

Meeting of:	CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	17 MARCH 2025
Report Title:	UPDATE AND POSITION STATEMENT FOR THE DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT SERVICE
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CHIEF OFFICER - FINANCE, HOUSING & CHANGE
Responsible Officer:	MARTIN MORGANS HEAD OF PARTNERSHIPS & HOUSING
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no impact on the policy framework and procedure rules
Executive Summary:	The purpose of this report is to update the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee with regards to the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) service and provide information on the position to date.

1. Purpose of Report

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

2. Background

- 2.1 A number of reports have been submitted to Cabinet and Cabinet / Corporate Management Board (CCMB), alongside other Committees, in recent years, outlining the need to re-shape and improve the delivery of the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) service within Bridgend.
- 2.2 The internalisation of the Disabled Facilities Grant service was approved by Cabinet from the 1st April 2021. This brought the agency role in-house, ensuring that the council has end to end responsibility for each adaptation.
- 2.3 A report to the Governance and Audit Committee on 11th November 2021 provided an update on the progress of the implementation of the new delivery model, together with the actions taken to meet the recommendations of the Audit Wales report in 2017/18 on the Service Users Perspective. Particularly noteworthy is that within the report was a key recommendation regarding council controls: 'Council needs to be assured that it has appropriate controls in place to provide effective oversight of the adaptations process, given it is ultimately responsible for the delivery of the adaptation'.

- 2.4 Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report on 2nd March 2022 which provided an update on the current position in relation to the implementation of the new model and appropriate actions.
- 2.5 The Governance and Audit Committee received an update on 24th January 2024. It noted that the council was maximising the funding available to it and the *“only way more jobs could be delivered was with additional capital”*.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 Surveying support is supplemented through commissioning surveying support through the South East Wales Technical and Professional Procurement Framework (SEWTAPs) alongside internal staff and agency.
- 3.2 A DFG case worker has been in post since December 2023. The caseworker is a key role which underpins the process of a DFG adaptation, from point of engagement of an occupational therapist through to completion and certification of adaptations. The DFG case worker provides that constant single point of contact for the recipient of the grant.
- 3.3 Implementation of a new software system, MasterGov, was introduced in April 2023. This enabled migration of all data from the legacy systems, including paper based systems. All financial elements of the Disabled Facilities Grant service have been digitised, which provides benefits such as prompt payment to contractors/suppliers, and the ability to monitor actual and forecasted expenditure.
- 3.4 The Contractors Framework was advertised on Sell2Wales and published on the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU). Tender bids were received on the 25th July 2024. On the 22nd of October 2024 Cabinet approved the awarding of the framework and authorised the council to enter into agreements with successful bidders. Contract award letters were issued to successful bidders on 20th November 2024. However the process of allocating adaptations via the Contractors Framework is currently on pause as the capital budget for the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) service has been committed for 2024/2025. All contractors have been informed that the allocation of cases will commence in the 2025-26 financial year.
- 3.5 Financial overview is outlined in the table below. The total capital budget allocated for DFGs and other housing related adaptations is currently £1.950m per annum, of which the DFG element is £1.750m. In 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 the full budget has been utilised. Those specific years have also been supported by bringing capital monies forward from future years to ensure the continuation of adaptations, alongside support from the Regional Partnership Board Housing with Care Fund Top Up Grant.

DFG Capital Expenditure Summary	£
2020-21	1,357,903
2021-22	1,680,432
2022-23	1,651,831
2023-24	2,882,023
2024-25 *	1,989,491

* Denotes the spend to 28th February 2025

On 26th February 2025, as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025-2029, Council approved an additional £500,000 of capital funding per annum from 2025-26, for DFGs to reflect the need to enable more people to remain in their own homes. The total annual allocation from 2025-26 for housing related adaptations will be £2.450m, of which £2.250m is for Disabled Facilities Grants.

- 3.6 The Pipeline of Disabled Facilities Grants are the cases that have not been allocated to date, and they are outlined in the table below. The service was internalised on 1st April 2021 whereby the agency role was brought in-house. However there were significant cases (legacy) still with external agents, with some of those cases dating back to 2017. There are now approximately only 20 legacy cases still with agents. Following the completion of the 20 legacy cases there will be no further legacy cases pre 1st April 2021.

