

Proposed Single Discretionary Award Policy

SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Welfare Strategy agreed by the Council Cabinet on 9 December 2015 included the recommendation to consult on a proposed Single Discretionary Award Policy combining Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP), Council Tax Hardship payment (CTH) and Local Assistance Scheme awards (LAS).
- 1.2 The draft Single Discretionary Award Policy at Appendix Two contains the following two proposed changes to the current award criteria, a reduction to the protected groups and the alignment of support services and a discretionary financial award for applicants not in a protected group.
- 1.3 Starting a twelve week consultation in February 2016 will mean that the outcome from the consultation cannot be presented to Cabinet until June 2016. As a result of this an interim DHP policy for the period 1 April 2016 to 30 June 2016 will need to be implemented. This interim DHP policy will be presented separately.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To note the Consultation content at Appendix 2.
- 2.2 To approve the inclusion of the following proposals in the public consultation:
 - the removal of those affected by one or more welfare reform changes from the priority group category
 - making engagement in support services a requirement of receiving an award under the policy, particularly where the person does not fall in to a protected group and where moving on support could result in less dependency on discretionary services
- 2.3 To note that a revised DHP policy for the period 1 April 2016 to 31 July 2016 will be presented for approval in March 2016.
- 2.4 To delegate authority to the Director of Finance for consultation responses to be collated, analysed and final proposals for adoption to be put forward for adoption by the Council.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 Focusing the support activity on those people affected by more than one welfare reform will:
- ensure that the limited discretionary funding is focused on the more vulnerable customers,
 - help to move this group closer to and into work, giving them more opportunity and releasing discretionary funding for more vulnerable customers
 - mean that we can continue to support vulnerable people in need of discretionary awards for a longer period
- 3.2 Aligning support services with a financial award for the group of people impacted by more than one welfare reform will help more of them to move closer to work whilst releasing discretionary funding for the protected groups.
- 3.3 A revised DHP policy for the period from 1 April 2016 to 31 July 2016 will mean that we are able to continue to make Discretionary Housing Payment awards, until the consultation outcomes and recommendations are presented to Council cabinet in June 2016.
- 3.4 To avoid delays in the implementation of the Council's Welfare Strategy for Derby.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4.1 By providing an extra 15% DHP funding for 2016/17 the government is acknowledging there will be a greater financial impact on Local Authorities with the removal of the Family Premium and the reduction of the Benefit's Cap. We anticipate that this increase will be insufficient in itself to offset the financial burden on the Council in helping Derby residents affected by the new Welfare Reform changes – making it more important to help people move away from a dependence on discretionary awards.
- 4.2 Our learning from the Universal Support Delivered Locally (USDL) pilot is that people have a tendency to only access support services at the point of crisis. Successfully moving people closer to and into work will take time and accessing support services at the point of crisis will severely restrict any positive contribution to their circumstances this strategy could make. Taking a proactive approach would give people the best possible opportunity to benefit from the support available.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 Make no changes to the protected groups

This option has been disregarded because it will reduce the length of time for which we can support other vulnerable groups.

5.2 Not aligning support services to the financial award under the Single Discretionary Award Policy.

This is likely to result in a low take up of support services, reducing the number of people who could potentially move closer and into work. This will leave more people dependent on reducing Government discretionary funding and more vulnerable to financial difficulties.

This report has been approved by the following officers:

Legal officer Financial officer Equality Officer Service Director(s) Other(s)	Olu Idowu Toni Nash Martyn Marples
For more information contact: Background papers: List of appendices:	Bernard Fenton 01332 643758 Bernard.Fenton@derby.gov.uk None Appendix 1 – Implications Appendix 2 – Consultation Content

IMPLICATIONS

Financial and Value for Money

- 1.1 The cost of the consultation is anticipated to be £1,000 and will be met from the Customer Management budget.

Legal

- 2.1 There is no statutory obligation to run a single Discretionary Welfare scheme but in order to provide the best value to the residents of Derby and to provide a resilient support structure for our most vulnerable residents Derby City Council is committed to:
- Working in partnership with the local Third Sector to develop schemes.
 - Explore a range of support, and link to advice, information and advocacy.
 - Explore a full range of models for delivery.

Personnel

- 3.1 N/A

IT

- 4.1 N/A

Equalities Impact

- 5.1 The consultation information and questionnaire will be predominantly online however written and easy read versions will be available where requested.

Health and Safety

- 6.1 N/A

Environmental Sustainability

- 7.1 N/A

Property and Asset Management

- 8.1 N/A

Risk Management

- 9.1 N/A

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 10.1 The Single Discretionary Award helps to deliver the Council's pledges described in

the Derby 2030 plan.