

Decision under Delegated Powers

Officer Requesting Decision

Rebecca Short – Private Sector Housing Manager

Officer Making the Decision

Alison Simmons – Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing

Recommendation

- 1 To approve the further temporary increase in hours for the post of Housing Support Coordinator (M338) at a salary grade E (from cost centre F321) from 148 hours to 185 hours per week, with effect from 26th August 2021 until 31st March 2022. The posts will report to the Private Sector Housing Manager. The posts will be funded through the 2020-2021 additional Disabled Facilities Grant funding award.
- 2 To approve the temporary increase in hours for the post of Technical Officer (M356) at salary grade SO1 (from cost centre F321) from 37 hours per week to 111, with effect from 20th July 2021 until 31st March 2022. The posts will report to the Private Sector Housing Manager. The post will be funded through the 2020-2021 additional Disabled Facilities Grant funding award.

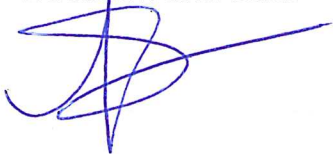
Reason

1&2 To maximize the number of residents assisted through the provision of a Disabled Facilities Grant, through an increase in resources focused on the processing of Disabled Facilities Grant referrals and applications in accordance with the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, and the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002.

Authority for Decision

The delegated function of the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) to agree changes to the establishment, within budget and without major operational disruption or interruption of services or involving a change from direct to indirect provision or vice-versa or other policy implications has been sub-delegated to Heads of Service subject to certain restrictions, which these proposals fall within.

Decision and Date



Alison Simmons
Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing

31st July 2021

Background

On 8th December 2020, The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government wrote to Local Authorities to advise of an additional payment of £68 million for Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) in 2020-2021, which included £133,699 additional DFG funding for Charnwood Borough Council.

This extra boost in DFG funding is to help support local authorities to deliver more home adaptations for those people with disabilities who qualify for a DFG. MHCLG recognise that following the outbreak of Covid-19, local authorities have displayed innovation and resilience in maintaining the delivery of essential services under very challenging circumstances and have faced difficulties, including the delivery of the DFG during the ongoing pandemic.

With this in mind, although MHCLG encourage the allocation of as much of this funding within this financial year, any amounts that cannot be reasonably spent within the year should be spent at the earliest opportunity to ensure that eligible applicants are not disadvantaged.

In March 2020, 71 residents were waiting for a housing assessment. On 23rd March 2020 the first COVID-19 lockdown began, and all housing visits were suspended to protect the vulnerable residents that are assisted through Lightbulb. Although partial housing assessments were completed over the telephone, and via video calls where possible, physical assessments within the home did not reconvene until 21st September 2020, by which time the waiting list had increased significantly to 212.

The Locality Lightbulb Team at Charnwood consists of 3 FTE Housing Support Coordinators (HSCs), 1 Technical Officer, 0.5 FTE Administrative Officers, in addition to a co-located Occupational Therapist Resource employed by Leicestershire County Council.

An additional HSC resource of 0.8 FTE has been in place since January 2021, in line with DD006 2021. This additional resource secured an initial reduction to the waiting list, from 212 to 170. However, incoming referrals for assessments have increased post lockdown and they now match the increased assessment capacity. As a result, the waiting list has plateaued at around 170. Further resources are required to continue the reduction of waiting times for residents in light of the increase in demand for the service. The proposal is to recruit a total of 4 additional officers, 2 HSCs and 2 Technical Officers.

The increase will include the extension of the temporary 0.8FTE HSC resource recruited in January (originally until Sept 5th 2021) and the recruitment of a further 1 FTE HSC for a period of 32 weeks, to focus on the housing assessment and reduction of the referrals on the waiting list for the remainder of this financial year, making a positive impact on assessment waiting list times.

In order to process and approve the increased DFG referrals made as a result of the additional HSC resource, 2 further Technical Officers will be recruited to increase the number of grants that can be assessed, thereby reducing completion times for DFGs, including Discretionary Grants, in line with the Private Sector Housing Grants Policy.

Comments from HR

HR Adviser: Anna Cairns (20/7/21)

Extensions to current arrangements will require a Variation eform to be completed. The normal recruitment process should be followed for vacant posts.

Financial Implications

Additional Post	Annual costs with on-costs	Maximum duration of contract	Estimated costs for the maximum duration of contract	Funding Source
HSC 1	£35,200	31 weeks	£20,984 +£1,335 Mileage £22,319	Additional DFG Allocation awarded in Dec 2020 c/f
HSC 2	£35,200	31 weeks	£20,984 +£1,335 Mileage £22,319	Additional DFG Allocation awarded in Dec 2020 c/f
Technical Officer 1	£39,200	37 weeks	£27,892 +£1,496 Mileage £29,388	Additional DFG Allocation awarded in Dec 2020 c/f
Technical Officer 2	£39,200	37 weeks	£27,892 +£1,496 Mileage £29,388	Additional DFG Allocation awarded in Dec 2020 c/f
Total Cost			£103,414	

The posts will be funded through the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government DFG allocation of £133,699 awarded on the 8th December 2020.

Spend on the additional 0.8FTE HSC since January 11th 2021 – upto 25th August 2021 (31.5 weeks will be $(0.8 \times £35,000)/52 \times 31.5 = £17,000$. As such sufficient budget remains to fund the recommendations.

Risk Management

There are no risks identified with this decision.

Key Decision: No

Background Papers: DD124 (19/20)
DD006 2021

