



NOTICE OF MEETING

CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING

TUESDAY, 9 JULY 2013 AT 9.30 AM

THE EXECUTIVE MEETING ROOM - THIRD FLOOR, THE GUILDHALL

Telephone enquiries to Joanne Wildsmith
Email: joanne.wildsmith@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING

Councillor Darren Sanders (Liberal Democrat)

Group Spokespersons

Councillor David Horne, Labour
Councillor Luke Stubbs, Conservative

(NB This Agenda should be retained for future reference with the minutes of this meeting.)

Please note that the agenda, minutes and non-exempt reports are available to view online on the Portsmouth City Council website: www.portsmouth.gov.uk

Deputations by members of the public may be made on any item where a decision is going to be taken. The request should be made in writing to the contact officer (above) by 12 noon of the working day before the meeting, and must include the purpose of the deputation (for example, for or against the recommendations). Email requests are accepted.

AGENDA

- 1 Apologies for Absence
- 2 Declaration of Interests
- 3 Housing Hardship Fund (Pages 1 - 4)

The report advises the Cabinet member of actions to provide support for some

tenants who fall within the governments assessment of 'under occupying' their properties but who may have been 'adequately housed' at the time of allocating and might no longer be able to access discretionary Housing benefit.

RECOMMENDED that the Cabinet Member for Housing delegates authority to Head of Housing and Property Services in consultation with Head of Finance and S151 Officer to develop a scheme that will enable the HRA to offer financial assistance for those council tenants affected by welfare reform, and for whom available DHP is considered insufficient, totalling no more than £40,000 in 2013/14 and for future provision to be set as part of the on-going annual HRA budget setting process.

4 Changes to Financial Assistance Policy for Private Sector Housing
(Pages 5 - 26)

The report seeks approval to amend the current Financial Assistance Policy for Private Sector Housing Renewal in Portsmouth to make the policy more in line with customer needs.

RECOMMENDED that the 2013 Financial Assistance Policy is agreed and implemented from 9th July 2013, as detailed in Appendix 1.

5 Refurbishment of St.Clare's Court (Pages 27 - 34)

The report seeks permission for the modernisation of sheltered housing facilities/accommodation at St Clare's Court, Leigh Park.

To seek permission, to spend £1,437,500 for the undertaking of refurbishment works to 1-45 St Clare's Court. 44 properties will be reconfigured into 32 self contained modern properties within the overall building.

RECOMMENDED that approval is given to proceed with the scheme within the approved sum of £1,437,500.

6 Refurbishment of Tweed Court (Pages 35 - 42)

This report has been brought forward urgently as funding is available and the work will take place in the same area as the refurbishment of St Clare's Court thereby minimising logistical and planning issues.

To seek permission for the modernisation of sheltered housing facilities/accommodation at Tweed Court, Leigh Park.

RECOMMENDED that the 2013 Financial Assistance Policy is agreed and implemented from 9th July 2013, as detailed in Appendix 1.

Agenda Item 3



Portsmouth
CITY COUNCIL

Agenda item:

3

Title of meeting: HOUSING CABINET

Date of meeting: 9th July 2013

Subject: Housing Hardship Fund

Report by: Head of Housing and Property Services

Wards affected: All Wards having Local Authority Housing

Key decision: No

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of report;

- 1.1 To advise the Cabinet member of actions to provide support for some tenants who fall within the governments assessment of 'under occupying' their properties but who may have been 'adequately housed' at the time of allocating and might no longer be able to access discretionary Housing benefit.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member for Housing delegates authority to Head of Housing and Property Services in consultation with Head of Finance and S151 Officer to develop a scheme that will enable the HRA to offer financial assistance for those council tenants affected by welfare reform, and for whom available DHP is considered insufficient, totalling no more than £40,000 in 2013/14 and for future provision to be set as part of the on-going annual HRA budget setting process.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Government's welfare reform introduced a standard size of property depending on household criteria and reduced Housing Benefit for tenants who were thought to have a spare room. The Governments definition of property sizes was not flexible to take into account personal circumstances but Local authorities were given additional money to give 'discretionary housing benefit' (DHP) in certain cases. Discretionary housing benefit is normally a temporary measure to allow the tenants to take action to resolve matters (eg by moving or budgeting for the increase in rent)

4. Reasons for recommendations

- 4.1 There are number of households where it may not be in the tenants best interest to move and where some additional support should be given in the event of DHP being exhausted - examples being
- (i) Vulnerable persons, perhaps two people living in a two bedroomed property but are prevented from living in a one bedroomed property due to a recognised medical reason or where moving to another property would create further problems eg mental illness or removal from local support network)
 - (ii) Families with young children - that the government say should share a bedroom but if they move to smaller properties now, they may be overcrowded in 5 years. Two moves in 5 years would not create a sustainable community and increase costs on the HRA. Families with young children with behavioural difficulties may be also affected and require support if the DHP is not available.
- 4.2 It is proposed that the administration of the Hardship fund would be by way of a credit to the rent account by Area Housing Managers and subject to Audit scrutiny. It would only apply where tenants were in receipt of or entitled to Housing Benefit and DHP had been paid.
- 4.4 The Housing Officer will established the income and expenditure of the family was such that they could not otherwise afford to pay the under occupation charge. Housing Officers will refer the cases to the Area Manager who will authorise (or decline) the credit to the rent account.
- 4.5 There are currently 1,400 tenants subject to the reduction in Housing Benefit because they are thought to have a spare room but around 40-80 households may be helped by a hardship fund when DHP funds run out.
- 4.6 It should be noted that the hardship fund would not normally be used to pay for unused bedrooms and tenants with a 25% reduction in Housing Benefit because they are under occupying 2 or more bedrooms will not qualify for hardship assistance. The support in these cases will be towards moving, budgeting or finding work.
- 4.7 Other Options considered and rejected were
- a) To do nothing. The risk was to force people to move, only to have to move again in years to come or to worsen their housing circumstances.
 - b) To pay all the under occupation charges, this would cost the Housing service £1.5million and not make best use of the councils stock

4.9 The Residents Consortium have been briefed on the proposal at their meeting on 4th April 2013. The issues were discussed and the proposal was approved and minuted.

4.10 The proposal meets the Corporate Priorities of

- Protect and support our most vulnerable residents

5. Equality impact assessment (EIA)

5.1 This proposal will impact positively on tenants and it is not felt a full EIA is required. The welfare reform does not affect households of pensionable age.

6. Legal Implications

6.1 The Cabinet Member should note that where a local housing authority wishes to make discretionary payments available to its own tenants through the housing revenue account, the authority should apply in writing and request that DCLG issues a Direction giving consent to these payments to ensure there is no breach of the legislation underpinning the operation of the housing revenue account. This should be noted by officers, who will need to take additional legal advice on the scheme that they develop.

6.2 The Cabinet Member has the authority to approve the recommendation proposed.

7. Finance Comments

7.1 The Department for Work and Pension (DWP)'s annual funding for DHP is aimed at helping Local Authorities manage the impact of the Housing Benefit (HB) reforms announced in the June 2010 budget and temporarily assist its residents facing potential financial hardship, as a result of the reforms.

7.2 The total Government contribution in 2013/14 for Discretionary Housing Payments totals £472,895.

7.3 This report seeks to delegate authority to the Head of Housing and Property Services in consultation with Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer to develop a scheme that will enable the HRA to offer financial assistance to those council tenants affected by welfare reform in lieu of DHP being available.

7.4 The anticipated cost of offering this financial assistance to Portsmouth's HRA tenants is anticipated to total £40,000 in 2013/14. This will be funded from within the existing budget, as approved by the Cabinet Member for Housing on 29th January 2013. The status of fund will be monitored on a monthly basis as part of the overall budget monitoring process.

