

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – COMMUNITY
6 SEPTEMBER 2011**

**EXECUTIVE
20 SEPTEMBER 2011**

HOME ADAPTATION POLICY FOR COUNCIL TENANTS

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek Members' approval to implement and amend the Home Adaptation Policy for Council tenants.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council along with other social housing landlords provides a Home Adaptation service to its residents. The purpose of the works is to adapt the homes to help vulnerable tenants to maintain their independent living. The types of adaptations carried out range from minor, such as lever taps and grab rails, to major adaptations which would include wet rooms and stair lifts.
- 2.2 A review of how adaptations are delivered to tenants of Exeter City Council was carried out by the Housing Resident Auditor Team in 2010. A focus group of officers then met to discuss the recommendations following this review and this revised policy document is the result of those discussions and recommendations. It is available in the Members' Room, on the Council's website or available on request.
- 2.3 The Council has a budget during 2011/12 of £450,000 to spend on adaptations to its council housing. Demand for the work always exceeds the resources available which can lead to tenants being entered onto a waiting list and delays being encountered.
- 2.4 The policy has the following main objectives –
- Define what is a major and minor adaptation.
 - Supply timescales to tenants on how long they can expect to wait for an adaptation to be carried out.
 - Introduces the principle that in certain cases tenants will contribute towards the cost of the adaptation.
 - Ensure that the Council delivers the Home Adaptation Service in a responsible manner and makes best use of its assets.
 - Reduce the timescales that tenants have to wait for non urgent adaptations to be undertaken.
 - Specify how tenants in most need will be made aware of the service.

3. PROPOSAL

- 3.1 One of the main changes introduced in this document is the principle that in certain circumstances tenants will be asked to contribute financially towards the adaptation that has been requested. It is proposed that the Disabled Facilities Grant model will be followed in defining what tenants will have to contribute and the level of the contributions. The purpose of this proposal is to get more work done with the resources available and therefore reduce the waiting time residents are encountering to get work done. It will also mean that Council tenants are treated the same way as owner occupiers and private sector tenants. This change will only impact on major

adaptations as defined in the policy. All minor adaptations will remain free to the tenant.

- 3.2 To make best use of its assets the Council must consider all applications and decide if the requested adaptation is reasonable and practical. The revised policy produces guidelines on what is and what is not reasonable. For example it could be considered unreasonable where adaptations are requested on family homes that would need to be removed should the property be relet or the installation of wet rooms above ground level or where properties have other access issues. It may be more appropriate in these cases, in discussion with the tenant, for alternative more suitable accommodation to be found.
- 3.3 By making use of the tenant census data already collected the intention is that the service will be publicised directly to those residents who may benefit from having adaptation works undertaken. This is a proactive approach in promoting the service and will be carried out by using a revised leaflet and other promotional materials.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 It is not suggested that any alterations in the budgets set for this work will be required because of the policy

5. RECOMMENDED:

- 1) That Scrutiny Committee – Community supports and Executive agrees to adopt the amended policy document, *Home Adaptations*.

ACTING HEAD OF HOUSING SERVICES

S:PA/LP/ Committee/911SCC5
Date 19.07.11

COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)
Background papers used in compiling this report: