

## **North Somerset Council Decision**



**Decision Of: Councillor Bell, Executive Member for Housing**

**With Advice From: Director of Public Health and Regulatory Services**

**Directorate: Public Health and Regulatory Services**

**Decision No: PHRS060 2022/2023**

**Subject: Housing Renewals Assistance Policy – Update**

**Key Decision: Yes**

**Reason:**

The policy is effective across all wards in North Somerset.

**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 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 the Executive on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2003 and has subsequently been reviewed and/or amended regularly, to keep pace with new good practice guidance and changes in the market.

The key changes proposed are as follows:

- 1) To adopt Council Tax Reduction as an additional passporting benefit under the means test for the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). Council Tax benefit was a qualifying low income passport benefit but when this support was locally determined it was no longer the case. There has been a change which now allows adopting this benefit to passport applicants through the DFG means test which will improve delivery of the grant and simplify for applicants.
- 2) Increased flexibility of the use of the Private Sector Support Assistance grant, to broaden the support for complex adaptations, allowing in exceptional circumstances the cost of decant accommodation for the disabled person and if necessary, their family while works are carried out. In general families prefer to remain in their own homes during works but sometimes, the considerable disruption and dust can present greater risks and it is sensible to relocate while some of the work is carried out. Offering this support as part of the project planning will help reduce delays for delivery of complex adaptations.
- 3) Increase the Decent Homes Loan Assistance from £15,000 to £20,000 to reflect the general rise in costs of home repairs and maintenance.

- 4) Increase the Park Home Loan from £5000 to £8000, to reflect increased building costs. .
- 5) Increase the North Somerset Fuel Buying Loan from £500 to £1000 to reflect the increased cost of fuel.
- 6) Remove the Tenant Ready Loan. This was an initiative established through Hinkley C funds; we no longer need a specific loan; landlord cases can be considered through the existing Landlord Loan.

**Decision:**

Approve a revised Housing Renewal Assistance Policy (**Appendix A**), relating to the Council's general power to provide assistance under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England & Wales) Order 2002 to offer assistance to improve living conditions.

**Reasons:**

The policy has been updated to introduce new and revised initiatives and respond to inflationary pressures.

**Options Considered**

Not updating the Policy – this would result the policy could not respond to changing needs and financial requirements of providing assistance. The policy is reviewed annually and amended as necessary, to ensure local need is met in the most effective way.

**Financial Implications:**

**Costs:**

The costs to deliver the policy are met through existing resources.

**Funding:**

The provision of loans/grants will be funded through the councils approved housing capital programme. This includes contributions from the Better Care Fund (Disabled Facilities Grant element), specifically in support of disabled adaptations and social care capital schemes.

The loans are provided through our partner Lendology CIC who work with a consortium of local authorities across the South West region. The policy takes advantage of the 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.

**Legal Powers and Implications:**

The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 provides the Council with the power to provide assistance, providing have a published policy.

### **Climate Change and Environmental Implications:**

The policy includes assistance to help with the installation of renewable technologies and works to insulate and improve the thermal comfort of homes, which contribute to the climate emergency action plan and the aim of becoming a carbon neutral council by 2030.

Whilst these changes are not specific to climate change, they will further support the above through the increasing value of available loan products.

### **Consultation:**

The amendments to the policy have been shared with the Occupational Therapy Team who have made suggestions to support adaptations.

The Adult Services and Housing Policy and Scrutiny Panel have also been consulted and are supportive.

### **Risk Management:**

Any risk to the council is mitigated, as 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.

### **Equality Implications:**

Have you undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment? Yes

Positive outcomes for people with protected characteristics have been identified for the proposals which will improve opportunities for vulnerable people to receive assistance, many of who will have protected characteristics for example older and disabled people.

### **Corporate Implications:**

This policy helps support the delivery of the Corporate Plan 2020 - 2024 by helping residents in need improve and adapt their homes and enable the occupiers to live in a healthy and safe environment that meets their needs.

### **Appendices:**

**Appendix A – Updated Housing Renewals Assistance Policy**

**Background Papers:**

Housing Renewals Assistance Policy – current

[HRAP revision Jan2022 \(n-somerset.gov.uk\)](https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk)

**Signatories:**

**Decision Maker(s):**



Signed:

Title: Executive Member for Housing

Date: 15 March 2023

**With Advice From:**



Signed:

Title: Director of Public Health and Regulatory Services

Date: 15 March 2023

**Footnote: Details of changes made and agreed by the decision taker since publication of the proposed (pre-signed) decision notice, if applicable:**