7.5 Any future provision for ongoing financial support from 2014/15 onwards will be set in accordance with the annual budget and rent setting process.

.....
Signed by:

Appendices:

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

.....
Signed by:

Agenda Item 4



Portsmouth
CITY COUNCIL

Agenda item:

4

Title of meeting: Cabinet Member for Housing

Date of meeting: 9th July 2013

Subject: Financial Assistance Policy for Private Sector Housing

Report by: Alan Cufley Head of Corporate Assets, Business & Standards

Wards affected: All Wards

Key decision: Yes

Full Council decision: No

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To seek approval to amend the current Financial Assistance Policy for Private Sector Housing Renewal in Portsmouth to make the policy more in line with customer needs.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the 2013 Financial Assistance Policy is agreed and implemented from 9th July 2013, as detailed in Appendix 1.

3 Background

- 3.1 The City Council adopted the current financial assistance policy in July 2012 in response to a change in access to funding. Still in keeping with providing assistance to our vulnerable residents, the new policy was developed around providing more low cost loans to residents, whilst still providing financial assistance in the form of grant aid to our most vulnerable residents.
- 3.2 The loans provided are based on a fixed term repayment basis calculated through a full financial assessment of the resident's ability to repay.
- 3.3 Although capital funding available for housing renewal has reduced for housing adaptation, the Council still has mandatory duties under the following legislation:
- Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 – mandatory provision of Disabled Facilities Grants
 - Housing Act 2004 – introduction of the Housing Health and Safety Rating system (HHSRS) and the duty to remove Category 1 hazards.
- 3.4 In addition to the legislative requirement placed on the Council, the adaptation, repair, and improvement of the city's housing stock makes a significant contribution to achieving the Council's vision and strategic objectives, including the Capital Strategy, to regenerate the city and support our vulnerable residents.

4 Funding Allocation

- 4.1 As approved by Council in February 2013, resources to fund the Financial Assistance Policy in 2013/14 are as follows:

Support for Vulnerable People	
Corporate Contribution 13/14	£900,000
Grant contributions and agency fees	£116,000
Remaining corporate contribution 12/13	£558,571
	£1,574,571
Removal of Hazards and Risks in the Home	
Loan Repayments	£500,531
	£500,531
Total Funding	£2,075,102

5 Proposed Policy changes.

- 5.1 To allow private Occupational Therapist (OT) to make referrals on behalf of clients.
- 5.2 To increase the eligibility for Disabled Facilities Assistance (DFA) to include help by the way of a low cost loan for clients that are not eligible for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) but still require a disabled adaption. Low interest bearing loan up to £15,000.
- 5.3 To reintroduce a landlord loan to help local landlords bring their properties in line with current legislation and other council polices. Low interest bearing loan up to £35,000.
- 5.4 To allow for an administration change to be made where appropriate, for clients who make ad-hoc over payments in relation to their loan.

6 Reasons for recommendations

OT support

- 6.1 We are unable to proceed with a DFG application unless a referral is made by an Occupational Therapist (OT). Currently these are only accepted via OTs directly employed by Adult Social Care. Allowing private OTs to refer and allow a reasonable fee to be paid out of the grant assistance if awarded, will allow for more financial assistance to be provided to this vulnerable sector.

- 6.2 To ensure that the referrals submitted do meet the needs of the client, an expert panel will be arranged consisting of a senior PCC OT and members of the Private Sector Housing Team (PSHT) to ensure compliance with the legislation.

Disabled Facilities Assistance

- 6.3 A client DFG application must undergo a formal means test of resources, with the parameters, set within the regulations, to see if the applicant qualifies for grant assistance. A number of clients find that their contribution is above the overall cost of the adaptations works and therefore no assistance can be awarded, but the adaptations are still required. This type of assistance will help customers who may have a large income, but no savings to access a low cost loan to help them undertake the adaptations and remain within their property.

Landlord loans

- 6.4 The reintroduction of a low cost loan for landlords will provide assistance to this much needed market and show further support from the city council during the implementation of the Additional Licensing programme. Interest bearing loans for a maximum term of 5 years where the property is rented, at current market rent, will encourage landlords to have a more proactive approach to improving housing conditions within the private rented sector.
- 6.5 If the landlord wishes to rent the property through an affordable housing rent scheme (80% of the full market rent or less), the low interest bearing loan can be repaid over a 10 year period to take into account the reduced income received from the rent payable. It should be noted that in order to avoid State Aid issues, financial assistance to a landlord cannot exceed E200,000 over a 3 year period.

Over payment

- 6.6 The majority of customers repay their loans by direct debit which have been arranged and agreed prior to the works being undertaken. The current policy allows for clients to make additional over-payments and have an early redemption of their loan without any financial penalty. Over the last 12 months we have seen clients paying small amounts off their loan on an ad-hoc basis, which has led to a large amount of administration work being undertaken to monitor and recalculate interest owed and to re-invoice the clients. Due to the disproportionate costs to the Council for this service, it is more appropriate to allow only larger over-payments to be made by the client without an administration charge being considered.

7 Equality Impact assessment (EIA)

- 7.1 An EIA has been undertaken for this change to the current policy and this does not impact on any of the equality groups.

8 Legal Implications

8.1 Terms and conditions will need to be developed to ensure that the Council's loan investment in a given property is secured appropriately. A cap on the total sum offered to given landlords in loans should be considered in order to ensure that public monies are properly protected, and that assistance to the landlord does not represent state aid to any commercial landlord operation that he or she undertakes (or, where it does, that it exceeds any threshold of aid to that landlord).

9 Finance Comments

9.1 The proposals within this report and in Appendix 1 look at providing a variety of financial assistance packages to residents of the City, but do not seek any additional resources to do so. The proposals aim to focus the provision on our mandatory duties of removing category 1 hazards, providing Disabled Facilities Grants, and providing assistance which will represent a saving to other budgets within the Council such as social care services. All financial assistance will be assessed against these priorities in the first instance.

9.2 The financial assistance will continue to be met from the previously approved resources as identified in paragraph 4.1 for 2013/14, which was approved by Council on 12th February 2013, and any future year funding will be approved as part of the Council's overall Capital Programme setting process.

.....
Signed by:
Alan Cufley, Head of Corporate Assets, Business & Standards

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Private Sector Housing Financial Assistance Policy 2013

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
None	

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

.....
Signed by:
Councillor Darren Sanders, Cabinet Member for Housing

PORTSMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE POLICY 2013

This document sets out the policy for financial assistance available from 2013, and includes:

- Assistance available
- Eligibility requirements for the assistance
- Terms and Conditions for the assistance
- Remedy in the case of breach of the terms and conditions

Types of Assistance Available

- Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant
- Disabled Facilities Assistance - Discretionary
- Disabled Persons Equipment Replacement Assistance - Discretionary
- Palliative Care Assistance - Discretionary
- Category One Hazard Grant - Discretionary
- Home Repair Grant - Discretionary
- Vulnerable Person Grant - Discretionary
- Home Improvement Loan - Discretionary
- Empty Property Loan - Discretionary
- Landlord Assistance Loan - Discretionary
- Property Downsizing Loan - Discretionary
- Property Marketing Loan - Discretionary

All assistance packages are discretionary and therefore are provided subject to funds being available. For this reason provision of this assistance may be limited or discontinued at any time. The one exception to this is the Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant, where funds must be made available to provide this assistance within a time limited period.

