



Meeting	Economy and Housing Policy Committee
Date and Time	Tuesday, 26th November, 2024 at 6.30 pm.
Venue	Walton Suite, Guildhall, Winchester and streamed live on YouTube at www.youtube.com/winchestercc

S U P P L E M E N T A R Y A G E N D A

The attached document, relating to the agenda item below was not available at the time the agenda was published.

Agenda Item.

6. Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG): Policy Review (Presentation) (Pages 3 - 12)

City Offices
Colebrook Street
Winchester
SO23 9LJ

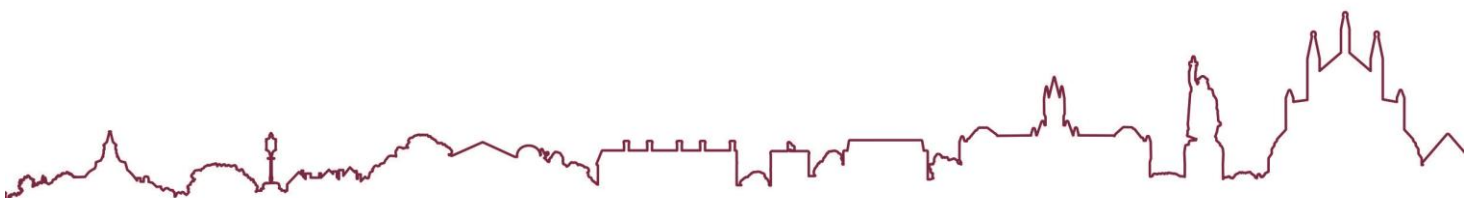
Laura Taylor
Chief Executive

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19 November 2024

Agenda Contact: Matthew Watson, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Tel: 01962 848 317 Email: mwatson@winchester.gov.uk



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Policy Changes

To the Disabled Facilities Grant policy.



What is a Disabled Facilities Grant?

- The Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) comes from the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act (1996), the funding comes from central government, which is then distributed to local housing authorities to administer.
- The DFG is a capital grant which is available to people of all ages and in all private sector housing tenures (i.e. whether renting privately, from a social landlord, privately renting, or owner-occupiers) to contribute to the cost of adaptations. Council tenants can apply but their adaptations are funded from Housing Revenue Account.
- The purpose of the DFG is to enable eligible disabled people (as defined by the 1996 act) to continue living safely and independently at home.
- In 2015 the funding of the DFG has been through the Better Care Fund. Supporting the wider agenda of an integrated approach to health provision recognising the importance of housing provision in this offer.
- The introduction of the 'The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance)(England and Wales)Order 2002. Enabled the DFG to be used more creatively and in line with the local demographic and has been used to inform our current policy.
- Our existing policy can be found at:

<https://www.winchester.gov.uk/assets/attach/35828/Disabled-Facilities-Grant-Policy-2023-2025.pdf>

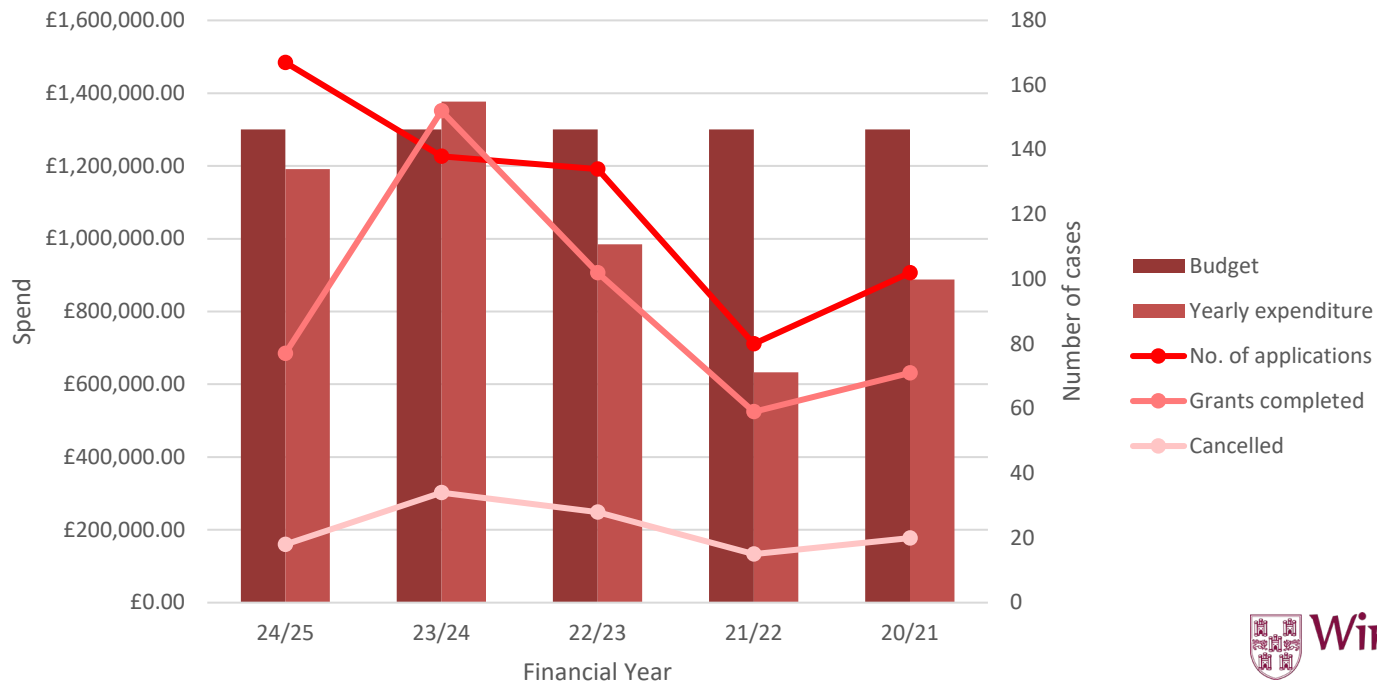
How is a Disabled Facilities Grant Applied for and Assessed?

