

Housing Renewal Assistance Policy 2022

REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE



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PORTFOLIO	Housing and Development Control
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PURPOSE

1. To seek a revision to the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy to provide a wide range of financial assistance which will improve the condition of homes in the Borough.
2. To introduce a Handyperson service for vulnerable residents in Burnley.

RECOMMENDATION

3. To approve the Housing Renewal Assistance Policy 2022, attached as appendix 1 to this report.
4. To appoint a Handyperson (Grade 8) and acquire the necessary tools and electric van for implementation of the Burnley Handyperson service.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

5. To provide a comprehensive range of financial assistance that will help improve living conditions within the Borough and reduce the number of empty homes.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

Background

6. In February 2019 the Council approved the introduction of an Integrated Health and Wellbeing Team (Burnley's Home Improvement Agency (HIA)) with the appointment of two new members of staff. Due to Covid 19 the appointment of these members of staff was delayed until the summer of 2021. Revision of the Housing Renewal Assistance Policy will enable the HIA to deliver more services to keep people safe and well in their own homes.

7. The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 requires local authorities to develop a policy for providing households with financial assistance to improve their homes. The order removed previous prescriptive legislation and provided authorities with more freedom to develop financial products and innovative forms of assistance.
8. The Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy was last updated in 2012 and requires revision in relation to the forms of assistance it can offer, based on local priorities and the level of resources available.
9. This Policy sets out the range of grants and loans that the Council can make available to improve living conditions in the Borough. The assistance available helps elderly, and vulnerable households as well as encouraging private landlords to bring empty homes back into use. In summary the proposed changes include:

New Grants

10. The Handyperson Service (Non means tested) provides a range of practical support services for older (usually over 60) and disabled people with the aim of helping them maintain independent living. It is chargeable at subsidised rate of £10 per hour. The Service will offer a wide range of jobs, while the list below is not exhaustive, work should be considered as 'small repairs' that can be completed quickly:
 - Small building repairs • Minor adaptations • Odd jobs such as putting up curtains, shelves, replacing light bulbs. • General home safety checks and remedial actions • Falls and accident prevention checks and remedial actions such as repairing floor coverings • Security checks – installing locks, chains and spyholes • Fitting handrails and fitting “key safes” • Installing smoke detectors.
11. The Decluttering and Cleaning Grant (Means tested) aims to help residents who have a hoarding disorder, where they have accumulated an excessive number of items and stored them in a chaotic manner which is interfering with their everyday living. The grant can assist residents who have a medical condition/disability that has resulted in the house becoming unhygienic. The grant is a maximum of £5,000 and includes items such as the hiring of skips and contractors to clear the hoarded items, deep cleans and counselling.
12. The Safe and Secure Grant (Means tested) aims to help older and disabled residents to feel safe in their own home. It is a maximum of £4,000 and could include items such as:
 - New window and door locks. • New front and rear doors if they are insecure. • Secure gates. • Security lighting. • Home security kits.
13. The Hospital Discharge Grant (Non means tested) aims to speed up hospital discharges and support people with disabilities or vulnerabilities return home. The grant will be a maximum of £2,000 for works such as deep cleaning, clearing properties, repairs needed to free a property of Category 1 Hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, other urgent repairs, repair of heating systems and the provision of emergency heating. The Hospital Discharge Grant will not be means tested but excludes packages of care funded by the NHS or social care.
14. The Home Displacement Grant (Must be eligible for a disabled facilities grant) is to assist residents with temporary accommodation costs on the very rare occasion when

it is not possible for the applicant and their household to remain in their home whilst the adaptation is being carried out and where temporary residential care would not be appropriate. The maximum Home Displacement Grant payment is £4,500, or £55 per night of displacement, whichever is lowest, and it is not means tested. The Council will not pay more than the actual cost of the alternative accommodation, and the applicant will be responsible for finding suitable alternative accommodation and providing evidence such as invoices, bills or statements, before any grant is paid.

Increased Grant/Loan Amounts

15. To remove the requirement of means testing of Disabled Facilities Grants below £10,000. Currently the Council follow the means testing policy set in the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and subsequent regulations. The legislation requires any person with a disability aged 19 or over be financially assessed (means tested) to determine whether a contribution is needed based on the household income. The means test is complicated and can add significant delay to the provision of the adaptation. The revised policy proposes the introduction of a £10,000 threshold before the means test is applied. The table below shows the means tested contribution raised in 20/21.

Year	Total Grants Approved	Number of Grants under £10,000	Total approved for Grants under £10,000	Total Contributions received	(+) Number of contributions
20/21	67	55	£210,099	£2605	5

5 of the applicants did not want to proceed with the grant due to the required contribution.

16. To increase the maximum Emergency Works Grant (Means tested) from £10,000 to £15,000. Since Covid 19 building material costs have increased significantly, in some cases by 13%. The Federation of Master Builders reports that there is a building material shortage caused by Covid 19 and Brexit, leading to price increases in key building materials such as timber, steel, cement and roof tiles.
17. To increase the Empty Homes Loan (Non means tested) from £20,000 to £25,000 in the Council's selective licensing areas to reflect the increase in building materials as detailed in paragraph 16. To extend the empty homes loans to properties that are situated outside selective licensing areas and that have been empty for 2 years or more. The maximum amount for loans outside the selective licensing areas will be £20,000.
18. To increase the heating rebate grant (Non means tested) from £300 to £400 and include renewable energy sources as well as gas boilers. This grant is not means tested and available to all owner occupiers.
19. All grants and loans detailed in the Housing Renewal Assistance Policy are discretionary apart from the mandatory part of the Disabled Facilities Grants. The

policy will be regularly reviewed and all discretionary grants may be withdrawn by the Council at any time should levels of funding decrease.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND BUDGET PROVISION

20. It is anticipated that the handyperson service will be launched in May 2022, the additional annual cost of the handyperson post is £32,647. Income received from the hourly charge out rate for the service will go towards this cost. It is estimated that there will be an initial, one-off cost of £35,000 for the electric van and essential tools.
21. In 2021/22 Burnley Council was allocated £2.7 million from the Better Care Fund, the costs associated with the revised policy will be funded through the allocation of the Better Care Fund. Appendix 2 shows an estimated budget and anticipated uptake for each grant/loan.
22. The empty homes loans are funded from the overall empty homes capital programme of £1.3 million. A maximum of £300,000 from this budget will be allocated to the empty homes loans (£200,000 within selective licensing areas and £100,000 outside selective licensing areas).

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

23. The Council's Strategic Plan has key priorities of making the borough a place of choice and creating flourishing, healthy and confident communities, a central commitment to realising this ambition is to improve housing conditions in the Borough. The revised housing renewal assistance policy details how the Council will support residents financially to do this which in turn supports Aim 4 of the Housing Strategy; to enable residents to access and maintain housing where they feel safe, secure and can enjoy life in a comfortable home of their choice.

DETAILS OF CONSULTATION

24. None

BACKGROUND PAPERS

25. None

FURTHER INFORMATION

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