

Executive

Agenda
Item:
A.3

Meeting Date: 8 March 2021
 Portfolio: Communities, Health and Wellbeing
 Key Decision: YES: Recorded in the Notice Ref: KD.03/21
 Policy and Budget Framework: No
 Public / Private: Public

Title: Disabled Facilities Grant Update
 Report of: Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services
 Report Number: GD 12/21

Purpose / Summary:

A report updating members on the progress of allocations under the Disabled Facilities Grants in 2020/21. The report also requests additional funds are allocated to the Additional Discretionary Assistance for Mandatory Grants to assist those mandatory DFG applications where the works required exceed the available grant.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Executive:

1. Consider and note the progress of allocations under the Disabled Facilities Grants for 2020/21.
2. Approve an increase of £255,800 to the 2020/21 Capital Programme, fully financed by additional Disabled Facilities Grant funding received.
3. Approve the proposal to replenish and reinforce the Additional Discretionary Assistance for Mandatory Grant by £190,100.

Tracking

Executive:	8 March 2021
Scrutiny:	
Council:	

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Carlisle City Council has received an additional Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) allocation for 2020/21 of £255,800. This was received by City Council in January 2021. Along with the initial allocation of £1,899,800, this took the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government DFG allocation for Carlisle in 2020/21 to £2,155,600. A total of £3,120,400 would originally have been available for 2020/21 when the carry forward from 2019/20 of £964,800 is included. However, approximately £776,325 of the £3,120,400 is committed to the Occupational Therapist post, the Homelife Liaison Officer post and the Mandatory Assistance Grant (all posts to improve the delivery of grant assistance), see Table .1 for the budget summary as of January 2021.

1.2 As of 15th December 2020, the Council's Housing and Pollution Team, who lead on the mandatory DFGs, had 167 live cases, 89 cases of which were still to be approved so had no funding yet allocated to them. The amount already approved by Housing and Pollution is about £950,000. Homelife who lead on the discretionary DFGs had 155 clients as of 15th December 2020 and were on course to use £1,000,000 of the allocation. When considering the DFG process had to slow during the spring and summer coronavirus lock down period it is clear that there has been significant DFG activity in the remaining months.

Original Allocation from MHCLG	1,899,800					
Carry Forwards from Previous Years	964,800					
Current Budget	2,864,600					
Additional Allocation due from MHCLG	255,800					
Revised Budget for 2020/21	3,120,400					
Split as follows:	Revised Budget	Actual to date	Balance Remaining		Projected Spend to year end	Available to carry forward
Grants	2,289,100	1,250,905	1,038,195		1,950,000	339,100
Existing Commitments	831,300	54,975	776,325		71,775	759,525
	3,120,400	1,305,880	1,814,520		2,021,775	1,098,625

Table 1. Summary of DFG Budget January 2021

1.3 The City Council is spending its DFG allocation and has been making good progress in reducing the amount of carry forward from 2016/17, when the City Council didn't have the appropriate grant offers or the capacity (Housing and Pollution were heavily involved with issuing flood grants at his time) to process the significant uplift in the DFG allocation. The Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) Action Plan - 2019 – 2021 had 2020/21 as being a year without any DFG carry forward and it is likely that without the lock down period this would have been achieved.

1.4 The Grant offers introduced by the Housing Renewal Assistance Policy in 2018 have been successful with discretionary grants, such as Safe and Warm grants, Independent living adaptation grants and energy efficiency grants, accounting for around 50% of the grant spend. The discretionary grants, in particular the Independent living adaptation grants, greatly assist the mandatory grants by taking some work out of the means testing processes thereby increasing the overall grant allocation for certain works.

2. PROPOSALS

2.1 From an available budget of £3,120,400 which includes the additional allocation, and an estimated grant expenditure of £1,950,000 for 2020/21 an amount of £339,100 is likely to remain unallocated for grants at the end of the financial year. This is additional to the existing commitments of £759,525 will be carried forward.

2.2 It is proposed to move £190,100 of the £339,100 into the Additional Discretionary Assistance for Mandatory Grant. This Grant assists the County Council and the NHS as it avoids them having to find funds when financial limits have been reached on the mandatory allocations. It also assists the City Council as there are occasions where grants are unnecessarily delayed whilst additional funding is sought. The original funds of £300,000 are now reduced by nearly one third so it is sensible to replenish and reinforce this fund. The proposed use of the funds in this way allow the Council to assist people in real need when there would otherwise be a gap in necessary funding.

2.3 The remaining £149,000 will be held back to cover any possible spend above that predicted and will otherwise be carried forward for use in 2021/22 along with the committed £759,525. An initial request has been made to Council to approve a carry forward of £500,000 into 2021/22.

2.4 A revised Housing Renewal Assistance Policy and DFG Action Plan will be produced in 2021/22.

3. RISKS

3.1 The report summaries the progress of allocations under the Disabled Facilities Grants for 2020/21 and removes risks by confirming budgets and accounting for expenditures.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1** The Housing and Pollution Team and Homelife HIA were consulted on how to allocate the additional 2020/21 grant of £255,800.

5. CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1** There is some uncertainty on how the DFG allocations for 2020/21 will be spent. The financial year started with a lock down that saw many contractors no longer operating and many homeowners not wanting to pursue works. Since the first lockdown applications have significantly increased and additional funds for DFGs have been provided by central Government. At the time of writing the report we are uncertain how infection rates will affect the delivery of DFGs in the last quarter. The Additional Discretionary Assistance for Mandatory Grant has been well used by the County Council and the NHS taking pressures off their budgets. As the grant has been reduced by nearly one third it is sensible to replenish and reinforce this fund.

6. CONTRIBUTION TO THE CARLISLE PLAN PRIORITIES

- 6.1** Address current and future housing needs to protect and improve residents' quality of life.

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Appendices attached to report: None

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government Act 1972 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:

- None

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS:

LEGAL – Disabled Facilities Grants are mandatory but capped and there is scope to add discretionary monies to the system via the policies that the Council has in place.

PROPERTY SERVICES - No property implications

FINANCE – The Council receives Disabled Facilities Grant funding through the Better Care Fund. The current budget allocation in 2020/21 (including amounts carried forward from previous years) stands at £2,864,600. The capital programme for 2020/21 will be increased by £255,800 for the additional allocation of £255,800 that has been received and which can only be used for the specific purpose of funding adaptations for disabled people who qualify for a Disabled Facilities Grant. The proposals within this report request a redistribution of funds within the overall budget available to better utilise the funding.

EQUALITY – None

INFORMATION GOVERNANCE – No Information Governance implications