

COMMUNITY AND ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday, 13 th March 2019
Report Subject	Update Report following the Disabled Facilities Grant Internal Audit Report 2017
Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Housing
Report Author	Chief Officer (Housing and Assets)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following the report to Scrutiny on the findings of the Internal Audit Report which was issued in May 2018, this report provides an update on progress and management actions taken to address the issues raised.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That members note the content of the report and the action taken to date.
2	Members support the ongoing work in the service to improve service delivery to our customers.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT
1.01	A Disabled Facility Grant (DFG) is a mandatory grant to help individuals living with a disability with the cost of adapting their homes to enable them to continue living at their residence with the maximum amount of independence.
1.02	The administration of DFG is carried out within the Housing and Asset portfolio following a referral from an Occupational Therapist once the appropriate considerations have determined that the best option for the individual is to have an adaptation to the property they live in.
1.03	DFG is available to owner occupiers and private tenants, for Local Authority tenants and tenants in social housing there are separate arrangements in place with their housing provider.
1.04	The maximum amount of grant available in Wales is £36,000
1.05	Where the application is for a child, or the applicant is in receipt of certain qualifying benefits, there is no means test and the cost of the adaptation up to the maximum grant will awarded.
1.06	For other applications the amount of the grant will vary from zero to maximum grant depending on the cost of the approved works and the financial circumstances of the applicant. A means test will be carried out to establish, based on the financial circumstances of the applicant, whether the applicant will be required to make a financial contribution to the adaptation costs.
1.07	As part of the 2016/17 internal audit scheduled programme an audit of the DFG service was undertaken with the following brief: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Compliance with relevant policies, procedures and regulations;• Administration of the DFG scheme;• Third party service level agreements and protocols; and• Performance monitoring
1.08	The Internal Audit report was issued in May 2018 (appendix 1) and concluded that an urgent system revision was required with key controls absent or rarely applied and, as a result, a limited (red) assurance level was given.
1.09	In order to ensure there was an adequate and urgent improvement to the delivery of the DFG an oversight board was established in July 2018.
1.10	Since then work has been ongoing to address and implement the recommendations contained within the audit report and to review service delivery in order to make improvements.
1.11	An updated action plan is attached at appendix 2 and provides information

	<p>and details the progress made to date.</p> <p>Some of the improvements and changes are detailed below:</p>
1.12	<p>In May 2018 the financial assessment element of the DFG process was integrated into the benefits service in order to enable the cross referencing of data already held to speed up processes and enhance the overall service delivery.</p> <p>In late Autumn 2018 the remainder of the service transferred to the Benefits Manager</p>
1.13	<p>To help understand how other Local Authorities manage the process and in an attempt to learn from others, Denbighshire County Council invited the team to visit them to understand their processes and approach to DFG service delivery.</p> <p>This has led to a significant amount of work being carried out between SPOA (single point of access), Social Services Occupational Therapy teams and the benefits service, to streamline the process prior to the adaptation request being made to ensure that as much information and evidence is captured at the outset to prevent duplication and customers being asked for information several times over.</p>
1.14	<p>Processes within the services have been mapped and streamlined and procedures for process and quality assurance have now been developed and are in place.</p>
1.15	<p>The performance monitoring of contractors has been strengthened and a framework for measuring this has now been introduced. All contractors have been informed that there are now key indicators by which they will be measured.</p>
1.16	<p>DFG work was suspended in Autumn 2017 due to budget pressures and the cases were put on hold until April 2018.</p> <p>This has had an impact on overall performance reporting for 2018/19 as some of those cases were on hold for as long as 4 months.</p> <p>This backlog of work has largely been completed, however, there are still a few cases ongoing due to the size and complexity of the adaptation required.</p>
1.17	<p>Due to the revision of processes and the launch of a new contractor framework during the year we have been in a position to do a direct comparison between new and old ways of working (based on data April to December 2018):</p>

	<p style="text-align: center;">Average days to deliver DFG's</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Average Days</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Valueworks average</td> <td>151</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Previous system average</td> <td>370</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total average to date</td> <td>312</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>This should provide an element of assurance that moving forward into the new financial year performance should significantly improve when the legacy cases are all complete.</p>	Category	Average Days	Valueworks average	151	Previous system average	370	Total average to date	312
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Valueworks average	151								
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1.18	<p>Work will continue into 2019/20 to further improve service delivery times and quality and bring the service into line with the recommendations following the Wales Audit Office Housing Adaptations Report and the Welsh Government Housing Adaptations service standards.</p> <p>A copy of both of these reports are attached for information at Appendix 3 and Appendix 4.</p>								

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	None associated with this report

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	An Equality Impact Assessment will be required during Spring 2019 when the current policy is revised.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	The current risk register for DFG is attached at appendix 5.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	<p>Appendix 1 – Internal Audit Report May 2018</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Audit Action Plan</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Wales Audit Office Housing Adaptations Report February 2018</p> <p>Appendix 4 – Welsh Government Housing Adaptations Service Standards February 2018</p> <p>Appendix 5 - DFG risk register February 2019</p>

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>https://www.audit.wales/publication/housing-adaptations</p> <p>Contact Officer: Jen Griffiths – Benefits Manager Telephone: 01352 702929 E-mail: jen.griffiths@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) – A statutory grant of up to £36,000 to help individuals living with a disability with the cost of adapting their homes to enable them to continue living at their residence with the maximum amount of independence.</p> <p>DFG Top Up Grant – a discretionary grant which can be awarded where the cost of the adaptation exceeds the £36,000 grant limit up to an amount of £39,000</p> <p>DFG Top Up Loan – a discretionary loan, secured against the value of the property, that can be issued to meet the costs of the adaptation in excess of the DFG Grant cap and the DFG top up grant</p> <p>Disabled Facilities Relocation Grant – a discretionary grant of up to £20,000 to cover the costs of a disabled person’s move to a more appropriate property.</p> <p>Land Charges – these allow the Council to register interest in a property so that should the property be sold or transferred to another person, the Council has the ability, once the appropriate conditions are met, to reclaim the value of the charge.</p> <p>Means Test – A review of a person’s financial circumstances to determine eligibility for assistance.</p>