

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

12 NOVEMBER 2020

REPORT OF THE INTERIM CHIEF OFFICER - FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND CHANGE

DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT – PROGRESS REPORT AND POSITION STATEMENT

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Governance and Audit Committee on actions taken to progress improvements to the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) service and provide information on the position to date.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives / other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:-**

1. **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** - taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.
2. **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

3. Background

- 3.1 Previous reports to Audit Committee, Cabinet and Cabinet Corporate Management Board (CCMB) have outlined the critical need to re-shape and improve the delivery of the DFG service within Bridgend. The DFG service has, for some time, failed to meet its performance indicator targets and, after consideration of factors raised by Members, Scrutiny, Internal Audit, and research with other local authorities, it has been concluded that a fundamental change in the delivery model is required to the service.
- 3.2 The statutory duty lies with the Council to provide the service but the control on quality and responsiveness is hampered by a lack of control of the whole application process with numerous points of failure existing in the current process. The delivery times for DFGs, particularly for complex children's cases, is not consistent with a person centred approach. The Council is in the bottom quartile for Wales in terms of delivery times.
- 3.3 This report provides an update on the progress made so far in preparation for a decision on the best delivery model for Bridgend.

4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 Background research and analysis is being undertaken on a number of levels to progress the changes required to improve the DFG service delivery. This has involved a 'lean thinking' systems approach, learning from other local authorities such as Neath Port Talbot and Rhondda Cynon Taff, and internal discussions and analysis. The aim of this work is to determine the best model of service delivery for the Council. It has been recognised that improvements require a fundamental shift in all aspects of the current service and action has been taken in the following areas to date:
- 4.2 The role of the agent: This is a fundamental part of each DFG application. Currently this function is undertaken by a small number (4-5) of local agents who are independent of the Council over which the Council has limited control. Research and investigation is taking place on the best model which will allow the Council more control over the functions and role of the Agent, operation, monitoring and delivery of the service and a report will be presented to Cabinet regarding the key steps, milestones and support required to take the Council to this position. There are a number of historic practices in place and key areas of exploration are – current administrative and communication systems, policies and procedures in place, and the applicant's journey to identify how the Council can achieve best outcomes and best value.
- 4.3 Discretionary works: In addition to the mandatory DFG service, a range of discretionary minor works are delivered on the Council's behalf by a number of providers. These are small scale works that can be delivered quickly and are valued highly by the recipient. To ensure clarity and economies of scale a joint exercise is currently taking place with the Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate and Finance to determine the scale of investment by the Council in these services. On completion of this, it is intended to consider further how the Council achieves best quality and value for this expenditure. This will ensure that performance is managed, fee levels are consistent and that Council budgets are used effectively without duplication.
- 4.4 Collaboration and support: It is absolutely critical to the delivery of the service in the medium term to identify support to deliver the service whilst the Council develops the final service delivery model it wishes to adopt. The ability to draw on additional support will allow the Council to deal with expressed and latent demand of the service that occurs in normal circumstances and the backlog caused by Covid-19 restrictions. The Covid-19 Pandemic has stalled the flow of referrals for DFG's and the ability to assess and deliver medium and major adaptations has been affected by the initial lockdown in March due primarily to the inability to go into people's homes. Additionally some builders did not work during this period or necessary supplies were unavailable. As the situation eases and workflow increases, focus has initially been given to priority cases but a backlog in referrals will need to be addressed. Support for the DFG team to deal with the demand on the service is being explored. A report on the recommendations to increase support will be presented to Cabinet.
- 4.5 Further analysis is required to finalise future arrangements for Bridgend and determine the best service model to replace what is currently in place. Cabinet will

receive a report outlining the next steps to achieve transition from the current model to any new model.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

5.1 None.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 An equality impact assessment is not required at this stage but will be undertaken prior to a decision on any new model.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

7.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 provides the basis for driving a different kind of public service in Wales, with five ways of working to guide how the Council should work to deliver wellbeing outcomes for people. The following is a summary to show how the five ways of working to achieve the well-being goals have been considered in this report:

Long term	Ensures best use of available accommodation and allows individuals to remain within their own home
Preventative	Supports an individual to manage their health and prevents an individual escalating into statutory services at a greater cost
Involvement	Involves individuals exercising their choice to remain in their home for as long as possible
Integration	Ensures individuals can remain within their community and with family
Collaboration	Will involve partnership working with local businesses and local services. DFG's are a collaboration between social service community health and housing

8. Financial implications

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

8.2 Any financial implications identified in the transition and adoption of the new model will be contained in future reports presented to Cabinet.

9. Recommendation

9.1 It is recommended that the Committee:-

- Note progress to date to improve the DFG service and the current position.

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Background documents: None