DFG Cases - Awaiting allocation	
2022 - 2023	109
2023 - 2024	267
2024 – 2025	231
	607

The allocation of cases is strictly managed by date in a sequential order i.e. oldest first, however if an occupational therapist determines the case to be a priority, then that case is escalated.

- 3.7 Increasing demand is demonstrated in the table below. There is an exponential jump following Covid-19 in 2021-22 but the numbers only marginally decline from 2023. Even though there is a decrease in total applications being received in the current year 2024/25, there remains a 75% increase in applications received compared to the year prior to the pandemic. The demand versus the 'total certified' i.e. cases completed demonstrates the challenge associated with the pipeline and the direct impact on the traditional performance indicators.

Year	Total applications (per job type)	% increase year on year	Total certified	% increase year on year
2019 - 2020	182		157	
2020 - 2021	153	-16%	75	-52%
2021 - 2022	484	216%	148	97%
2022 - 2023	578	19%	174	18%
2023 - 2024	339	-41%	225	29%
2024 - 2025 *	319	-6%	225	0%

* Denotes the position to 28th February 2025

- 3.8 Performance - the corporate performance assessment indicators are presented in the table below. The count of “days” starts at the point of the referral. Challenges such as Covid-19, legacy cases with agents, increases in demand, and availability of budget have had a detrimental impact on the wait time and the performance indicators.

PI DATA Q1 - Q3 24/25			
Type	Quantity	Days	Average cumulative days (rounded up to whole number)
LAS	93	75012	807
Stairlifts	50	26298	526
Ramps	17	18005	1059
Extensions	11	12367	1124

The table below outlines the number of Disabled Facilities Grants delivered from 2019 to the current period 2024/25. It highlights that since 2020/21 there has been an increase in the delivery of cases year on year. 2020/2021 saw a significant reduction in completions of cases due to Covid-19. A year was lost due to limited access as a result of restrictions. This has had a lasting detrimental effect on the performance indicators. In 2023/24 and 2024/25 the capital budget has been fully expended. This showcases how the available capital budget determines the number of adaptations that can be delivered in a financial year, which is outlined in the financial overview in section 3.5.

Financial Year	Number of calendar days taken to deliver a DFG	Number of DFGs delivered during the financial year	Average number of calendar days taken to deliver a DFG
2019 - 2020	68434	157	436
2020 - 2021	40937	74	553
2021 - 2022	67481	160	422
2022 - 2023	75002	173	434
2023 - 2024	126883	225	564
2024 - 28/2/25)	178909	225	795
	378737	1014	373

The performance indicators that were set in 2021, targeting 210 days for case completion was prior to the impact of Covid-19 and the unforeseen increasing demand. The legacy cases post internalisation April 2021 and the impact of Covid - 19 have had a significant impact on the performance indicators to date. In terms of performance indicator improvement, the key constraint is the available capital budget alongside the pipeline as outlined in section 3.6. This was highlighted by the Governance and Audit Committee in January 2024, where it was summed up that the *“only way more jobs could be delivered was with additional capital”*.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

- 4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. This is an information report, therefore it is not necessary to carry out an Equality Impact assessment in the production of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

- 5.1 The report contributes to the following goals within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:
- A prosperous Wales
 - A resilient Wales
 - A Wales of cohesive communities
 - A globally responsive Wales

The following is a summary to show how the 5 ways of working to achieve the wellbeing goals have been used to formulate the recommendations within this report:

Long term	Ensuring best use of available accommodation allowing individuals to live safely in their own homes.
Involvement	Providing individuals the choice to remain in their home, ensuring that they are part of the process from start to finish and managed through a single point of engagement.
Integration	Ensure individuals can remain within their communities, providing an array of benefits including stability through the maintaining of local support networks.

Collaboration	Developed the Framework Agreement to support the DFG service, to deliver the required adaptations necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the individual.
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6. Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 The Disabled Facilities Grant service supports the agenda around climate change. The key priority is to ensure residents can live safely within their own homes and their communities. The use of the budget will be developed in line with Welsh Government planning and standards requirements, which support moves to tackle climate change.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 The Disabled Facilities Grant service plays a key role in supporting Bridgend County Borough Council's safeguarding agenda, with the service often supporting vulnerable individuals.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Committee note the position statement with regards to the DFG service.

Background documents: None