1 HELP FOR PEOPLE TO LIVE INDEPENDENTLY IN THEIR HOME.

1.1 DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT (MANDATORY)

A grant of up to £30,000 to help people meet the cost of adaptations to a disabled person's home. The Council is required to ascertain that the works are necessary and appropriate for the needs of the individual, and that it is reasonable and practical to carry out the works having regard to the age and condition of the dwelling.

1.1.1 Scope of works

Works that can be considered for mandatory disabled facilities grant are:

- Adaptations to aid access into and around the dwelling
- Works to ensure the safety of a person

- Provision of suitable bathroom or sleeping facilities, heating, and access to lighting and power.
 - Provision of suitable kitchen facilities or adaptation of existing kitchen.
 - Adaptation to enable the disabled person to care for dependent residents.
- Where more than one solution meets the needs of the disabled person, grant assistance will be given for the most cost effective option.

1.1.2 Eligibility

Allocations will be considered from:

- Disabled homeowners and private sector tenants
- Disabled people living at home with their family
- Parents or Guardians of a disabled child
- All applications will require consultation with Social Services, which will usually be in the form of a referral from a City Council Social Care Occupational Therapist. Referrals from Private Occupational Therapists may be accepted subject to consultation with the City Councils Social Care Services. If a Private referral is accepted following consultation, the Occupational Therapists professional fees may be added to the grant total.

1.1.3 Terms and conditions

- All applications are subject to the standard test of resources as set out in the Housing Grants Construction Regulations 1996 (as amended) to calculate the amount the applicant should contribute to the cost of the works. This test will only be applied to the means of the disabled occupant, spouse or partner.
 - There will be no means testing for families with disabled children under the age of 19.
 - If the disabled person has contributed to a disabled facilities grant within the last ten years, or five years if a tenant, their contribution will be reduced by any previous contribution.
 - The disabled occupant must continue to occupy the property as their only or main residence for 5 years from the certified grant date, unless their health or personal circumstances prevent them from doing so.
 - Grants of more than £5,000 to owner occupiers will be registered as a land charge. The charge will be for a maximum of £10,000. This will be subject to repayment if the property is sold within 10 years of the Certified Grant Date¹ at the discretion of the Council.
 - The applicant will be exempt from repayment of the grant if they move from the property to live in residential care or supported living accommodation.
- NB: These provisions are subject to circular advice, and can be varied by the Department of Communities and Local Government.

¹ The date that the Council considers all the works to the property to be complete to a satisfactory standard. The applicant will be given written confirmation of this date.

1.2 **DISABLED FACILITIES ASSISTANCE (DISCRETIONARY)**

- A loan of up to £15,000 for help to meet the cost of adaptations to a disabled person's home or to help meet the applicant's means tested contribution towards the mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant (1.1 above). All applications will require consultation with Social Services, which will usually be in the form of a referral from a City Council Social Care Occupational Therapist. Referrals from Private Occupational Therapists may be accepted subject to consultation with the City Councils Social Care Services. If a Private referral is accepted following consultation, the Occupational Therapists professional fees may be added to the grant total.

1.2.1 **Terms and conditions**

- The loan must be paid by instalments to enable full repayment of the capital and interest within the loan period.
- Duration of loan will be subject to individual circumstances and the sum loaned.
- The applicant will sign a formal Legal Charge which will be secured on the property by way of registering a Legal Charge at the Land Registry. More detailed information is provided in section 4.2 of this document.
- The general conditions for home improvement loans will apply to Disabled Facilities Assistance, as detailed in Section 4 of this document.

1.3 **DISABLED PERSONS EQUIPMENT REPLACEMENT ASSISTANCE (DISCRETIONARY)**

A grant of up to £5,000 to replace obsolete or defective equipment.

1.3.1 **Scope of works**

Examples of work that can be considered for this assistance are:

- Replacement of stair lifts
- Replacement of disabled shower units

1.3.2 **Eligibility**

As for the mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant as in 1.1.2 above.

1.3.3 **Terms and conditions**

The client should ensure that the equipment is kept in good condition.

1.4 **PALLIATIVE CARE ASSISTANCE (DISCRETIONARY)**

A grant to fund the installation of a stair lift.

1.4.1 **Scope of works**

The loan and installation of second hand, reconditioned stair lifts.

1.4.2 Eligibility

Applications will be considered from:

- Homeowners or private tenants who are in palliative care.
- A person in palliative care living at home with family
- Parents or Guardians with a disabled child in palliative care living at home.
- Applications supported by City Council Social Care Occupational Therapist.
- Applications from or supported by hospices to enable people to return home for care.

1.4.3 Terms and Conditions

- The client should ensure that the equipment is kept in good condition.
- When the stair lift is no longer needed for the purpose for which it was provided, it must be returned to the supplier.

2 HELP FOR OWNER OCCUPIERS TO REPAIR AND IMPROVE THEIR HOMES

2.1 CATEGORY ONE HAZARD GRANT (DISCRETIONARY)

A grant of up to £2,500 to remedy one Category one hazard found within the curtilage of the property, that would affect the health & safety of the occupants.

2.1.1 Scope of works

The Council can use its discretion to provide assistance to remedy what it considers to be the most significant health and safety risks, through remedying *one* significant Category one Hazard under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, from the following list of category one hazards only.

- Damp & Mould
- Excess cold
- Entry by intruders
- Falls associated with baths etc
- Falls on the level
- Falls associated with stairs & steps
- Falls between levels
- Electrical Hazards

The Grant will also be used to carry out sustainability measures in relation to the works carried out at the property, where no external funding is available to enable these works to be undertaken. For example, the installation of a water butt when carrying out remedial works to a roof or guttering.

For the replacement of means of heating or hot water, the applicant must:

- Have first been assessed for Green Deal/Eco Funding. Financial assistance will only be offered on production of evidence that Green Deal/Eco funding is not available for the applicant.
- be assessed to be in fuel poverty, or
- be living in a property with an EPC energy efficiency rating of E - G. Financial assistance will be provided on the basis that the Banding will be increased by at least one band, and must as a minimum achieve band D.
- Any low cost energy measures recommended in the EPC report must also be undertaken.
- agree to undertake insulation work specified by the Council such as loft and/or cavity wall insulation, or internal or external wall insulation, which will not be funded through this policy.

2.1.2 Eligibility

Available to any owner-occupied household where only one category one hazard from the list above has been identified. The property must have been owned and occupied by the applicant for at least the last 5 years, and the applicant must not have received a previous grant or loan assistance package from Portsmouth City Council (excluding Disabled Facilities Grant assistance). This grant is not available in conjunction with any other discretionary assistance package. See general conditions for grant assistance, as detailed in section 5 of this policy document.

2.2 HOME REPAIR GRANT (DISCRETIONARY)

A grant of up to £4,000 to remedy disrepair that would affect the health and safety of the occupants.

2.2.1 Scope of works

The Council can use its discretion to provide assistance to remedy what it considers to be the most significant health and safety risks, through any items required to remove Category 1 hazards and significant category 2 hazards only under the Housing Health and Safety rating system. The grant will also be used to provide sustainability measures as specified by the council, where no external funding is available to enable these works to be undertaken.

For the replacement of means of heating or hot water, the applicant must:

- Have first been assessed for Green Deal/Eco Funding. Financial assistance will only be offered on production of evidence that Green Deal/Eco funding is not available for the applicant.
- be assessed to be in fuel poverty, or
- be living in a property with an EPC energy efficiency rating of E - G. Financial assistance will be provided on the basis that the Banding will be increased by at least one band, and must as a minimum achieve band D.
- Any low cost energy measures recommended in the EPC report must also be undertaken.

- agree to undertake insulation work specified by the Council such as loft and/or cavity wall insulation, or internal or external wall insulation, which will not be funded through this policy.

