to remain in, or facilitate, living in their own homes as independently as possible. For example, a one off grant enabling the adaption of a bathroom into a level access shower room can negate the ongoing costs associated with providing an expensive personal care package. The potential cost savings to the Social Services budget is of particular importance now that the County Council will take on the responsibility for distributing funding for DFGs to Local Authorities.
2. This report describes the output for the last financial year 2013/14 and the current year's programme up to 31 July 2014. There is also an explanation of how the funding for DFGs will change from April 2015.

CURRENT POSITION

3. In 2013/14 we completed 107 cases, the highest number ever achieved by FBC. The average time taken from initial enquiry to final payment was reduced to 22 weeks (although the majority of cases were completed within 18 weeks) with an average cost per case of £5,435.
4. The table below shows how this compares to previous years.

Year	Cases	Average time weeks	Average cost per case	Total expenditure
2013/14	107	22	£5,435	£581,516
2012/13	92	26	£5,888	£541,760
2011/12	71	29	£5,854	£415,681
2010/11	64	30	£6,728	£430,601

5. The cost of DFG's in 2013/14 was funded as follows

Government Grant	£254,717
FBC contribution (from capital programme ¹)	£197,799
One-off additional Government Grant	£75,600
Underspend from 12/13 DFG budget	£53,400
Total	£581,516

¹ Annual budget of £170,000 increased by £27,516 to meet overspend. Met from underspend in Home Improvement Loan budget – see Executive report “Actual Capital Expenditure and Financing 2013/14” 7 July 2014

6. The DFG team work with the assistance of the Home Improvement Agency (HIA) which is provided under contract from Hampshire County Council's Supporting People programme. The HIA provide a case worker and surveyor services for customers helping them to complete forms, prepare plans and gather builders' estimates etc. The case worker also ensures that people are receiving any other assistance and benefits to which they are entitled.
7. The improved performance of the DFG team as shown in the table above has been achieved by revising procedures and ensuring that the Home Improvement Agency continues to perform as expected, maintaining a good working relationship with local contractors and reducing the time spent liaising with Occupational Therapists.

FUNDING

8. The way that we receive government funding for DFGs is changing. Instead of the money coming direct from the Government (Communities and Local Government – CLG), in future it will come directly from Hampshire County Council (HCC) as part of the Better Care Fund. Funding for this year was provided by the CLG but from 2015/16 the County have been given indicative amounts that the CLG consider appropriate for award to each Borough/District. Crucially, these amounts are not 'ring fenced' and the County could choose to disregard the guidance. The legal responsibility however, to provide DFGs remains with the Boroughs/Districts. The indicative figure for Fareham for 2015/16 is £330,000, an increase of £65,829 on the CLG grant of £264,171 this year. The County have intimated that there is the potential for the amount to be increased based upon performance and evidence of savings made.
9. Officers have therefore, taken the lead in liaising with HCC to promote the importance of the disabled adaptation grant work that we, and the other boroughs/districts within Hampshire, undertake.
10. The main emphasis is to show the savings to the Social Services budget that can be made by providing adaptations to people's homes that enable them to live independently.

CURRENT YEAR PERFORMANCE TO DATE (2014-15)

11. In 2014/15 the DFG programme has received a grant from CLG totalling £264,171, together with £170,000 from the Council's own capital programme. In July 2014, the Executive agreed to supplement the DFG programme further by transferring some of the 2013/14 Home Improvement Loan underspend resulting in a total amount available of £470,200.
12. As shown in the table below, as at 31st July 2014, when the estimated cost of pending cases received up to this date are taken into account, the budget for this financial year is almost fully committed. This means that without additional funding we will be unable to fund any new cases we receive from the 1st of August until the new financial year. Without extra funding being made available there will be a backlog of cases with significantly increased waiting times.

Budget		£470,200
Expenditure to date (including 2013/14 approvals)	£182,917	
Committed expenditure for approved cases	£ 89,963	
Estimated value of pending cases	£199,000	
Total	£471,880	
Balance		(£1,680)

13. As things stand, we will only be able to complete approximately 77 cases this financial year resulting in a backlog of cases for 2015/16.

14. Although the average cost of a DFG in 2013/14 reduced slightly on the previous year, as the economy improves we do not expect this trend to continue due to contractors' prices increasing.

RISK ASSESSMENT

15. There is a risk that if there are not sufficient resources available to meet the demand for DFGs, customers will have to wait longer for their adaptations to be carried out which will create a backlog and could give rise to complaints. This may give rise to an increase in demand on Social Services and NHS budgets as a result. In order to reduce the risk of complaints, officers are exploring a number of options to increase the funds available for DFG's. This includes requesting additional funding from CLG, HCC and exploring the option of additional "top up" funding from a virement from FBC's own resources.

16. Although we do not have any specific information at present, there is also a risk that HCC may not re-tender the Home Improvement Agency contract when it expires in March 2015. This is due to HCC conducting a fundamental review of the Supporting People programme and associated contracts. If the contract is not renewed we will lose the services of a surveyor and a case worker, potentially increasing the administration costs for FBC. Officers will continue to keep a watching brief on developments and dialogue with HCC is ongoing.

CONCLUSION

17. Over the past year there have been significant improvements in the DFG 'customer journey' whilst also achieving a reduction in the overall cost of the adaptations. However, we expect an increase in referrals for DFGs, due in some part to the ageing population and greater awareness of the help available. Therefore, the pressure on the Council's budget is likely to continue with the added uncertainty of future funding from HCC. This could result in longer waiting times for an adaptation to be carried out and therefore reduced customer satisfaction.

Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact Giles Hearn. (Ext 4404)