

21 JUNE 2017

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of a meeting of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel held in The Bradbury Room, Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Wednesday, 21 June 2017

* Cllr S P Davies (Chairman)
Cllr D J Russell (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

D A Britton
Mrs L D Cerasoli
* S J Clarke
I C Coombes

Councillors:

Ms K V Crisell
* A H G Davis
* N S Penman
* M L White

*Present

Officers Attending:

Mrs F Churchill, Ms M Stephens, R Topliss and Ms S White

Apologies:

Cllrs Britton and Mrs Cerasoli.

10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made by members in connection with an agenda item.

11 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No issues were raised during the public participation period.

12 NEW FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE POLICY (DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS & HOME REPAIR LOANS)

The Panel considered proposed changes to the Council's Housing Financial Assistance Policy for disabled adaptations via the Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's) and essential repairs for vulnerable homeowners via Home Repair Loans (HRL's).

A Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) was a means-tested grant that enabled the home of disabled person to be adapted to meet their needs, with for example, a walk-in shower or stair lift. These grants had been available for a number of years and were managed by the resident's local authority, and funded by either Hampshire County Council (for owner occupiers or private tenants) or the Housing Revenue Account for this Council's tenants. The maximum mandatory grant available was £30,000. It was acknowledged that could be limiting for the larger projects which often were for the benefit of disabled children. Demand for DFG's in the New Forest had increased by 40% in the last five years, and it was anticipated that this trend would continue due to the local demographic and ageing population.

The aim of the Better Care Fund (BCF) was to provide flexible financial support for councils and NHS organisations to jointly plan and deliver local services so that people can manage their own health and wellbeing, and live independently in their own homes for as long as possible. The additional money from the BCF together with the increased HRA funding for District tenants provided this Council with greater scope and flexibility to undertake improvements in the home of the District's disabled residents by taking a flexible holistic view.

The additional funding would also allow the Council to fund promotional work to ensure all interested parties were aware of the availability of funding, plus fund the employment of an Occupational Therapist which would improve overall efficiency in speeding up the assessment process, and would reduce delays to the client.

The Panel strongly support the recommendations. The new policy would give the Council greater flexibility in assisting and enabling the Council's most vulnerable disabled residents to receive the support needed to remain in their homes.

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet be recommended to approve the proposed changes.

13 TONY ELSBURY

The Panel were sad to hear that Tony Elsbury, Housing Grants & Improvements Manager had died following a long illness. Tony had worked for the authority for 12 years. He was dedicated and passionate about his work and would be greatly missed.

The Panel's thoughts and best wishes went to Tony's family, friends and colleagues.

CHAIRMAN