The general conditions for grants will apply to these grants, as detailed in section 5 of this policy document.

2.2.2 Eligibility

Applications will be considered from homeowners who satisfy the general eligibility conditions detailed in section 5 of this document.

In addition the following eligibility criteria will apply:

No previous Home Repair Assistance has been provided for the applicant or the property within the last 3 years.

The applicant or partner is in receipt of income based qualifying benefit, such as:

- Housing Benefit
- Council Tax Benefit
- Income Support
- Income-based Job Seekers Allowance
- Working Tax Credit which includes a disability element where the entitled person has a relevant annual income of less than £15,050
- Child Tax Credit where the entitled person has a relevant annual income of less than £15,050
- Guaranteed Pension Credit
- Either Disabled Living Allowance or Attendance or War Disablement or Industrial Injuries Benefit, or suffer from severe mental health problems that make work impossible and their contribution using the Disabled Facilities Grant means test would be zero.

Or on a low income but not in receipt of benefits, i.e. less than £2,000 contribution after means testing.

2.2.3 Terms and conditions

Grants of £4,000 or less are repayable if the property is sold or transferred, or the occupiers vacate within 3 years of completion of the works and will be secured as a charge on the property. The applicant may choose to fund works in excess of £4,000 themselves or take on a loan.

The general conditions for grants will apply to these grants, as detailed in section 5 of this policy document.

2.3 VULNERABLE PERSONS GRANT (DISCRETIONARY)

Available to those in receipt of an income based benefit, where applicants are also:

- in receipt of a disability benefit, *or*
- are aged 60 or over, *or*
- have children aged *under* 15 years, *or*

- suffer from severe mental health problems that make work impossible and their contribution using the Disabled Facilities Grant means test would be zero.

Maximum grant of £10,000

2.3.1 Scope of works

Any items of work required to rectify a significant hazard under the HHSRS. The grant will also be used to provide sustainability measures as specified by the council, where no external funding is available to enable these works to be undertaken.

For the replacement of means of heating or hot water, the applicant must:

- Have first been assessed for Green Deal/Eco Funding. Financial assistance will only be offered on production of evidence that Green Deal/Eco funding is not available for the applicant.
- be assessed to be in fuel poverty, or
- be living in a property with an EPC energy efficiency rating of E - G. Financial assistance will be provided on the basis that the Banding will be increased by at least one band, and must as a minimum achieve band D.
- Any low cost energy measures recommended in the EPC report must also be undertaken.
- agree to undertake insulation work specified by the Council such as loft and/or cavity wall insulation, or internal or external wall insulation, which will not be funded through this policy.

2.3.2 Terms and conditions

Grants in excess of £4,000 are repayable if the property is sold or transferred or the occupiers vacate within 15 years of completion of the works, and will be secured as a charge on the property. Such assistance is only available to occupiers with leasehold or freehold interests in the home where there is sufficient equity in the property.

Successive applications are permitted subject to the maximum grant not being exceeded in any 5 year period.

If successive applications are made and the sum of the application in any 5 years exceeds £4,000 then assistance will only be provided with a legal charge for the combined full amount, unless the applicant chooses to fund the excess over £4,000 themselves.

This grant is not available in conjunction with any other discretionary assistance package. See general conditions for grant assistance, as detailed in section 5 of this policy document.

2.4 **HOME IMPROVEMENT LOANS FOR OWNER OCCUPIERS (DISCRETIONARY)**

A variety of affordable loans of up to £35,000 to enable vulnerable owner occupiers to carry out work to improve their homes. Loan terms offered will be

determined by the Local Authority based on an assessment of financial resources, and will be offered for a period of 5 years, 10 years, 15 years, 20 years or 25 years.

2.4.1 Scope of works

Any items of work required to remedy significant hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System within the Housing Act 2004.

Loan assistance will also be used for the installation of sustainability measures as the council specify, which could include:

- Installing water butts
- Installing low-flow taps to kitchens and bathrooms
- Lagging of hot water pipes
- De-Paving of gardens, forecourts, driveways

For the replacement of means of heating or hot water, the applicant must:

- Have first been assessed for Green Deal/Eco Funding. Financial assistance will only be offered on production of evidence that Green Deal/Eco funding is not available for the applicant.
- be assessed to be in fuel poverty, or
- be living in a property with an EPC energy efficiency rating of E - G. Financial assistance will be provided on the basis that the Banding will be increased by at least one band, and must as a minimum achieve band D.
- Any low cost energy measures recommended in the EPC report must also be undertaken.
- agree to undertake insulation work specified by the Council such as loft and/or cavity wall insulation, or internal or external wall insulation, which will not be funded through this policy.

2.4.2 Terms and conditions

The general conditions for loans will apply to these loans, as detailed in section 5 and 6 of this policy document.

2.4.3 Types of loans available to owner occupiers

Loan Assistance can be used to top up a Home Repairs Grant; where the applicant is eligible for this assistance. Loan assistance cannot however be used to top up any other type of grant assistance.

Capital repayment loan

- Duration of loan – Subject to individual circumstances and the sum loaned.
- Interest free period – first 2 years.
- The loan must be paid by instalments to enable full repayment of the capital and interest within the loan period.

Low start capital repayment loan

- Duration of loan – Subject to individual circumstances and the sum loaned.
- Payment holiday – first 2 years

- Interest free period – first 5 years.
- The loan must be paid by instalments to enable full repayment of the capital and interest within the loan period.

Interest only loan

- Duration of loan – set per cost of loan up to a period of 15 years.
- Interest only paid for the duration of loan from the certified date.
- Full capital to be repaid at the end of the loan period, or upon the sale of the property, whichever comes first. The local authority will consider conversion to another form of repayment loan at the end of the loan period, subject to individual circumstances.
- Available to those in receipt of a pass-porting benefit.

Vulnerable persons loan

- Duration of loan – life
 - Interest free period - Life
 - Full repayment will become due on the death of the applicant(s).
- This loan is available to applicants who are receiving a pass porting benefit, and have within the household:
- an occupant aged 65 or over, *or*
 - at least one vulnerable age group for a Category 1 hazard (under the HHSRS) identified within the property.

Interest Free repayment Loan

Duration of loan – 10 years

- Interest free period – 10 years

This loan is available to applicants who have a means test contribution of £2,000 Or below.

- The loan must be paid by instalments to enable full repayment of the capital within the loan period.

3 HELP TO REPAIR, IMPROVE AND PROMOTE RENTAL PROPERTIES AND HOUSING THAT IS STAGNANT ON THE MARKET

3.1 EMPTY PROPERTY LOANS (DISCRETIONARY)

Loans are available to anyone who owns a residential property which has been empty for twelve months or longer. The loan is available for a maximum of £35,000 to pay for essential renovation and repair works, so that the homes can be lived in by their owners or rented on the open market or through an affordable housing rent scheme.

3.1.1 Scope of works

Works to bring the property back into use and ensure that no significant hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (within the 2004 Housing Act) remain within the property.

Loan assistance will also be used for the installation of sustainable energy measures as specified by the council, which for example could include:

- Installing water butts
- Installing low-flow taps to kitchens and bathrooms
- Lagging of hot water pipes
- De-Paving of gardens, forecourts, driveways

For the replacement of means of heating or hot water, the applicant must:

- Have first been assessed for Green Deal/Eco Funding. Financial assistance will only be offered on production of evidence that Green Deal/Eco funding is not available for the applicant.
- be assessed to be in fuel poverty, or
- be living in a property with an EPC energy efficiency rating of E - G. Financial assistance will be provided on the basis that the Banding will be increased by at least one band, and must as a minimum achieve band D.
- Any low cost energy measures recommended in the EPC report must also be undertaken.
- agree to undertake insulation work specified by the Council such as loft and/or cavity wall insulation, or internal or external wall insulation, which will not be funded through this policy.

