

# HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

## Agenda Item 29

Brighton & Hove City Council

**Subject:** Expenditure of the 2009/10 Private Sector Renewal Grant Allocation and Disabled Facilities Grant Allocation.

**Date of Meeting:** 17 July 2009

**Report of:** Director of Adult Social Care & Housing

**Contact Officer:** Name: **Martin Reid** Tel: **293060**

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**Key Decision:** No

**Wards Affected:** All

### FOR GENERAL RELEASE

#### 1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 Brighton & Hove City Council is the lead authority for the delivery of the 2008-2011 Private Housing Renewal Programme for Brighton and Hove and East Sussex (The BEST consortium). The consortium receives funding from the Regional Housing Board (RHB) and received the largest allocation of funding across the South East for 2009/10 (£8m).
- 1.2 The Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is individual government grants towards capital spending on providing disabled adaptations to housing. The DFG grant covers 60% of the DFG expenditure with and Local authorities must meet 40% from its own resources. Brighton & Hove City Council uses monies from RHB grant to 'top up' this 40% contribution.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That it is noted that the council received £4,209,600 Private Housing Renewal Grant from the Regional Housing Board for 2009/10, through the BEST consortium. This will be spent in accordance with the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002 following Cabinet approval.
- 2.2 That it is noted that the remaining grant money, £3,790,400 will be allocated to the council's BEST partner authorities in East Sussex according to an agreed split of funds following Cabinet approval.
- 2.3 That the development of the use of affordable home improvement loans for some owner-occupiers with our partners South Coast Money Line be noted.
- 2.4 That it is noted that the Disabled Facilities Grant allocation for 2009-10 is £660K.

### **3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:**

#### **Background**

- 3.1 In 2007, Brighton & Hove, Eastbourne, Hastings, Wealden, Lewes and Rother formed the BEST consortium specifically to bid for Regional Housing Board (RHB) 2008/11 private sector renewal funding. The Government Office for the South East (GOSE) reported that the bid was successful. Money is released each financial year in March based on previous performance in spend and delivery.
- 3.2 The renewal programme for BEST covers energy efficiency/fuel poverty, decent homes, empty homes and other interventions such as landlord accreditation.
- 3.3 In November 2008, GOSE reported to the RHB on progress in the first six months made by all the bids throughout the South East.
- 3.4 There was a very positive report on the BEST partnership. In summary *“a high-performing partnership. Has demonstrated its ability to generate up-take and to deliver measures in volume. At the half year point 95% of the half year funding had been delivered and in total 84% of the whole year’s funding had been allocated. Tightly managed with dedicated staff assigned to delivering the programme. Robust plans for year two across a broad range of condition issues and looking to expand its activity. Tackling a coastal concentration of some of the region’s poorest stock. Recommendation is for increased funding”*.
- 3.5 As a result of the performance to date the RHB recommended the BEST received an additional £1.245 million for 2009/10 and this received ministerial approval in March 2009. The additional money has been taken from under-performing partnerships (Thames Valley, East Kent, PUSH (Southampton)). The RHB are also holding £2m in reserve across the region, pending a performance review in October 2009.
- 3.6 Brighton & Hove are the lead authority in the BEST consortium and host the programme management team. BHCC as the largest local authority with the greatest need receive over 50% of the funding.

#### **Progress in Brighton & Hove**

- 3.7 Progress in Brighton & Hove 2008/9 was good, and the Private Sector Housing Team delivered £2.77m of measures, improving the living conditions of 1000 households living in poor quality private housing in the City. 800 energy efficiency measures were installed, saving 436 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>.

## Future Plans

- 3.8 The additional £1.2m BHCC have received for 2009/10 will be used to assist even more households in need.

## South Coast Money Line

- 3.9 The use of low cost loans in partnership with South Coast Money Line (SCML) will also be expanded. SCML is a not for profit organisation, with Community Finance Institution status. The core objective for SCML is to deliver fair finance for vulnerable groups via a loan product, the Home Trust Loan, to help people improve and carry out repairs to their homes. The Private Sector Housing Team in partnership with South Coast Money Line hope to deliver 25 loans to home-owners in 2009/10.
- 3.10 A marketing campaign to residents promoting the scheme will begin in July 2009, with leaflets, posters, press releases and a website launch, [www.hometrustedloan.org.uk](http://www.hometrustedloan.org.uk). Two loans officers are employed by South Coast Money Line to deliver loans in this area.
- 3.11 This is a value for money scheme, allowing grant money to help more households, and the loan money to be recycled back into the scheme.

