

**EXETER CITY COUNCIL**

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – COMMUNITY  
6 NOVEMBER 2007**

**EXECUTIVE  
20 NOVEMBER 2007**

**REVIEW OF DISABLED ADAPTATIONS POLICY AND PROCEDURE  
(COUNCIL PROPERTIES)**

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To seek Members' approval for the revised Disabled Adaptations Policy and Procedure following a comprehensive review.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Exeter City Council currently spends in excess of £400,000 per annum installing a range of disabled adaptations for tenants who require them. These include everything from providing grab rails and lever taps to installing walk-in showers, stair lifts and access ramps.
- 2.2 Timescales for such adaptations vary depending on the complexity of work required and the budget available. Therefore whilst minor adaptations may take a few weeks or months to install, some applicants have experienced waits of over 12 months for major adaptations such as walk-in showers. Therefore, a review of the service was undertaken to introduce new policies and procedures to enable more effective assessment of the tenants' needs and to speed up the time taken from referral to completion of the work. A copy of the new policy and procedure is available on the intranet with a hard copy in the Members' Room.

**3 POLICY AMENDMENTS**

- 3.1 The policy and procedure document sets out new timescales and standards for the service that can be monitored using the Council's housing management computer system. It also makes changes to the way minor and major works are undertaken. These changes include:
- Publishing a list of 'minor' adaptations that will be dealt with immediately upon referral and completed within 20 working days
  - In partnership with Devon County Council's Adult and Community Services Department, introducing new referral mechanisms to ensure an accurate assessments of an individual's needs are made and priority given for installation.
  - Setting a service standard for completion of major adaptation work within 12 weeks of receiving the formal referral from the occupational therapist.
  - Introducing a range of standard letters to keep tenants informed of progress

- Distributing a new satisfaction survey questionnaire to assess how the tenant viewed the process, their experience of the contractor while the work was undertaken and testing the impact of the adaptation on their lives.

3.2 Many of these new targets and standards will be a challenge to meet, in particular completing major adaptation work within a 12-week period. However, such timescales are being achieved by other landlords and is therefore a standard we wish to achieve. Speeding up our response times will have a great benefit to many tenants and support them in remaining safely in their homes. Regular monitoring of cases will be undertaken and performance information published quarterly in the Housing Performance Digest.

3.3 The policy also seeks to use the Council's transfer policy to help move disabled tenants into more suitable properties through the Home Choice scheme as another option in meeting their needs. This approach not only helps to ensure we use existing adapted housing more effectively but also allows available resources to be targeted more efficiently. To assist this process the joint funded occupational therapist based within the Housing Services Unit has established a separate housing register of disabled applicants (including existing tenants) that accurately assesses their needs and can match them to suitable properties that become available.

#### **4 RECOMMENDED**

- 1) that Scrutiny Committee – Community supports and Executive agrees to adopt the Disabled Adaptations Policy and Procedure document
- 2) that performance information relating to this new policy is included within the Housing Unit's Performance Digest.

HEAD OF HOUSING SERVICES

S:LP/Committee/1107SCC8  
18.10.07

COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE

**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)**

**Background papers used in compiling the report: -**

None