3.1.2 Terms and conditions:

The loan must be repaid by instalments to enable full repayment of the capital and interest within the loan period. Full repayment of the loan plus any interest due must be repaid upon the sale or transfer of the property. Interest will be calculated from the certified date.

Where the property is to be occupied by the owner or their family, or to be rented on the open market

- Duration of loan - up to 5 years subject to circumstances and amount of loan
- Interest free period - first 2 years.

Where the property is to be rented through an affordable housing rent scheme (Approximately 80% of full market rent or less)

- Duration of loan - up to 10 years subject to circumstances and amount of loan
- Interest free period - first 2 years.

- The offer of a loan will be subject to sufficient equity being available in the property.
- Applicants receiving an empty property loan must make the property available for letting on the open market, or through an affordable housing rent scheme, or they must occupy the property as their own principle home.
- The loan will be subject to repayment in full if the property is kept empty, sold or transferred to another owner.
- This loan is not available in conjunction with any other discretionary assistance package. See general conditions for loan assistance.
- This assistance is not available where legal action has had to have been taken by PCC against the property owner.

- The general conditions for loans will apply to these loans, as detailed in section 4 and 5 of this policy document.

3.2 **LANDLORD ASSISTANCE LOANS (DISCRETIONARY)**

Loans of up to £35,000 are available to enable landlords to carry out essential renovation and repair works to remove significant health and safety hazards from their rental property.

3.2.1 **Scope of works**

Works to ensure that no significant hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (within the 2004 Housing Act) remain within the property.

Loan assistance will also be used for the installation of sustainable energy measures as specified by the council, which for example could include:

- Installing water butts
- Installing low-flow taps to kitchens and bathrooms
- Lagging of hot water pipes
- De-Paving of gardens, forecourts, driveways

For the replacement of means of heating or hot water, the applicant must:

- Have first been assessed for Green Deal/Eco Funding. Financial assistance will only be offered on production of evidence that Green Deal/Eco funding is not available for the applicant.
- be assessed to be in fuel poverty, or
- be living in a property with an EPC energy efficiency rating of E - G. Financial assistance will be provided on the basis that the Banding will be increased by at least one band, and must as a minimum achieve band D.
- Any low cost energy measures recommended in the EPC report must also be undertaken.
- agree to undertake insulation work specified by the Council such as loft and/or cavity wall insulation, or internal or external wall insulation, which will not be funded through this policy.

3.2.2 **Terms and conditions:**

The loan must be repaid by instalments to enable full repayment of the capital and interest within the loan period. Full repayment of the loan plus any interest due must be repaid upon the sale or transfer of the property. Interest will be calculated from the certified date.

Where the property is or to be rented on the open market

- Duration of loan - up to 5 years subject to circumstances and amount of loan
- Interest free period - first 2 years.

Where the property is to be rented through an affordable housing rent scheme (Approximately 80% of full market rent or less)

- Duration of loan - up to 10 years subject to circumstances and amount of loan

- Interest free period - first 2 years.
- The offer of a loan will be subject to sufficient equity being available in the property.
- The applicant must be the freehold owner of the property, and be letting, or intending to let the property.
- The type of loan that will be offered will depend on the individual circumstances of the applicant, and where applicable, subject to a satisfactory company search.
- Applicants receiving a Landlord Assistance loan must make the property available for letting on the open market, or through an affordable housing rent scheme.
- The loan will be subject to repayment in full if the property is kept empty, sold or transferred to another owner.
- This loan is not available in conjunction with any other discretionary assistance package. See general conditions for loan assistance.
- This assistance is not available where legal action has had to have been taken by PCC against the property owner.
- The applicant will be subject to a Landlord Assessment under Section 66 of the Housing Act 2004.
- The general conditions for loans will apply to these loans, as detailed in section 4 and 5 of this policy document.

3.3 **PROPERTY MARKETING LOANS (DISCRETIONARY)**

Loans are available to anyone who owns a residential property, which has been on the open market to be sold for a period of 6 months or more. The loan is available for a maximum of £5,000 to pay for essential renovation and repair works, to improve the desirability of the property to potential buyers.

3.3.1 **Scope of works**

Works to renovate or remedy disrepair to the property, specifically for making the house more marketable to be sold.

This could include:

- Decoration to the interior or exterior of the property
- Clearing or overhauling of the garden or forecourt
- General repairs which could include gutters, rendering, windows, doors, roof repairs
- Treatment of rising or penetrating damp
- Sustainability Measures

For the replacement of means of heating or hot water, the applicant must:

- Have first been assessed for Green Deal/Eco Funding. Financial assistance will only be offered on production of evidence that Green Deal/Eco funding is not available for the applicant.
- be assessed to be in fuel poverty, or

- be living in a property with an EPC energy efficiency rating of E - G. Financial assistance will be provided on the basis that the Banding will be increased by at least one band, and must as a minimum achieve band D.
- Any low cost energy measures recommended in the EPC report must also be undertaken.
- agree to undertake insulation work specified by the Council such as loft and/or cavity wall insulation, or internal or external wall insulation, which will not be funded through this policy.

3.3.2 Terms and conditions:

Duration of loan – up to 2 years subject to circumstances and amount of loan. The loan must be repaid in full, including interest on the sale or transfer of the property, or on the 2 year anniversary of the loan; whichever comes first.

- The offer of a loan will be subject to sufficient equity being available in the property.
- Simple interest will be charged from the certified date.

3.4 PROPERTY MARKETING LOANS (DISCRETIONARY)

Loans are available to anyone who owns a residential property, which has been on the open market to be sold for a period of 6 months or more. The loan is available for a maximum of £5,000 to pay for essential renovation and repair works, to improve the desirability of the property to potential buyers.

3.4.1 Scope of works

Works to renovate or remedy disrepair to the property, specifically for making the house more marketable to be sold.

This could include:

- Decoration to the interior or exterior of the property
- Clearing or overhauling of the garden or forecourt
- General repairs which could include gutters, rendering, windows, doors, roof repairs
- Treatment of rising or penetrating damp
- Sustainability Measures

For the replacement of means of heating or hot water, the applicant must:

- Have first been assessed for Green Deal/Eco Funding. Financial assistance will only be offered on production of evidence that Green Deal/Eco funding is not available for the applicant.
- be assessed to be in fuel poverty, or
- be living in a property with an EPC energy efficiency rating of E - G. Financial assistance will be provided on the basis that the Banding will be increased by at least one band, and must as a minimum achieve band D.

- Any low cost energy measures recommended in the EPC report must also be undertaken.
- agree to undertake insulation work specified by the Council such as loft and/or cavity wall insulation, or internal or external wall insulation, which will not be funded through this policy.

3.4.2 **Terms and conditions:**

Duration of loan – up to 2 years subject to circumstances and amount of loan. The loan must be repaid in full, including interest on the sale or transfer of the property, or on the 2 year anniversary of the loan; whichever comes first.

- The offer of a loan will be subject to sufficient equity being available in the property.
- Simple interest will be charged from the certified date.

3.5 **DOWN-SIZING PROPERTY LOAN (DISCRETIONARY)**

Loans of up to £3,000 are available to meet the immediate costs of moving to a smaller property, or one that is more suitable for the applicants changing needs. The Loan can be used to cover typical moving costs such as solicitors fees, structural survey fees, removals services, etc.

