

Cabinet

3 October 2023

Discretionary Housing Payment

For Decision

Portfolio Holder: Cllr G Suttle, Finance, Commercial and Capital Strategy

Local Councillor(s): All councillors

Executive Director: A Dunn, Executive Director, Corporate Development

Report Author: Katie Hale

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Report Status: Public

Brief Summary: The Revenues and Benefits service administers an annual Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) fund supported by formal government guidance which must be adopted and supported within local policy. The Department for Works and Pensions are the department responsible for National guidance which informs the attached policy. The DWP last updated their formal guidance on 31 May 2022 and no changes have been made since. The current policy we have in place remains fully compliant and up to date with formal guidance and supports the administration we have in place.

Recommendation: To reapprove the current policy and set a next review date of September 2026.

Reason for Recommendation:

1. Each financial year the Local Authority receives funding from the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) known as Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) funding.

- 1.1. Formal guidance is provided by the DWP which sets out how the discretionary scheme should be administered and helps support our administration of the funding, ensuring this financial support is awarded correctly to those most in need.
- 1.2. The Benefits Team continues to offer this application process in line with formal guidance and promotes awareness of the available funding throughout the year to ensure our eligible local residents benefit and available funding is utilised.
- 1.3. The policy was last brought before Cabinet in June 2019 and although no changes have been made or new duties placed upon the scheme with the policy remaining correct, it is appropriate to bring the policy back to cabinet to provide this update and confirm that the policy remains reviewed on a regular basis and supports the administration deliver this important financial support.

2. Update on Appeals

- 2.1. In 2019 the adopted policy introduced a new provision. Customers making a claim for a Discretionary Housing Payment do not have the normal right of appeal to an independent appeal available in respect of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit (Housing Element). Customers can request a review of a decision which is carried out by an officer who was not involved in the original decision.
- 2.2. In 2019 the policy adopted therefore introduced an additional right to requests to further an appeal to the council's appeal committee.
- 2.3. I can confirm there has been no requirement for a decision to be referred to the Council's Appeals Committee as any requests for a decision review have been concluded at officer level.
- 2.4. We do however feel it is important to retain this right for our customers. We request no change to the policy.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 The Council receives a government grant allocation each year for DHP's. Any amount not spent must be returned at the end of the financial year. The council can supplement the grant from it's own funds, up to a

determined limit. We maintain a £25,000 contingency which is budgeted for each year.

3.2 Dorset Council's grant allocation for 2023/2024 is £458,298.

3.3 Full council agreed to top up the grant allocation for 2023/2024 as a one off exception due to the cost of living crisis by an additional £200,000. As at 1 September in total £249,857 has been awarded.

4. **Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications**

There are no implications.

5. **Well-being and Health Implications**

We work closely with many stakeholders to ensure that maximum eligible support is provided signposting customers to other suitable support at the appropriate times.

6. **Other Implications**

Appropriate and timely administration of the DHP funding helps maintain tenancy security.

7. **Risk Assessment**

7.1. **HAVING CONSIDERED:** the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

8. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

The EqIA has been reviewed and no implications have been identified.

9. **Appendices**

Policy Document

EqIA

10. **Background Papers**

There are no further background papers.

