

**OFFICER DELEGATION SCHEME
RECORD OF DECISION**



TO BE UPLOADED TO THE INTERNET BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

Date: 15/12/22		Ref No:	
Responsible Officer: Michelle Stott, Unit Manager – Private Sector Housing			
Type of Decision (please refer to MO Guidance):			
Key	<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-Key	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Freedom of Information Status: No Restriction			
Title/Subject matter: Recruitment of a Home Improvement Officer to conduct feasibility assessments for disabled adaptations to council properties.			
Budget/Strategy/Policy/Compliance:			
i) Is the decision within an Approved Budget?		Yes	
ii) Is the decision in conflict with the council's policies, strategies or relevant service plans?		No	
iii) Does the decision amend existing or raise new policy issues?		No	
iv) Is the decision significant and/or does it meet the £100,000 threshold for recording?		No	
Equality Impact Assessment [Does this decision change policy, procedure or working practice or negatively impact on a group of people? If yes – complete EIA and summarise issues identified and recommendations – forward EIA to Corporate HR]		No impacts	
Summary:			

The Private Sector Housing (PSH) Team currently have dedicated Home Improvement Officers (HIOs) that are undertaking feasibility assessments, following an occupational therapist assessment of need. The HIOs provide plans and technical advice on disabled adaptations to private sector properties. This is ensuring that adaptations proposed are reasonable and practicable (and cost effective).

For Council properties, Occupational Therapists make referrals to STH for feasibility requests, however these referrals in the majority are sent straight to an external architect to create a detailed plan of what is required.

Unfortunately, the plans received back are extensive, detailed and not always required. For example, an OT makes a referral stating that ground floor facilities are required, the Architect does not look at all available potential cost-effective solutions, instead they draw an extension. These plans are then reviewed at case discussion meetings between the Unit Manager for PSH, The Clinical Lead for Disability Services, OTs and PSH Home Improvement Officers. They are then assessed as not reasonable nor practicable, as it is possible to fit what is required within the existing floorplan of the house, and therefore the plans are then sent back to the Architect to amend.

Not only is this creating additional delays to the approval process for disabled adaptations (for which there is a statutory guideline of 6 months to approve) but this is also creating an increase in informal complaints (where Cllrs and MPs are involved) due to client disappointment that they are no longer getting a large extension, when an internal conversion is deemed to meet the need. It is setting unrealistic expectations for clients.

Financial implications

Case discussion meetings are held monthly. With plans being regularly rejected or deemed not practicable. At the most recent Case discussion meeting held in November, 4 out of 5 plans were returned to be amended following a review. By HIOs proposing alternative solutions this saved approximately £65K of HRA funds. In addition, each plan costs £1028. Therefore £4112 of HRA has been wasted in November alone.

The HRA budget allocation for council property adaptations does not meet the demand for works and therefore it is vital that savings are found where possible to ensure the most cost-effective solution is found, enabling the council to assist as many applicants as possible, ensuring adaptations are made without delay.

It is proposed that the Unit Manager for Private Sector Housing recruits 1 FTE Home Improvement Officer (Grade 10) – with 'on costs' the annual cost to the HRA would be £42,304.68. It is not possible to utilise the existing HIOs within the PSH team as their salaries are capitalised to DFG funding – therefore they are only able to work on PSH properties. In addition, they do not have the capacity to take on additional work due to the continued high referral rate plus

backlog in adaptations to private sector properties therefore recruitment is required.

If every case discussion meeting had results like November, there would be a saving of circa £787,039.32 per year to the HRA by recruiting 1 FTE HIO to conduct feasibilities. It would ensure cross tenure consistency, a single referral route and would avoid delays to clients.

Wards affected: All

Consultations:

Jayne Clarke

Tayo Arifayan

Vanessa Brockbank

Scrutiny & Review Committee Interest: N/A

Options considered:

Option 1 – Continue with current process, 2 separate referral routes for feasibilities with architect plans procured for all adaptations to council properties.

Option 2 – To recruit an additional Home Improvement Officer, funded by the HRA, to sit within the Private Sector Housing Team, to undertake feasibility assessments and provide outline plan drawing and technical advice provision for adaptations to council properties.

Decision *[with reasons]* Implement Option 2

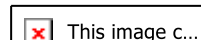
By providing a single source of feasibility would provide cross tenure consistency and avoid delays due to re-doing feasibility drawings should a difference of opinion arise. This would speed up the process and allow the agreed plans to be provided with the referral to Six Town Housing to commence with the works sooner.

Option 1 is not feasible due to the potential high costs to the HRA, it creates delays to adaptations for clients and is not a tenure neutral approach.

Decision made by:

Director or Chief/Senior Officer

Signature:

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Date:

24.01.23

Members Consulted [see note 1 below]		
Cabinet Member		
Lead Member		
Opposition Spokesperson		
<p>Notes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Where, in accordance with the requirements of the Officer Delegation Scheme, a Chief Officer consults with the appropriate Cabinet Member they must sign the form so as to confirm that they have been consulted and that they agree with the proposed action. The signature of the Opposition Spokesperson should be obtained if required, to confirm that he/she has been consulted. Please refer to the MO Guidance. 2. This form must not be used for urgent decisions. 3. Where there is any doubt, Corporate Directors should err on the side of caution and seek advice from the Council's Monitoring Officer. 		