3.5.1 **Eligibility conditions**

- Applicants must be aged 65 or over.
- The applicant must intend to sell their existing property and buy a property of lower value.
- The property must be on the open market to be sold in order to receive loan assistance.
- The applicant must demonstrate that the proposed property they wish to purchase is more suitable for their needs than their existing property. This may be because of the proposed properties size, location, amenities etc.
- The loan is to be registered with land registry against the clients existing property and must be repaid in full including interest owed, upon the sale of the property.

3.5.2 **Terms:**

Duration of loan – The loan must be repaid in full, including interest, on the sale or transfer of the property, or on the 2 year anniversary of the loan; whichever comes first.

- The offer of a loan will be subject to sufficient equity being available in the property.
- Simple interest will be charged from the date of approval of the loan.

4 GENERAL CONDITIONS FOR ALL REPAIR AND IMPROVEMENT ASSISTANCE

These conditions apply to all discretionary grants and loans, excluding Disabled Facilities Assistance, Disabled Persons Equipment Replacement Assistance, and Palliative Care Assistance.

4.1 Eligibility conditions

- Applications for assistance must be made prior to the commencement of work.
- The property must be at least 10 years old.
- The property must not be on the market to be sold. (Excluding property marketing Loan)
- The property must be within Council Tax bands A-D.
- Applications from owner-occupiers of band E properties may be considered where there is a health and safety risk in a vulnerable household, and alternative funding sources are not available. Households in band E will be defined as vulnerable if the applicant is receiving income related benefit, and has within the household:
 - an occupant aged 70 or over, or
 - an occupant who is registered disabled, or
 - at least one vulnerable age group for a Category 1 hazard (under the HHSRS).

4.2 Registration of a legal charge

4.2.1 Grants

- The grant will be registered:
 - on the Local Land Charges Register for grants of £4,000 or less. The charge will be removed 3 years from the certified grant date or in the event of early repayment of the grant.
 - With a Legal Charge at the Land Registry for grants of over £4,000. The charge will be removed 15 years from the certified grant date or in the event of early repayment of the grant.
- If the grant conditions have been breached within the grant period, the charge will remain on the property until the grant has been repaid in full, along with interest. Compound interest will be charged from the date that the breach occurred, at a rate of 4% above the Bank of England base rate.

4.2.2 Loans

- The applicants will sign a formal Legal Charge which will be secured on the property by registering a Legal Charge at the Land Registry, except in cases where the property is unregistered and there is already a mortgage in

existence. In these cases the Council gives notice to the first mortgagee and register a Puisne Mortgage CI entry in the Land Charges Register.

- The charge will be removed following full repayment of the loan and interest accrued.

4.3 Ownership and occupation requirements

Financial assistance is provided by the Council to assist people to provide better living conditions for the occupants identified in their application. For this reason the following conditions apply:

4.4 Grant recipients

- Owner occupiers receiving a grant must continue to occupy the property as their only or principal home for:
 - 3 years from the certified grant date for Grants of £4,000 or less.
 - 15 years from the certified grant date for Grants of more than £4,000.

This is known as the grant condition period.

- The grant will be subject to repayment in full if, within the grant condition period, the property is sold or transferred to another party, rented out, the applicant dies, or ceases to occupy the property as their only or principal home.
- The applicant will be exempt from repayment of the grant if they move from the property to live in residential care or supported living accommodation.
- If the applicant dies, the continued occupation of a member of their family² will count as continuous occupation.

4.5 Loan recipients

- Owner occupiers receiving a loan must continue to occupy the property as their only or principal home until the end of the loan term, or when the loan capital and interest accrued have been repaid in full.
- The loan will be subject to repayment if the property is sold or transferred to another party, rented out, the applicant dies, or ceases to occupy the property as their only or principal home.
- Should the applicant move from the property to live in residential care or supported living accommodation the requirement to make loan repayments will be deferred to allow the property to be sold. This will be subject to the property being sold within 6 months from the date that they moved from the property, and full repayment of the outstanding balance. If the property is not sold within 6 months, the Council will look to recover the full amount due.
- If one party to a loan in joint names dies leaving a spouse or partner in occupation, the remaining partner will continue as responsible for the loan.
- If the loan is in one name only and that person dies leaving a spouse or partner in occupation, the Council will consider transferring the loan to the

² Defined by the Housing Act 1985 Section 113 (as amended).

remaining spouse/partner, subject to their individual circumstances, and the transfer of the property into their sole name.

5 **GENERAL LOAN CONDITIONS**

These conditions apply to loans for both owner occupiers and landlords, and include discretionary Disabled Facilities Assistance.

5.1 **Equity requirement**

- There must be at least 20% equity remaining in the property.
- Equity remaining will be calculated by subtracting the value of all legal charges on the property, including the proposed loan under this policy, from the assessed current market value of the property (or similar properties within the immediate vicinity).
- If the applicant has the facility to acquire further funding as stipulated within their current mortgage conditions, they must declare this in their application, and provide details of the agreement.
- The applicant must agree not to further charge or remortgage the property.

5.2 **Interest**

- Simple Interest will be charged at the standard local authority rate³ as determined by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. This may be changed if the applicant defaults on the loan agreement, as detailed in section 5.4 of this document.
- The interest to be paid over the duration of the loan will be set at the beginning of the loan period⁴.

5.3 **Repayment terms**

- Instalments must be made by Direct Debit to be set up as soon as payment becomes due.
- Instalments will be calculated to ensure that the loan capital and interest will be paid in full by the end of the loan period (excluding interest only loan).

5.4 **Default**

- If the applicant defaults on the conditions of the agreement, action will be taken to recover all of the monies owed.
- Any action will take into account the circumstances of the applicant. Every

³As in the Housing 1985, Schedule 16. www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1985/68/schedule/16

⁴ The loan period commences on the date the application is approved by the Council. The applicant will be give written confirmation of this date.

effort will be made to agree an arrangement that meets the Council's requirements without causing undue hardship to the applicant.

- The Council reserves the right to charge compound interest in cases of non-compliance with the loan agreement, from the date the Council considers the non-compliance date.

5.6 **Redemption**

Loans can be voluntarily discharged at any time, by the applicant repaying the capital and interest due to the Council. Over payments should be made in instalments of £1000 or more, payments made below £1,000 may attract a £25 administration charge for recalculation of the outstanding capital and interest, where necessary. Early repayment will not attract redemption penalties.

5.7 **Insurance and maintenance of the property**

- The applicant is required to keep the property insured for the duration of the loan.
- The applicant is required to continue to maintain and repair the property for the duration of the loan.

Agenda Item 5

Agenda item:

5

Decision maker:	Cabinet Member for Housing
Subject:	REFURBISHMENT OF St. CLARES COURT
Date of decision:	9th July 2013
Report by:	OWEN BUCKWELL – HEAD OF HOUSING AND PROPERTY MANAGEMENT
Wards affected:	Havant
Key decision:	Yes – Over £250,000
Budget & policy framework decision:	No

1. Summary & Purpose of report

- 1.1 To seek permission for the modernisation of sheltered housing facilities/accommodation at St Clare's Court, Leigh Park.
- 1.2 To seek permission, to spend £1,437,500 for the undertaking of refurbishment works to 1-45 St Clare's Court. 44 properties will be reconfigured into 32 self contained modern properties within the overall building.
- 1.3 The works will benefit individual residents of the scheme as it will enhance their standard of living by providing improved, increased-sized living space with up-to-date individual facilities.
- 1.4 The scheme will hopefully become more attractive to future residents due to enhanced accommodation, more appropriate to today's expectation, and therefore more attractive to a person considering entering a sheltered scheme.
- 1.5 If approved, it is anticipated that the works could commence in autumn 2013 and would continue on a phased basis. This would be in line with the moving of existing residents to completed flats and would cause minimum disruption.
- 1.6 This scheme does not require residents to move unless they wish to do so; there are significant vacant units within this building allowing us to commence large scale works without the scheme being closed. This method of refurbishment has proved very popular with residents as they have been very concerned to be able to remain within the scheme in which they are currently living. Any residents wishing to move from the scheme will be offered alternative category 2 accommodation.
- 1.7 An initial conversion of 2 void bed-sits into 1 property has taken place. This has been used as a flagship property to fully gauge the way forward with the whole scheme in line with resident's demands and needs.
- 1.8 We will ensure that each resident has a support person to help manage their move to allay any concerns and ensure that individual needs are met.

