

ANGUS COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 28 FEBRUARY 2017

HOUSING ADAPTATIONS JOINT WORKING POLICY

REPORT BY HEAD OF PLANNING AND PLACE

ABSTRACT

This report seeks approval for the Housing Adaptations Joint Working Policy.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee approves the Housing Adaptations Joint Working Policy.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS COMMUNITY PLAN/SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT/COPORATE PLAN

This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within the Angus Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement 2013-2016:

- Angus is a good place to live in, work in and visit
- Individuals are supported in their own communities with good quality services
- Our communities are developed in a sustainable manner.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. The provision of an efficient adaptations service is crucial to meeting the housing needs of people with medical and support needs, helping people to live independently in their own home and supporting the provision of social care services. It reduces the risk of falls and other accidents as well as delays in discharging people from hospital or the need for to long-term residential care. The provision of an effective and responsive adaptations service improves the quality of people's lives.
- 3.2. Scottish Government Guidance on the Provision of Equipment and Adaptations is clear that adaptations services, from assessment to provision, should be equitable across private homeowners, council tenants, private landlord tenants and Housing Association tenants i.e. tenure neutral. Within Angus there is currently no single policy or procedure which covers the provision of adaptations to all customers. The assessment and decision making process varies depending on the tenure of the customer and this can lead to inconsistency in services provided and the outcomes achieved.
- 3.3. The integration of health and social care has also had implications for the provision of housing adaptations for private sector households and Council tenants, with delegated authority for the provision of services the responsibility of the Integrated Joint Board (IJB). This includes funding for adaptations with capital budgets currently set at c£0.45m for private sector adaptations and c£0.52m for Council tenants. Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) currently receive central funding towards adaptations directly from the Scottish Government, however the level of funding is not expected to meet 100% of the costs and RSLs have had difficulty in meeting the demand for adaptations in their stock.
- 3.4. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) funding for adaptations to Council properties continues to be ring-fenced and must not be used for adaptations in other tenures or for different purposes. Further changes in relation to funding for RSLs may be announced following publication of the findings from the Scottish Government's Adapting for Change Programme which, among other things, has been investigating tenure neutral funding pots.

4. PROPOSALS

- 4.1. The Joint Housing Adaptations Policy proposes an approach to providing an adaptations service which promotes joint working between relevant services and minimises delays by ensuring staff have appropriate decision making authority. It is based on the principal of 'minimum intervention, maximum independence' which underpins every assessment. This means that adaptations, and in particular major adaptations, will only be provided when all other reasonable options have been ruled out.
- 4.2. The Policy has been developed by a short life working group. Review of previous cases has been used to highlight examples of successful outcomes as well as areas for improvement. The broad approach now being formalised into operation practice has been piloted by a Special Needs Housing Group for around 12 months. Consultation has been undertaken with members of the Housing, Health and Social Care Strategic Planning Group (which includes RSL representatives) and Care and Repair. Joint sessions have also been held with Occupational Therapy and Housing staff in each locality.
- 4.3. The Policy sees all assessments for adaptations carried out under the same decision making framework. This sets the levels of authorisation based on a classification of minor, moderate, major and complex adaptations. The classification considers both the extent of works required as well as whether the property will meet the long terms needs of the household.
- 4.4. The Policy requires housing options to be considered as part of the assessment and recommendation process where the customer's current home cannot be adapted or requires numerous major or complex adaptations. This will ensure much closer working between Occupational Therapy and Housing staff in considering the needs of individual customers. Improving joint working will minimise duplication between services and ensure customers receive a joined up and consistent service. Staff will also be able to better plan for the future needs of households, reducing the need for crisis intervention.
- 4.5. A Joint Housing and Adaptations Panel will be established to make decisions on complex adaptations. The Panel will consider cases from all tenures, ensuring consistency. The Panel will include representatives from the Health and Social Care Partnership, Communities Directorate and RSLs (if appropriate). It is anticipated that this joined up approach will reduce the potential for delays in reaching a decision by ensuring that all options have been fully explored prior to a recommendation being agreed and that services have an opportunity to be involved in the decision making process where there may be a budgetary or resource impact. The Panel will have authority to approve adaptations, open market acquisition and discretionary allocation of new build stock in accordance with existing Delegated Authority.
- 4.6. The Joint Housing Adaptations Policy also sets an approach to monitoring outcomes for services users as well as performance information. It is recognised that while the revised approach brings consistency to the assessment process there remains a need to maintain different operational processes for delivering adaptations based on tenure. By monitoring adaptations from referral to delivery across all tenures, the Council and IJB will develop far greater insight into the performance of adaptation services and it is anticipated that the Joint Housing and Adaptations Panel will be in a position to undertake further review of the end to end process, leading to improved outcomes for customers.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. There are no direct financial implications for the Council arising from the content of this report. The Impact of the new Policy on spend against the IJB budget will be reviewed quarterly

NOTE: No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

REPORT AUTHOR: Vivien Smith, Head of Planning and Place
EMAIL DETAILS: communitiesbusinesssupport@angus.gov.uk

List of Appendices: Appendix 1 Housing Adaptations Joint Working Policy