

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Cabinet
<b>DATE:</b>	17 <sup>th</sup> July 2019
<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	Councillor Loraine Cox , Housing & Regeneration
<b>REPORT AUTHOR:</b>	Mark Hoyle, Head of Regeneration & Housing Fiona Goodfellow, Housing Strategy and Policy Manager
<b>TITLE OF REPORT:</b>	Housing Renewal Policy

**1. Purpose of Report**

1.1 To seek Cabinet's approval for a new Housing Renewal Policy.

**2. Recommendations**

I recommend that Cabinet:

2.1 Approve Hyndburn's new Housing Renewal Policy attached at Appendix 1.

**3. Reasons for Recommendations and Background**

3.1 The Regulatory Reform (England and Wales) (Housing Assistance) Order 2002 (the RRO) grants a general power on local authorities to provide "assistance" "in any form" "to any person", to improve, repair, adapt or rebuild residential premises.

3.2 The RRO reflects the view that it is primarily the responsibility of private sector owners to maintain their own property but it recognises that some owners, particularly the elderly and most vulnerable, do not have the necessary resources to repair or improve their homes. Local authorities therefore, subject to resources, have an important role to play in providing assistance in these cases.

3.3 Hyndburn has such a RRO Policy, or probably better described, a Housing Renewal Policy in place which was last reviewed in 2006.

3.4 Following a review, a new Housing Renewal Policy is proposed at Appendix 1 and identifies the forms of assistance, including financial assistance that will be available from the Council to assist vulnerable occupiers in all tenures including disabled people to improve or adapt their homes, the eligibility criteria for assistance and the terms upon which this assistance will be provided.

3.5 Historically, the Council has utilised the Capital Programme to fund housing renewal activity. Due to austerity measures including public sector funding cuts there is very little money now available to support housing renewal activity. However, one area where funding is increasing is for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's). In 2019/20 the Council is due to receive nearly £1m. DFG funding forms part of, and is allocated through the Better Care Fund (BCF)<sup>1</sup>. This fund is

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<sup>1</sup> The BCF is a programme spanning both the NHS and local government which seeks to join-up health and care services, so that people can manage their own health and wellbeing, and live independently for as long as possible.

allocated to upper tier authorities (i.e. Lancashire County Council) then passed onto the Districts under ring fencing arrangements and it is expected that health priorities will become more important in the way DFG funding is spent.

3.6 RRO policies (refer to “3.1” to “3.4” above) include the use of DFG funding, now allocated via the BCF as described in “3.5” above. This now enables local authorities to use specific DFG funding for wider purposes. Therefore, subject to an approved RRO, DFG funding can be used beyond mandatory DFG’s to support vulnerable households remaining in their existing homes. This is therefore an opportunity to use additional DFG funding to support wider measures subject to a new RRO (Housing Renewal Policy) which is summarised in “3.7” below.

### 3.7. Key Policy Areas

The key policy areas are summarised as follows:-

#### 3.7.1 *Education and Encouragement*

The aim here will be to provide information and advice to assist any person to improve, repair, adapt or rebuild residential premises. In doing so, the Council will work with third sector parties, including the voluntary sector, registered providers, home improvement agencies, health, other local authorities and fuel poverty and energy efficiency groups and organisations to improve housing conditions.

#### 3.7.2 *Direct Financial Assistance*

Here the aim will be to provide assistance to vulnerable households including the elderly and disabled. Financial assistance will be subject to availability of funding and written terms and conditions under which assistance will be provided. The forms of assistance could include:

- Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG’s) up to £30,000
- Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG’s) to include:
  - Topping up the maximum mandatory grant of £30,000 by up to an additional £20,000
  - The introduction of a £7,000 threshold before a means test is applied.
- Additional Assistance for Vulnerable Households, to include:
  - Affordable Warmth Grant and energy efficiency measures including provision, renewal or repair of heating and hot water systems, insulation or double glazing up to a maximum of £7,000.
  - Hospital Discharge Grants up to £3,000 where needed to support hospital discharge
  - Emergency Works Grant – to eliminate Category 1 hazards that pose an imminent risk to the health or safety of the occupants following an inspection under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System up to a maximum of £7,000. The works to include: providing essential repairs to electrical wiring where this has been assessed as dangerous
  - Home Security Assistance Grant up to a maximum of £3,000

All the above will be subject to funding and liquid assets/savings not exceeding £25,000.

- Facelift grants forming part of a housing renewal scheme to improve the appearance and exterior of a block of dwellings (subject to funding).

- Relocation Assistance usually where demolition is proposed under a Council led regeneration scheme (subject to funding).
- Empty Homes - to bring long term empty homes back into use (subject to funding).

### 3.7.3 *Indirect Financial Assistance*

To provide assistance by working in partnership with others including Registered Providers, House Builders, health and social care related housing projects and the voluntary sector to support the regeneration and renewal of poor quality housing.

### 3.7.4 *Enforcement*

The Council will use various powers available to it to intervene and secure improvements where housing conditions are in disrepair and/or unacceptable in accordance with the Housing Enforcement Policy adopted in June 2017.

## 4. **Alternative Options considered and Reasons for Rejection**

- 4.1 The Council is required to have a RRO Policy in place in order to provide various forms of housing assistance and therefore not having a Policy is not an option.
- 4.2 The overall approach proposed is to provide housing assistance to the most vulnerable households across the Borough and those in greatest need.

## 5. **Consultations**

- 5.1 During the development of the proposed Policy the Regeneration and Housing Panel were consulted. Lancashire County Council has also been consulted.

## 6. **Implications**

<b>Financial implications (including any future financial commitments for the Council)</b>	All forms of assistance will be subject to approval in the Council's Capital Programme. The Council's DFG allocation for 2019/20 is £965,987.
<b>Legal and human rights implications</b>	DFG's are a mandatory grant of which the Council are spending approximately £650,000 per annum. The Council is required by the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 to adopt and publish a policy setting out how it will exercise the power to provide the housing assistance set out in Article 3 of the Order.
<b>Assessment of risk</b>	By not approving and publishing the Housing Renewal Policy we are contravening Article 4 of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 and thus not able to provide housing assistance.

	The main financial risk is overspending on the annual approved budget. This will be closely managed and monitored by putting appropriate controls in place and regular reporting to the Council's Capital Programme Working Group.
<p><b>Equality and diversity implications</b>  <i>A <a href="#">Customer First Analysis</a> should be completed in relation to policy decisions and should be attached as an appendix to the report.</i></p>	Attached at Appendix 2.

**7. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985:  
List of Background Papers**

7.1 None.