2. Background

- 2.1 St Clare's Court is a category two sheltered scheme outside of the city limits in the area of Leigh Park. This is a scheme that provides on-site housing related support Monday to Friday to our residents, working with Adult Social Care, Health and other agencies. The level of the support varies to meet the needs and demands of the residents, and is flexible in its provision.
- 2.2 There are 44 properties, comprising of 33 bed-sits, 9 one-bedroom flats and 2 two-bedroom flats. There are also six sets of communal bathroom facilities consisting of two wet rooms/bathrooms on each floor. There are two large community rooms, a laundry/drying room. The warden's office and guest room which has the same size footprint as a bed sit, with a bathroom next door, also has the possibility of providing a further 1 bed flat.
- 2.3 The bed-sits are around 28m². This is 38% smaller than the 45m² required for a one bedroom flat for new affordable housing in the council's space standards.
- 2.4 Some of the bed-sits have very basic washing facilities and residents have to use the communal wet room/bathroom facilities.
- 2.5 We have experienced a high level of voids at this scheme over the past 10 years and currently have a 22% under occupancy equating to 10 empty properties. We have collated evidence to suggest that the type of accommodation does not suit the demands and needs of the prospective tenants.
- 2.6 On average there have been 12 void properties per year for the last 10 years.
- 2.7 Without remedial works, it is expected that the under occupancy will increase exponentially over the next 30 years at a rate of 10% every 3 years, leaving this block less popular with potential residents due to the age, condition and unsuitability of the less attractive accommodation on offer to them.
- 2.8 The works to St Clare's Court are designed to improve the desirability of the scheme, and will ensure that the properties are attractive and fully occupied by future residents and allow local people to stay in this area.

3. Recommendations:

- i **That approval is given to proceed with the scheme within the approved sum of £1,437,500.**

4. Reasons for recommendations

- 4.1 The works will ensure that St Clare's Court sheltered housing properties are up to the market standard for this product, thus maintaining lettable assets for the council.
- 4.2 The works will improve the living environment for residents and ensure that the scheme is in line with the requirements for the future.

- 4.3 The works will help to contribute to the council's Corporate Priority 6 – "Increase availability, affordability, and quality of housing"
- 4.4 The works will help to contribute to the council's Corporate Priority 7 – "Protect and support our most vulnerable residents".

5. Options considered and rejected

- 5.1 *Do Nothing-*
Properties are currently empty because they do not offer the right accommodation to suit people's needs. This is an unacceptable situation and will only worsen.
- 5.2 *Decategorise*
The council would lose the facility of sheltered accommodation in the Leigh Park area which would make it impossible for future tenants requiring this facility to stay in the area.
- 5.3 *Change to mixed block, general needs and sheltered.*
This will only address short term take-up and does not deal with the required updating/modernisation of the accommodation.

6. Duty to involve

- 6.1 Some of the residents were spoken to in person during initial consultation to gather their opinions and thoughts on St Clare's Court. Further consultation will take place to maintain a level of transparency on what is happening and how individuals will be affected.
- 6.2 Residents will be consulted on any changes to communal areas prior to any works affecting them. They will also be given the opportunity to vote on the colour scheme used on any areas.

7. Implications

- 7.1 It is considered that the works will have positive implications by helping to maintain the properties whilst improving the living conditions of the residents.
- 7.2 The works should have positive implications by ensuring that the council maintains good quality housing that is easily lettable.
- 7.3 There is the potential for negative implications due to potential disruption to residents during the works, such as noise and dust etc. Measures will be undertaken to reduce these occurrences to a minimum.
- 7.4 There is the potential for negative implications due to possible loss of existing facilities however this will be outweighed and balanced by the increased accommodation and facilities individual properties will be able to provide to their residents within their own homes.
- 7.5 We do not have any leaseholders who will be affected by the scheme.

This report and the project it refers to contribute to the following Corporate Priorities:

- Increase availability and quality of housing
- Protect and support our most vulnerable residents

9. Equality impact assessment (EIA)

A preliminary EIA has been done regarding this project. The project will impact positively on age and disability strands. There is no adverse impact on people who belong to the remaining equality strands. A full EIA is **not** required.

Residents who live in the blocks affected by the project will be consulted on the work, and specific needs will be addressed so that tenants with protected characteristics can be fully involved in the consultation. The project is expected to have positive outcomes for all current and future tenants and will benefit all the council's tenants by saving money in the long term.

10. Legal implications

- 10.1 The refurbishment works proposed will need to be procured through a process which is compliant with the City Council's Contract Procedure Rules in Part 3A of the Constitution.
- 10.2 Under Part 2, Section 3 of the City Council's constitution (responsibilities of the Cabinet) and further in accordance with the Scheme of Delegations at Appendix A to the Executive Procedure Rules in Part 3 of the Constitution, the Cabinet Member for Housing has the authority to approve the recommendations set out in this report.

11. Head of Financial Services comments

“The works involved in updating Tweed/St Clare’s Court reduces the number of available dwellings in this sheltered accommodation, but it increases the desirability of the block as a place to live. This is expected to have a marked effect on occupancy levels in years to come, with a substantial improvement on current void losses. Without this modernisation, there will be fewer and fewer tenants who are prepared to live in Tweed Court, which would reduce the financial viability of this block over a period of time and escalate the existing issues relating to voids further.

Funding for this scheme is from the ‘Major Repairs – Dwellings’ section of the Housing Investment Programme, which was approved by full council on 12th February 2013”

.....
Signed by: **Owen Buckwell – Head of Housing and Property Management**

Appendices:

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/
rejected by the _____ on _____ .

.....
Signed by: [**Councillor Darren Sanders**]

This page is intentionally left blank

St Clares Court - remain the same or rebuild

	A	B	C	D
1	SUMMARY OF OPTIONS - Figures in brackets are net incomes, all others are net costs	Total capital cost for PCC - Housing Investment Programme	Total revenue effect over 30 years	Net Present Value
		£ 000	£ 000	£ 000
2	Option 1 - Do nothing - continue to use and maintain St Clares Court in its existing configuration	0	(1,935)	(1,414)
3	Option 2 - Rebuild and modernise St Clares Court. Fewer overall units, but more flats rather than bedsits, leading to increased occupancy	1,438	(4,509)	(1,517)

NOTES

Option 2 is the best option, as it provides decent homes for residents, reduces void losses, and is overall saves the HRA more money than Option 1

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item 6

Agenda item:

6

Decision maker:	Cabinet Member for Housing
Subject:	REFURBISHMENT OF TWEED COURT
Date of decision:	9th July 2013
Report by:	OWEN BUCKWELL – HEAD OF HOUSING AND PROPERTY MANAGEMENT
Wards affected:	Havant
Key decision:	Yes – Over £250,000
Budget & policy framework decision:	No

