

North East Derbyshire District Council

Cabinet

12 March 2020

Discretionary Housing Payments Policy

Report of Councillor P Parkin, Portfolio Holder for Finance

Purpose of the Report

- To seek approval to adopt the refreshed Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) Policy attached at **Appendix 1**.
- A DHP policy has been in place for a number of years so in line with good practice it is regularly reviewed for changes in legislation etc. This refresh therefore takes account of all such changes to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

1 Report Details

- 1.1 This policy defines the award process for customers. Discretionary housing payments are intended to provide short term financial support to those most in need. Through the operation of this policy the Council seeks to ensure that the most vulnerable receive the support they need whilst a more permanent solution is sought. This includes:
- Preventing/alleviating homelessness and poverty
 - Supporting young people transition to adult life
 - Enabling young families to stay in their homes where there are good reasons for this
 - Providing short term support to vulnerable customers facing shortfalls in housing benefit and universal credit.
 - Supporting those affected by the under occupation deduction or benefit cap
- 1.2 The Council is committed to working with the local voluntary sector, social landlords and other interested parties in the District to maximise entitlement to all available state benefits. This is reflected in the day to day administration of the Scheme.
- 1.3 DHP is intended to be short term funding and, in the main, awards will be for between three and six months. However, longer term awards may be considered in exceptional circumstances. Under this policy, awards longer than 12 months are not made, however a further claim can be made at this time if circumstances require.
- 1.4 Awards are made based on the information provided in the customer's application and the subsequent verification of evidence. Applicants must be entitled to housing benefit/universal credit and be able to demonstrate that they are unable to meet their housing costs. The amount and length of the award will be decided based on

whether the policy criteria is met from the information provided in the claim and subsequent follow up. One off payments are considered such as rent in advance, deposits or removal costs.

- 1.5 A dispute process is contained within the policy. Therefore should an applicant wish to challenge a decision made by the Council they can do so through this process.

2 Conclusions and Reasons for Recommendation

- 2.1 The DHP policy defines the award process for customers. Discretionary housing payments are intended to provide short term financial support to those most in need. Through the operation of this policy the Council seeks to ensure that the most vulnerable receive the support they need whilst a more permanent solution is sought.
- 2.2 The DHP policy refresh therefore takes account of all legislative and operational changes to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

3 Consultation and Equality Impact

- 3.1 Each DHP award is treated strictly on its merits and all customers receive equal and fair treatment. The policy contains a dispute process to ensure that all disputes against a decision are also dealt with fairly and equitably.

4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 4.1 No alternatives found - the Council requires a policy in order to operate the scheme.

5 Implications

5.1 Finance and Risk Implications

- 5.1.1 The Government makes an annual contribution towards the cost of the DHP scheme. Should this be exceeded then the Council is required to meet the additional costs. A statutory cap of 2.5 times the Government contribution is placed on the annual spend for each Council.

5.2 Legal Implications including Data Protection

- 5.2.2 There are no legal or Data Protection implications arising

5.3 Human Resources Implications

- 5.3.1 There are no human resource implications arising

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 That Cabinet approve and adopt the DHP Policy 2020 detailed at **Appendix 1**.

7 Decision Information

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|---|------------------|
| <p>Is the decision a Key Decision? A Key Decision is an executive decision which has a significant impact on two or more District wards or which results in income or expenditure to the Council above the following thresholds: <i>BDC: Revenue - £75,000</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Capital - £150,000</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>NEDDC: Revenue - £100,000</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Capital - £250,000</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Please indicate which threshold applies</i></p> | No |
| <p>Is the decision subject to Call-In? (Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)</p> | No |
| <p>Has the relevant Portfolio Holder been informed</p> | Yes |
| <p>District Wards Affected</p> | No direct impact |
| <p>Links to Corporate Plan priorities or Policy Framework</p> | |

8 Document Information

| Appendix No | Title |
|---|--|
| 1 | Discretionary Housing Payments Policy (2020 refresh) |
| <p>Background Papers (These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Cabinet (NEDDC) or Executive (BDC) you must provide copies of the background papers)</p> | |
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