

REPORT TO	DATE OF MEETING
Cabinet	26 October 2016

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SUBJECT	PORTFOLIO	AUTHOR	ITEM
Private Sector Housing Grants Programme	Strategic Planning and Housing	Strategic Housing Manager	

SUMMARY AND LINK TO CORPORATE PRIORITIES

The last Private Sector House Condition Survey was undertaken in 2012, and found that 19.8% of the private sector housing stock within the borough was non-decent. In response to this, it is proposed that the Council implement a grants programme to support vulnerable home owners to improve their properties to reduce the number of non-decent homes, and create stronger more sustainable communities. This will form part of the Housing Capital Programme to support the delivery of the South Ribble Housing Framework, which was approved by Cabinet in March 2016.

The contents of this report supports the Corporate Priorities of “A Strong South Ribble in the heart of a prosperous Central Lancashire” and “Creating Strong and Healthy Communities”.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- a) Note the contents of this report and approve the Private Sector Housing Grants Programme

DETAILS AND REASONING

Background

In 2012, Private Sector House Condition Survey was commissioned by the Council to understand the nature and condition of the private sector housing in the borough. It identified that 19.8% of private sector housing stock in the borough still failed to meet the Decent Homes Standard. The national level of non-decent homes is higher at 22% (English Housing Survey, 2012).

A house is deemed to meet the decent standard, if it meets the following:

- the statutory minimum standard for housing (the Housing Health and Safety System (HHSRS) since April 2006); homes posing a Category 1 hazard under the HHSRS are considered non-decent. (Appendix 1 provides more details on category 1 hazards).
- be in a reasonable state of repair
- have reasonably modern facilities and services
- provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort

Current work

Currently, the main focus of the Council's private sector work is energy efficiency. The Council provides limited assistance to home owners which provides energy efficiency measures funded through the Lancashire County Council's Winter Warmth campaign. In addition to this, assistance

is provided to households, where they qualify through the Government's ECO scheme (Energy Company Obligation) through local installers.

In the past, the Council has provided financial assistance to vulnerable homeowners to improve their homes, which has proved extremely successful and beneficial to residents of the borough. Recently, previous work undertaken by the Council has been recognised by Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC). In the latest data released by DECC for the period of 2012 to 2014 for national fuel poverty, South Ribble was not only the lowest in Lancashire but in the North West.

Since the demise of many national funding streams, programmes for energy efficiency measures have now almost ceased. This will have an impact on future fuel poverty data for South Ribble. This funding from the Council would be used to target and assist those residents in most need and where possible to attract other sources of external funding which will ensure that assistance provided will be cost effective and deliver the most measures as possible.

It should be noted that there is currently no funding or schemes available for improvements relating to disrepair.

Proposed Grants Programme

The South Ribble Housing Framework 2016-19 has identified improving existing housing stock as a priority, with an action to reduce the number of non-decent homes across the borough.

As such, the Council has allocated £500,000 for a three year grants programme to support vulnerable home owners improve their homes, where they are classed as non-decent. This forms part of the Housing Capital Programme which was approved by Cabinet in March 2016.

The proposed grants programme is detailed below:

Grants will be available for the following:

- Windows
- Insulation
- Heating
- Disrepair

To be eligible for a grant, the applicant must meet the following criteria:

- Be an owner occupier, and the grant must be for the main residence of the applicant.
- Have lived in the property for a minimum of 3 years.
- Meet one of the following:
 - People aged 65 years with pre-existing medical condition (from an agreed list from Lancashire County Council which must be evidenced by a medical professional in writing)
 - Anyone with a disability (the applicant must be registered disabled) who permanently lives at the address.
 - Households with children under 5 years of age who permanently lives at the address.
- Not had any other home improvement grant from South Ribble Borough Council in the past 3 years. (Disabled facilities grants are excluded from this).

Tenants of private landlords and registered providers (i.e. housing associations) are not eligible for the grant.

A land charge will be placed on the property for five years meaning the grant will be repaid if the property is sold within 5 years of the grant.

It is difficult to predict exactly how many households will apply for a grant, but a promotional campaign will be prepared in order to raise the profile of the assistance programme. It is estimated that a minimum of 50 properties could benefit from a grant.

WIDER IMPLICATIONS

In the preparation of this report, consideration has been given to the impact of its proposals in all the areas listed below, and the table shows any implications in respect of each of these. The risk assessment which has been carried out forms part of the background papers to the report.

FINANCIAL	<p>The Council's approved Capital Programme includes a budget of £500,000 in 2016/17 for the Private Sector Home Improvement Grant Programme, funded from RTB clawback receipts. This budget will be re-phased to reflect the expected delivery of the programme over a three year period.</p> <p>The maximum value of grant payable for each type of work is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Windows - 50% of the cost to a maximum value of £2,000 ▪ Insulation - Grant of £4,000 per property ▪ Boiler/Heating - 50% of the cost to a maximum value of £1,000 ▪ Disrepair - 50% of the cost a maximum value of £5,000 <p>Approved grants will be paid following the completion and sign off of the improvement works by the Housing team.</p> <p>On completion the grant will incur a land charge against the property to the value of the grant for a term of 5 years.</p>		
LEGAL	<p>The proposed expenditure is clearly for a lawful purpose – amongst other statutory provisions section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 is relevant here.</p> <p>Clearly the housing officers will need to ensure that all applicants for grants are robustly checked to ensure they meet the requirements of our programme/policy.</p>		
RISK	<p>Housing grants programmes have been delivered for several years, and procedures are in place to ensure effective management of the process. Regular Housing Capital Programme meetings will support the management of the expenditure of the funds.</p>		
THE IMPACT ON EQUALITY	<p>An equality impact assessment has been undertaken for the Strategic Housing service and there is a neutral impact on the protected characteristic groups. Given that this grants programme will benefit residents with a disability and households with children under 5 years old, this proposal will have a positive impact on the following protected characteristics: disability and maternity.</p>		
OTHER (see below)			
<i>Asset Management</i>	<i>Corporate Plans and Policies</i>	<i>Crime and Disorder</i>	<i>Efficiency Savings/Value for Money</i>

<i>Equality, Diversity and Community Cohesion</i>	<i>Freedom of Information/ Data Protection</i>	<i>Health and Safety</i>	<i>Health Inequalities</i>
<i>Human Rights Act 1998</i>	<i>Implementing Electronic Government</i>	<i>Staffing, Training and Development</i>	<i>Sustainability</i>

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

South Ribble Strategic Housing Framework 2016/2019.