1. Summary & Purpose of report

- 1.1 To seek permission for the modernisation of sheltered housing facilities/accommodation at Tweed Court, Leigh Park.
- 1.2 To seek permission, to spend £1,437,500 for the undertaking of refurbishment works to 1-45 Tweed Court. 44 properties will be reconfigured into 32 self contained modern properties within the overall building.
- 1.3 The works will benefit individual residents of the scheme as it will enhance their standard of living by providing improved, increased-sized living space with up-to-date individual facilities.
- 1.4 The scheme will hopefully become more attractive to future residents due to enhanced accommodation, more appropriate to today's expectation, and therefore more attractive to a person considering entering a sheltered scheme.
- 1.5 This scheme does not require residents to move unless they wish to do so; there are significant vacant units within this building allowing us to commence large scale works without the scheme being closed. This method of refurbishment has proved very popular with residents as they have been very concerned to be able to remain within the scheme in which they are currently living. Any residents wishing to move from the scheme will be offered alternative category 2 accommodation.
- 1.6 If approved, it is anticipated that the works could commence in autumn 2013 and would continue on a phased basis. This would be in line with the moving of existing residents to completed flats and would cause minimum disruption.
- 1.7 An initial conversion of 2 void bed-sits into 1 property has taken place. This has been used as a flagship property to fully gauge the way forward with the whole scheme in line with resident's demands and needs.

- 1.8 We will ensure that each resident has a support person to help manage their move to allay any concerns and ensure that their individual needs are met.

2. Background

- 2.1 Tweed Court is a category two sheltered scheme outside of the city limits in the area of Leigh Park. This is a scheme that provides on-site housing related support Monday to Friday to our residents, working with Adult Social Care, Health and other agencies. The level of the support varies to meet the needs and demands of the residents, and is flexible in its provision.
- 2.2 There are 44 properties, comprising of 33 bed-sits, 9 one-bedroom flats and 2 two-bedroom flats. There are also six sets of communal bathroom facilities consisting of two wet rooms/bathrooms on each floor. There are two large community rooms, a laundry/drying room. The warden's office and guest room which has the same size footprint as a bed sit, with a bathroom next door, also has the possibility of providing a further 1 bed flat.
- 2.3 The bed-sits are around 28m². This is 38% smaller than the 45m² required for a one bedroom flat for new affordable housing in the council's space standards.
- 2.4 Some of the bed-sits have very basic washing facilities and residents have to use the communal wet room/bathroom facilities.
- 2.5 We have experienced a high level of voids at this scheme over the past 10 years and currently have a 22% under occupancy equating to 10 empty properties. We have collated evidence to suggest that the type of accommodation does not suit the demands and needs of the prospective tenants.
- 2.6 On average there have been 12 void properties per year for the last 10 years.
- 2.7 Without remedial works, it is expected that the under occupancy will increase exponentially over the next 30 years at a rate of 10% every 3 years, leaving this block less popular with potential residents due to the age, condition and unsuitability of the less attractive accommodation on offer to them.
- 2.8 The works to Tweed Court are designed to improve the desirability of the scheme, and will ensure that the properties are attractive and fully occupied by future residents and allow local people to stay in this area.

3. Recommendations:

- i **That approval is given to proceed with the scheme within the approved sum of £1,437,500.**

4. Reasons for recommendations

- 4.1 The works will ensure that Tweed Court sheltered housing properties are up to the market standard for this product, thus maintaining lettable assets for the council.

- 4.2 The works will improve the living environment for residents and ensure that the scheme is in line with the requirements for the future.
- 4.3 The works will help to contribute to the council's Corporate Priority 6 – "Increase availability, affordability, and quality of housing"
- 4.4 The works will help to contribute to the council's Corporate Priority 7 – "Protect and support our most vulnerable residents".

5. Options considered and rejected

- 5.1 *Do Nothing-*
Properties are currently empty because they do not offer the right accommodation to suit people's needs. This is an unacceptable situation and will only worsen.
- 5.2 *Decategorise*
The council would lose the facility of sheltered accommodation in the Leigh Park area which would make it impossible for future tenants requiring this facility to stay in the area.
- 5.3 *Change to mixed block, general needs and sheltered.*
This will only address short term take-up and does not deal with the required updating/modernisation of the accommodation.

6. Duty to involve

- 6.1 Some of the residents were spoken to in person during initial consultation to gather their opinions and thoughts on Tweed Court. Further consultation will take place to maintain a level of transparency on what is happening and how individuals will be affected.
- 6.2 Residents will be consulted on any changes to communal areas prior to any works affecting them. They will also be given the opportunity to vote on the colour scheme used on any areas.

7. Implications

- 7.1 It is considered that the works will have positive implications by helping to maintain the properties whilst improving the living conditions of the residents.
- 7.2 The works should have positive implications by ensuring that the council maintains good quality housing that is easily lettable.
- 7.3 There is the potential for negative implications due to potential disruption to residents during the works, such as noise and dust etc. Measures will be undertaken to reduce these occurrences to a minimum.
- 7.4 There is the potential for negative implications due to possible loss of existing facilities however this will be outweighed and balanced by the increased accommodation and facilities individual properties will be able to provide to their residents within their own homes.
- 7.5 We do not have any leaseholders who will be affected by the scheme.

8. Corporate priorities

This report and the project it refers to contribute to the following Corporate Priorities:

- Increase availability and quality of housing
- Protect and support our most vulnerable residents

9. Equality impact assessment (EIA)

A preliminary EIA has been done regarding this project. The project will impact positively on age and disability strands. There is no adverse impact on people who belong to the remaining equality strands. A full EIA is **not** required.

Residents who live in the blocks affected by the project will be consulted on the work, and specific needs will be addressed so that tenants with protected characteristics can be fully involved in the consultation. The project is expected to have positive outcomes for all current and future tenants and will benefit all the council's tenants by saving money in the long term

10. Legal implications

- 10.1 The refurbishment works proposed will need to be procured through a process which is compliant with the City Council's Contract Procedure Rules in Part 3A of the Constitution.
- 10.2 Under Part 2, Section 3 of the City Council's constitution (responsibilities of the Cabinet) and further in accordance with the Scheme of Delegations at Appendix A to the Executive Procedure Rules in Part 3 of the Constitution, the Cabinet Member for Housing has the authority to approve the recommendations set out in this report.

11. Head of Financial Services comments

"The works involved in updating Tweed/St Clare's Court reduces the number of available dwellings in this sheltered accommodation, but it increases the desirability of the block as a place to live. This is expected to have a marked effect on occupancy levels in years to come, with a substantial improvement on current void losses. Without this modernisation, there will be fewer and fewer tenants who are prepared to live in Tweed Court, which would reduce the financial viability of this block over a period of time and escalate the existing issues relating to voids further.

Funding for this scheme is from the 'Major Repairs – Dwellings' section of the Housing Investment Programme, which was approved by full council on 12th February 2013"

.....
Signed by: **Owen Buckwell – Head of Housing and Property Management**

This page is intentionally left blank

Tweed Court - remain the same or rebuild

	A	B	C	D
1	SUMMARY OF OPTIONS - Figures in brackets are net incomes, all others are net costs	Total capital cost for PCC - Housing Investment Programme	Total revenue effect over 30 years	Net Present Value
		£ 000	£ 000	£ 000
2	Option 1 - Do nothing - continue to use and maintain Tweed Court in its existing configuration	0	(1,935)	(1,414)
3	Option 2 - Rebuild and modernise Tweed Court. Fewer overall units, but more flats rather than bedsits, leading to increased occupancy	1,438	(4,509)	(1,517)

NOTES

Option 2 is the best option, as it provides decent homes for residents, reduces void losses, and is overall saves the HRA more money than Option 1

This page is intentionally left blank