

NORTH SOMERSET COUNCIL

**DECISION OF COUNCILLOR ELFAN AP REES
THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING,
HIGHWAYS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING
with advice from the DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES**



DECISION NO: P&C 03 (2017/18 Scheme)

SUBJECT: Revision of the Housing Renewals Assistance Policy

DECISION:

To approve the revised Housing Renewals Assistance Policy as set out in Appendix 1.

BACKGROUND:

The purpose of this decision is to approve the revision of the Housing Renewals Assistance Policy, relating to the Council's power to provide assistance under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 to offer assistance to improve living conditions.

In order to use the powers to provide assistance the Council must have adopted and published a policy. The original policy was approved by executive on 1st July 2003 and has subsequently been reviewed and/or amended each year.

The main changes proposed are as follows;

- 1) The introduction of a Fast Track Loan for urgent works e.g. to replace a boiler or carryout an electrical rewire or upgrade.
- 2) The Adaptations Support Assistance has been replaced by Private Sector Renewals Assistance and now includes the facility to top up a Disabled Facilities Grant on complex schemes where all other sources of funding have been explored.
- 3) Two new initiatives have been introduced to increase the numbers of properties in the private rented sector for letting at the Local Housing Allowance rate through nominations made by the council, in the form of a minor works improvement grant of up to £1000 and 0% interest loan for up to £5000.

Reasons:

The corporate plan sets out the council's vision and overall priorities. The plan identifies key outcomes which detail what the council wants to achieve for local people, these cover 3 key areas:

- Prosperity and opportunity
- Health and wellbeing, and
- Quality places

Under each of these broad outcomes, specific ambitions are identified. For Quality places there are;

- Enable sustainable housing growth which protects our natural and built environment and the special character of our villages.
- Build and sustain great places to live and visit – vibrant, accessible and safe.
- Empower people to contribute to their community and communities to provide their own solutions.

This policy helps support the delivery of the Corporate Plan by residents in need improve and adapt their homes and enable the occupiers to live in a healthy and safe environment that meets their needs.

The policy continues to be based on the principle that the prime responsibility for the maintenance of a home is the homeowners but recognises that the Council have an important role in providing assistance, particularly to the elderly and most vulnerable who do not have resources available to do this.

Other Alternatives Considered:

Not updating the Policy – this would mean that the policy could not respond to changing needs and solutions. The Policy is reviewed annually and amended to ensure local need is met in the most effective way. Examples of best practice from other authorities are considered and adopted where local benefits can be seen.

Financial Implications:

The loans are provided through Wessex Home Improvement Loans who work across the South West Region with a consortium of Local Authorities. In response to the changing financial climate Wessex have continued to broaden the range of products available. The policy takes advantage of the full range of products available to enable assistance to be offered to a wider range of vulnerable clients whilst retaining the viability of the loan scheme.

The provision of loans/grants will be funded through the councils approved housing capital programme. This includes contributions from the Better Care Fund (to fund the Disabled Facilities Grant programme and assistance to support this through Private Sector Renewal Assistance and Move on Assistance) and S106 contributions from the Hinkley Point development (to increase the supply of private rented housing at rents covered by Housing Benefit to help mitigate the impact of the development on local housing markets).

Implications for Future Years:

The policy will continue to be reviewed annually to take account of new initiatives and new products that become available and in light of the changing financial climate.

The availability of all types of assistance and loans will be subject to resources and the Council may withdraw, suspend or amend this policy (or part of) at any time should circumstances require. Applications must be formally approved, in writing by the Council and the issuing of forms, schedules of work or advice does not commit the Council to any future liability to approve an application.

Reviewed

Mark Hughes, Head of Housing and Strategy

Dated.....

Signed:

Councillor Elfan Ap Rees
Executive Member for Strategic Planning, Highways,
Economic Development and Housing

Dated:

Confirmation of advice given:

Signed:

Sheila Smith
Director, People and Communities

Dated: