

## ***Report to the Council***

**Committee:** Cabinet

**Date:** 29 September 2015

**Subject:** Funding for Disabled Facilities Grants

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor D Stallan

---

### **Recommending:**

**(1) That a supplementary capital estimate in the sum of £120,000 for 2015/16 be approved to supplement the existing agreed budget of £380,000 for Disabled Facilities Grants.**

---

### **Report:**

1. The Council has a legal duty to provide Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) to residents of the District that meet the eligibility criteria under the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. The Grants are means tested up to a maximum of £30,000 per application to provide essential facilities or access to essential facilities for home owners registered or eligible to be registered as disabled. The work ranges from stair lifts and ramps to extensions; however, the most common adaptation is level access showers.

2. The grants are initiated by Occupational Therapists from Essex County Council under a referral system. New arrangements implemented by the County Council in 2013 have seen a dramatic increase in the number of referrals received by the District Council, from 71 in 2012/13 to 164 in 2014/15. This has also led to an increase in expenditure on the Grants from £259,344 in 2012/13 to £401,413 in 2014/15.

3. Officers believe that the number of referrals will stabilise at approximately 165 per year, incurring an estimated annual expenditure of £500,000 per annum. The budget agreed in the Capital Programme at the end of 2014 was £380,000 per annum, up to and including 2018/19.

4. The Council does receive some help from the Government to meet its statutory obligations. In 2015/16, the Council received £363,000 from the Better Care Fund, although there has been no indication if this level of assistance will be continued in future years. Under certain circumstances, the Council can require the repayment of a Disabled Facility Grant; however, only £20,500 has been recovered since the measures were introduced by the Council in April 2012.

5. The budget which has been allocated for Disabled Facilities Grants will be inadequate to meet demand for the foreseeable future, and unless additional funding is made available then the Council will fail to meet its statutory obligation to provide residents of the District with these essential grants for adaptations. The Cabinet has already agreed that a growth bid in the sum of £120,000 for this budget should be made for the years 2016/17 to 2018/19; this would increase the total annual budget for Disabled Facilities Grants to £500,000.

6. The supplementary capital estimate requested for 2015/16 would enable the budget for this year to be increased to £500,000 as well, and allow the Council to meet its obligations under the Disabled Facilities Grants scheme.

7. We recommend as set out at the commencement of the report.