## Disabled Facilities Grant

- 3.12 Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is a mandatory entitlement administered by local housing authorities to help fund the provision of adaptations to enable disabled people to live as comfortably and independently as possible in their homes.
- 3.13 Eligible work is wide-ranging, providing for access to the home and basic facilities within it, for example: providing ramps, door widening, stair lifts and level access showers. The grant is subject to an assessment of need and a financial means test. Over the last 3 years the Housing Adaptations Team has doubled Disabled Facilities Grant expenditure on private sector housing adaptations, as can be seen in Table 1

**Table 1: Disabled Facilities Grants Awarded 2005-8**

Year	Number of Disabled Facilities Grants awarded	Disabled Facilities Grant Expenditure
2005/6	48	£559K
2006/7	123	£989K
2007/8	124	£930K

- 3.14 The Council makes a 40% contribution of £440K to match fund the government's 60% (£660K) contribution toward Disabled Facilities Grants. This 40% match funding and considerable additional funding by way of additional Disabled Facilities Assistance is provided by the Council's Private Sector Housing Renewal Grant allocation via the Housing Renewal Assistance Policy. This increased investment has been achieved through the Council securing higher private sector renewal grant settlements as a result of successful bids for regional funding through BEST.

#### **4. CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 The Council's Housing Renewal Assistance Policy was established following a comprehensive consultation exercise conducted both within the Council and with external stakeholders.

#### **5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

##### Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The council received an allocation in the form of a capital grant in April 2009 that will enable expenditure of £4,209,600 on Private Sector Housing Renewal during 2009/10 as part of a three year programme (2008-2011). A further £660,000 has been received by the council in May 2009 for expenditure on Disabled Facilities Grants and other relevant works. The contract with South Coast Money Line (SCML) forms part of the spend against the on Private Sector Housing Renewal Grant.

In the event that there is a substantial shortfall in the amount spent under the Housing Renewal Assistance Policy there is a risk that allocations for future years could be reduced.

Staff resources have been committed by the council to ensure that the BEST consortium can closely monitor expenditure under this programme and to fully meet the obligations for reporting to the Government Office for the South East.

Finance Officer Consulted: Neil Smith

Date: 25/06/2009

##### Legal Implications:

- 5.2 Grants are delivered under The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002. The Councils Housing Renewal Policy was approved by Cabinet on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2008 in order that it can continue to provide grants and other forms of assistance under this order.

Solicitor Consulted: Elizabeth Culbert

Date: 25/06/2009

#### Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 The availability of grant as part of the Council's Housing Renewal Policy provides help and assistance to disadvantaged householders.
- 5.4 Disabled Facilities Grants provide resources to help disabled people with restricted mobility to live independently.

#### Sustainability Implications:

- 5.5 Housing is one of the key objectives in the Council's sustainability strategy which aims 'to ensure that everyone has access to decent affordable housing that meets their needs'.
- 5.6 The Council's housing renewal activities identified in this report help to prevent ill-health, provide for basic needs by ensuring that dwellings are fit for habitation, are suitable for the needs of disabled occupiers, are energy efficient and help to reduce the level of fuel poverty in the City.

#### Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.7 Continuing to tackle empty properties, which can attract vandalism as well as making grants available for home security, will complement works to reduce crime and disorder in Brighton & Hove.

#### Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.8 Policy development in this area is undertaken with due regard to appropriate risk assessment requirements.

#### Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.9 The Private Sector Housing RHB Grant funding will enable proactive approach to dealing with standards in the private sector housing of the City and ensure all homes meet the Decent Homes standards and provide a better use of energy into the future. The funding will also enable the Council to meet statutory duties.

### **6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):**

- 6.1 Private Housing Renewal Grant and Disabled Facilities Grant enable the Council to discharge statutory duties and fund a comprehensive private sector housing renewal programme which includes options such as home improvement and other loans in addition to the offer of grants.

### **7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATION**

- 7.1 The report seeks to update Housing CMM on expenditure of Private Housing Renewal and Disabled Facilities Grant funding.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

**Appendices:** none

**Documents In Members' Rooms:** none

### **Background Documents**

1. The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002.
2. Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy