

AGENDA ITEM NO.14

WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: HOUSING COMMITTEE -25th JANUARY, 2000

SUBJECT: AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS FOR DISABLED PEOPLE IN COUNCIL TENANCIES

FROM: HOUSING

1. **Purpose of Report**

1.1 To seek guidance from Members in relation to the monetary threshold of £2,500, which is currently applied to requests for Aids and Adaptations in Council properties.

2. **Background**

2.1 At the present time all requests for adaptations which are estimated to cost over £2,500 are referred to the Environmental Health Business Unit, to be considered for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG).

2.2 The Disabled Facilities Grant was introduced in 1989 as a Grant to provide assistance to disabled people with the cost of undertaking necessary and appropriate adaptations to their home and necessitates the use of a means test. This financial test of an individual's resources may result in the tenant paying for all, or a proportion, of the cost of the adaptation. DFG's are open to tenants from all sectors and it is known that some Registered Social Landlords fund adaptations in this way.

2.3 In 1998/99 20 cases were referred by Housing to the Environmental Health Business Unit and out of these 7 subsequently were assessed as being in a position to make a financial contribution to the cost of the adaptation to their Council home. The remaining 13 had their properties adapted, totally funded from HIP resources.

3. **Current Issues**

3.1 This approach was agreed in 1992, and the monetary threshold was set to

- exercise control over the adaptations budget,
- assist in the distribution of resources across the range of demands
- give some kind of compatibility between tenants of the Council and the private sector for high cost adaptations.

3.2 Costs of adaptations have gradually increased over the years, with the result of a greater number of routine referrals to Environmental Health Business Unit for DFG consideration. This had not been the original intention of the Policy agreed in 1992, and therefore this area does require review.

3.3 Further, there are also the very important issues of equity and consistency. The existence of a monetary threshold inevitably means that some applications from Council tenants will be means tested and others will not, dependent on the cost of the adaptation. This should also be considered in the context that all applications from private tenants are means tested.

- 3.4 Criticisms of the system have been raised. The DFG route inevitably adds delay to the process of a disabled tenant applying for an adaptation. Means testing, by its very nature, can be complex to administer and time consuming. In addition, under the DFG route if it is felt that tenants needs can be resolved by way of a transfer the case may be rejected.

4. **The Options**

The options for the Council are as follows:-

- 4.1 **All requests for Aids and Adaptations are automatically dealt with by the Housing Business Unit and no Council Tenants are tested on their financial resources.**

This would provide a consistent and equitable approach in that all Council Tenants would be dealt with the same, regardless of income.

However, this approach would mean that the full cost of all adaptations would be met from the Aids and Adaptations Budget within the Capital Programme and this would certainly place a greater strain on this budget.

- 4.2 **All requests for Aids and Adaptations would be automatically considered for Disabled Facilities Grant, meaning that all tenants needing an adaptation to their Council home would be means tested.**

Again this would provide a consistent approach, with all tenants being dealt with in exactly the same way.

However, this has the potential of injecting delay into the process. There would also be staffing/resource implications for the increased administration required.

Financially, as some tenants would be required to pay a contribution, more adaptations could be completed within the budget.

- 4.3 **The third option is to review our current method of working and review the threshold accordingly.**

Increasing the threshold would reduce the numbers being referred for a Disabled Facilities Grant. However it would maintain the original intention of this practice, which is to exercise a measure of control on the higher cost adaptations.

- 4.4 Your officers consider that Option 4.2 above is impractical, Option 4.3 could be immediately invoked, say to a figure of £3,500, whilst Option 4.1 would be worthy of adoption if members were so minded, in order to reduce delay and ensure a consistent approach across the Council sector.

5. **Key Issues Strategies**

- 5.1 This is an Action Point within the Better Government for Older People Pilot Exercise.

6. **Recommendations**

- 6.1 To consider the above Options and to decide between Option 4.1 and 4.3.

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Background Papers

Housing Management Sub-Committee Report - 30th September, 1992

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Areas in District Affected:

ALL