- An application is made to the council, this can be via HCC or directly to the WCC Housing Occupational Therapist (OT). The legislation states that an applicant should have been assessed by an OT or trusted assessor to ensure that the works are Necessary and Appropriate to meet the client's needs relating to their disability which can include but not exclusively to autistic people, those with a mental health condition, physical disabilities, learning disabilities, cognitive impairments such as dementia, and progressive life limiting conditions.
- Works include but are not limited to level access showers, straight and curved stairlifts, ramps, wash dry toilets, through floor lifts etc
- The application then passes to the Grant Officer who will ensure that works are Reasonable and Practical. The grant officer will take into consideration the condition of the property, costs of works are proportionate to the need.
- At all times, the applicant is informed regarding decisions. The final scheme of works may differ from the initial referral but will always be completed in agreement with the client and the assessing OT.

Why do we need to review the DFG policy?

- The council needs to review the current policy to reflect the budget and increased demand
- Over the past 4 years applications have increased, more grants have been approved and the average cost of works have increased whilst the grant allocation has remained stagnant.
- The current DFG funding has been guaranteed until March 2025.

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Option 1 – Keep the existing policy

Advantages

1. The council can assist all eligible residents of the district regardless of financial means (except WCC tenants).
2. Quicker to administer grant applications.

Disadvantages:

1. High risk of the DFG budget not lasting for the full financial year and the council having to delay mandatory grants.
2. The council is at risk of not fulfilling the better care funding requirements.
3. The council could be in the position of holding a larger waiting list. (Many HCC referrals would have waited prior to referral to WCC)
4. The use of limited public finances to fully subsidise adaptations to those households who have their own financial means. DFG funding potentially does not reach those in greatest need who do not have the means to pay for their adaptations.
5. Delays to adaptations risks residents remaining in unsafe homes. This could lead to higher hospital admissions, higher care costs and potential family and carer breakdown.

Impact: The council might be unable to fulfil its existing policy with the current level of funding from central government.

Option 2 – Means test all applicants and stop all top up grants

Advantages

1. It is likely that the council will be able to keep total funding within the DFG budget.
2. Quicker to administer grant applications.
3. The council remain working within the guidelines of the better care fund.
4. The councils DFG budget will go further and help those more in need.

Disadvantages

1. There is currently the data to know whether the council would spend its DFG funding in full.
2. The removal of the discretionary grant amount could result in some residents not continuing with their application.
3. Potentially, it would take longer to administer an application and means test.
4. Removing top up grants may result in eligible applicants no longer being able to appropriately adapt their home.
5. Some applicants who are assessed as having to contribute, or fully funding their adaptations, might not be able to afford this and might have to continue to live in an inappropriate home.

Impact: The council would ensure that they are supporting eligible residents most in need and without the means to fund works themselves. But larger schemes of works over £30,000.00 would not be funded by WCC.

Option 3 – Means test all applicants, allow a discretionary grant and revise the top up grant amount.

Advantages:

1. By reducing the discretionary grant from £15,000.00 to £5,000.00, for example, we would expect a number of applicants to contribute towards their adaptations.
2. By reducing the top up grant from £70,000.00 to £30,000.00, this will enable the necessary adaptations to still take place and enable applicants to remain safely in their homes.
3. The council remain working within the guidelines of the better care fund.
4. The council's DFG budget will go further and help those more in need.

Disadvantages:

1. Reducing the discretionary grant amount, may result in some residents not continuing with their application.
2. Potentially it would take longer to administer an application and means test.

Impact: A balanced approach to helping eligible residents and ensuring the DFG budget is managed effectively.

Next steps.

Option	Impact	Next Steps
Option 1 – No policy change.	The council might be unable to fulfil its existing policy with the current level of funding from central government.	The council would continue providing it's DFG service as directed by the existing policy. Funding and spending to be monitored, potentially halting discretionary grant funding part way through the year to ensure mandatory grants can be fulfilled. This will need to reviewed yearly.
Option 2 – Means test all applicants and stop all top up grants.	The council would ensure that they are supporting eligible residents most in need and without the means to fund works themselves. But larger schemes of works over £30,000.00 would not be funded by WCC.	Means test all applicants over the next 12 months to monitor the affect this will have. This will enable the council to know the percentage of applicants who would not be eligible for grant funding and how many would need to contribute towards their adaptations (and by how much). This would guide the number of applications we could expect, the potential grant spend and the overall effect to the service.
Option 3 – Means test all applicants, allow a discretionary grant and revise the top up grant amount.	A balanced approach to helping eligible residents and ensuring the DFG budget is managed effectively.	As above, including that the council would know what discretionary grant funding could be offered and afforded.

Questions?



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