

## Cabinet - 3 November 2020

### Recommendations from the People and Health Overview Committee meeting held on 27 October 2020

#### Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy

The Committee considered a report by the Interim Executive Director of People - Adults on the Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Safety introduced the report explaining that the previous sovereign councils each had different policies which meant there were inconsistencies across Dorset. The new policy would address these inconsistencies. The main changes were summarised in Appendix 2 to the report. Once approved, the policy would be publicised to encourage take up.

As to whether the assistance scheme could be used in conjunction with commercial borrowing, it was explained that the loans were targeted towards people who may have been refused commercial loans or find it difficult to access credit. Loans therefore have an element of risk attached to them but default levels are currently very low because Lendology CIC offer a range of repayment options to suit the applicant's circumstances..

With regard to whether any thought had been given to providing loans to foster carers or potential foster carers in order for them to be able to adapt their homes to facilitate this, it was explained that this could be considered under Recommendation 2 but had not been considered as part of the policy. Several members supported this suggestion. The Interim Corporate Director for Housing stated that he would take this and the broader question of support for foster carers and their housing requirements up with Children's Services officers.

The Committee supported the new policy.

#### **Recommended**

That the Cabinet:

1. Adopt the Dorset Council Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy.
2. agree that authority be delegated to the Corporate Director Housing and Community Safety in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing to:
  - (a) make minor amendments to the policy to comply with legislation and guidance;
  - (b) suspend the approval of any discretionary housing assistance offered in this policy;
  - (c) introduce new assistance to help private residential property should funding become available.

#### Reason for Recommendation

The Council is required by law to adopt and publish a policy detailing any assistance it wishes to offer to improve private residential property.

The formation of Dorset Council requires that a new Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy is adopted. On the 1 April 2019 policies from the original sovereign councils novated to Dorset Council. Generally, these policies are similar but not identical and therefore there are inconsistencies in some areas of assistance offered. A summary of the main changes to existing policies is shown in Appendix 2 of this report.

Financial assistance has several aims. It is targeted to:

- Improve the quality of the housing stock in Dorset
- Improve the ability of disabled people to access their property

- Reduce carbon emissions
- Improve people's health.
- Allow the Council to take advantage of and facilitate the uptake of external funding.

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