

## **HOUSING SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION: 3 FEBRUARY 2020**

### **REVIEW OF HARDSTANDINGS POLICY**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report considers the current practice of providing hardstandings for Council tenants free of charge, when they are requested and recommends that a new approach is implemented to create hardstandings only when there is a justifiable medical need which would meet the criteria for grants under the Disabled Facilities Grants process.

#### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Hardstandings have been provided free of charge to Council tenants over the years upon request. Once a request is made, a tenant's name is added to a waiting list and when labour time allows (and subject to feasibility and budget), hardstandings are created within a tenant's property boundary, usually to park cars.
- 2.2 The budgetary provision for such hardstandings has remained static for a number of years at around £300,000.
- 2.3 With greater emphasis being placed on ensuring that Housing Revenue Account (HRA) income is spent in the most efficient way, a review has been carried out on the Council's approach to providing hardstandings.
- 2.4 The labour work necessary to create a hardstanding is carried out by the Council's Engineering Works Service and recharges are made to the HRA.
- 2.5 Whilst the Council considers that hardstandings could still be provided in some circumstances, it is considered that the current approach of providing these without any criteria is not appropriate for the future.
- 2.6 In most cases the provision of a new hardstanding can have an adverse impact on parking within the immediate highway as a new pavement crossing (i.e. dropped kerb) is required and this can reduce the amount of on road parking by up to 3 vehicles. The current provision of hardstanding does not take into consideration any objective criteria and accordingly, priority cannot be given to those who have a medical need rather than a general desire for the hardstanding.

#### **3. NEW PROPOSAL**

- 3.1 It is proposed that a new approach is adopted to create a hardstanding only when there is a justifiable medical need which would meet the criteria for grants under the Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) process.
- 3.2 Tenants would still be able to self-fund a driveway and hardstanding subject to permission being granted by the Council following an impact assessment, and statutory consents by Hampshire County Council (highways licence) and planning permission, where applicable.

- 3.3 For 2020/21, a new budget provision of £200k will be used to enhance existing housing estates by undertaking improvement works. These works will include improved lighting, improving existing communal car parking areas, footpaths etc. or the formation of new communal parking areas, if considered necessary.

#### **4. IMPACT OF NEW PROPOSAL**

- 4.1 There are currently 35 applicants on the waiting list for a new hardstanding. Approximately half of applicants have either been given a commitment that the hard standing works will be carried out (following a site visit and a feasibility assessment) or would be eligible under the DFG process; it is intended that the Council carry out the hardstanding work for those applicants who fall into these two groups. The remaining applicants whose hardstandings have not yet been confirmed by the Council (i.e. no site visit or feasibility work has yet commenced), and accordingly, have not been given any expectations that the works will be carried out, will be affected by the proposed new Policy change. These applicants will be written to and the position explained. If they meet the disability criteria under the Disabled Facilities Grant process, the Council will still undertake the hardstanding works.

#### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 In adopting this new approach, the £300k Capital Programme budget associated with hardstandings will be removed and replaced with an Estates Improvement budget of £200k.
- 5.2 Future applications for a hardstanding, will be subject to a medical need and feasibility assessment, and if approved will be funded from the Housing Revenue Account Disabled Facilities Adaptions budget.

#### **6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are none arising from this report.

#### **7. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 Within the Estates Improvement Budget, consideration will be given for the provision of charging points for electric vehicles.

#### **8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The proposed change will enable the Council to meet the needs of those with the protected characteristic of disability who require hardstanding at their homes more efficiently; as the provision of hardstanding will now be based on medical need, rather than position on the waiting list. It will also be subject to the statutory timescales for completion of works under the DFG.

**9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 That the proposed new approach to hardstandings for Housing Landlord Services be approved and implemented.

**10. PORTFOLIO HOLDER ENDORSEMENT**

**I have agreed to the recommendation of this report.**

**Sign: Cllr J Cleary**

**Date: 3 February 2020**

**For further information contact:**

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**Date on which notice given of this decision – 3 February 2020**

**Late date for call in – 10 February 2020**