

DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Local Authorities can award Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP's) where there is a shortfall between the rent a landlord is charging and the amount of Housing Benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit being awarded, or to help with housing costs.
- 1.2 The legislation covering Discretionary Housing Payments is the Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001. The policy gives full regard to the Department for Work and Pensions Guidance Manual for Discretionary Housing Payments.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Discretionary Housing Payments scheme is administered locally. Due to welfare reforms, most notably the introduction of Universal Credit, this policy has been updated to reflect these changes.
- 2.2 The purpose of the policy is to assist those claimants on a low income who are getting Housing Benefit or Universal Credit and who have a shortfall between the amount of support they are receiving and their actual rent, with that shortfall causing financial hardship.
- 2.3 The award could be for a number of reasons including loss of employment, change in household composition, landlord increasing the rent, the reduced benefits cap or welfare reforms.
- 2.4 The Government provide funding each year and any funding which is not spent cannot be carried over to the following year. The funding is always fully utilised to ensure we support as many households as possible and this includes proactively working with stakeholders. The funding for 2017/18 was £324,613.00 and all of the funding was used to make 765 awards.
- 2.5 The government funding for 2018/19 is £278,541.00.

3. DELEGATIONS

- 3.1 It is proposed that the Council's Discretionary Housing Payment Policy is administered by the Benefits Manager and appeal decisions made by the Service Manager Revenues and Benefits.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no financial implications in awarding a Discretionary Housing Payment as the scheme is fully funded by the Government.

5. PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S COMMENTS

- 5.1 I fully endorse this policy and how we use this funding to work with our partners to support as many people as possible who are struggling to pay their rent.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 That the Discretionary Housing Payments policy, as attached as Appendix 1 to this report, is approved and adopted; and
- 6.2 That the Service Manager Revenues and Benefits, Benefits Manager and Senior Benefits Officer be given delegated authority to make decisions under the above policy.
- 6.3 That an annual report be submitted to update the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Panel on funding allocation, policy delivery and appeals.

For further information contact:

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Background Papers:

Discretionary Housing Payments Policy