

## **DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS**

**EXECUTIVE MEMBER:** Cllr George Clements

**LEAD OFFICER:** Mike Tichford

**REPORT AUTHOR:** Debbie Cochrane

**Summary:** Monitoring of the budget for mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants has revealed a shortfall in meeting anticipated commitments for the remainder of the year.

**Recommendation:** That the current position be noted and

- 1) The budget for Disabled Facilities Grants be increased by £100,000 in the current year by virement from the Renovation Grants Budget
- 2) That an application for supplementary credit approval be made to the Secretary of State

**Impact on delivering Copeland 2020 objectives:** The provision of Disabled Facilities Grants is a statutory duty

**Impact on other statutory objectives (e.g. crime & disorder, LA21):** None

**Financial and human resource implications:** Proposed virement of £100,000 can be accommodated without any increase to the approved total Housing Capacity Budget.

**Project & Risk Management:** None. Council has previously approved £500,000 as part of financing the 2005/06 Capital Programme for Housing.

### **Key Decision Status**

- **Financial:** None  
- **Ward:** None

**Other Ward Implications:** None

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Under the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 the Council has a mandatory duty to consider applications for Disabled Facilities Grants. Such grants which are subject to a test of the households financial resources are designed to enable adaptations to meet the needs of a disabled occupant. The needs and requirements for every application for grant are considered carefully by Cumbria Social Services and/or NHS occupational therapists prior to approval. Under the current formula, each grant award is funded 60% by the government and 40% by the Council. However, the government's contribution is subject to an annual maximum allocation. For 2005/06 the Government allocation is £150,000 (60%) to

which the Council have allocated £100,000 (40%). The budget for Disabled Facilities Grants for the current year is therefore £250,000 and is contained within the total Housing Grants Capital Budget of £1,552,474.16, after account for carry forward from previous year and a £108,474.

## **2. THE CURRENT SITUATION**

- 2.1 At the beginning of the financial year there were approved applications for Disabled Facilities Grants, generating a commitment of £57,164.71 against total budget provision of £281,670.37, leaving £224,505.66 available for new application approvals throughout the year. Monitoring of the budget indicates that as of 31 August 2005 a further 25 Disabled Facilities Grants had been approved, generating additional commitments of £196,550.07 or on average a grant award of £7,642.46. This means that only £27,995.59 of the current Disabled Facilities Grant Budget is left for new grant approvals for the remainder of the year. There are currently 18 further applications in the system. These may or may not proceed, but it would be prudent to ensure that they will and that the average grant award will remain at £7,642.46. It is therefore, forecast that a further grant commitment of £137,564.28, or a shortfall of £109,608.69 against current budget provision. This situation is not unique. In 2004/05 the Disabled Facilities Grant Budget was increased from £236,488.00 to £292,100.00 to accommodate demand. Last year the average Disabled Facilities Grant award was £6,091.65, or 20% less than the current year average.
- 2.2 The benefits for DFG to a disabled resident impact on their everyday lives in many ways something as small as a grab rail can have a big difference to someone with mobility problems. A Stairlift can give an occupant full access to their property and in many ways gives them back some sort of "normality" e.g. things an able bodied person would take for granted such as bathing. During this financial year the Council has helped 30 residents, this includes ground floor extensions, Stairlifts, through floor lifts and shower facilities.
- 2.3 Discussions are currently taking place between the RSL's within the borough and the council regarding DFG's. a further report will be made to executive in due course as there may be financial implications.

## **3. OPTIONS**

- 3.1 There are two options available to the Council
  - The Council is under a statutory obligation to determine an application for Disabled Facilities Grant within 6 months of receipt. It is anticipated that the remaining budget will be exhausted by the end of September 2005. It is possible that new applications could be held for the maximum period prior to approval, in which case commitments would count against next years budget. However, in do so the Council would not be seen to be assisting the most vulnerable residents of the Borough in a speedy manner.
  - An additional £100,000 could be vired from the Discretionary Renovation Grant Budget to the Disabled Facilities Grant Budget. Such action would not require any amendment to the existing total Housing Capital Budget and is funded from the Council's own resources. It is anticipated that this will be sufficient to meet current anticipated demand for Disabled Facilities Grants this financial year. In addition, as the amount of Government contribution is fixed on an annual basis, a bid for additional funding should be made to the Secretary of State. Details of the virement are shown in Appendix A.

## **4. CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1 The Disabled Facilities Grant Budget is under severe stress due to the current level of

demand. It is estimated that to continue to provide this mandatory form of assistance to vulnerable members of our society, £100,000 be vired from the Discretionary Renovation Grant Budget. This will enable the Council to continue to process applications currently in the pipeline without excessive delay. The virement has a £nil effect on the total Housing Capital Budget as shown in Appendix A to this report. In addition it is proposed that an application to the Secretary of State be made to seek additional financial contributions to the increased Disabled Facilities Grant Budget. Because this report is based on past profiles and future projections, officers will continue to monitor the situation.

### **List of Appendices**

Appendix A – Approved/Revised Housing Capital Budgets 2005/06

### **List of Background Documents:**

### **List of Consultees:**

#### **Corporate Team**

**Paul Robson**

**Tom Bruce**