

DRAFT MINUTE RELATING TO THE RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET FROM THE JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON 14 FEBRUARY 2019.

Information Bulletin 1 – Disabled Facilities Grant

Jan Osborne, Babergh, Cabinet Member for Housing, introduced the report.

Heather Worton, Corporate Manager-Property Services, and Amanda Todd, Senior Environmental Health Officer were present to answer questions.

A report was being prepared to Cabinet in March with proposed changes to alleviate the current way of working with the Disabled Facilities Grant, as outlined on page 24 bullet point 3.0 to 3.7.

Councillor Hadingham queried if there was a preliminary assessment of applications and the officers responded that this was provided by Orbit. It was the responsibility of Suffolk County Council to conduct the initial referrals and that there were a lot of work being conducted before the referrals were forwarded to Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils.

The proposed changes would be implemented during the last sixteenth months of the Orbit contract. It was established that Orbit was under-resourced and that the proposed changes would be funded by Councils.

The Council had a statutory obligation to provide support and Orbit was unable to provide further support as the organisation had no additional resources.

Members question the Orbit contract and the Cabinet Member for Housing clarified that the contract was initially for five years and that the implication of pulling out to the contract would have financial implications for all the authorities involved.

Paragraph 1.4 was queried by Members and if the funding would be lost if not allocated before 31 March 2018. It was clarified that it was unlikely that Council would be able to commit to allocate all the funding and that any surplus would be diverted to Suffolk County Council.

Members continued to debate the Orbit contract and some Members were unhappy that contract would continue for another 16 months. Officers and the Cabinet Member for Housing were highly concerned that the penalty clauses within the contract would result in a greater financial loss and a significant pause in any delivery.

Members generally agreed that the proposed recommendations to Cabinet were acceptable, but they would like to receive feed-back from Cabinet once a decision had been made. Both Cabinets would be considering proposed changes to Disabled Facilities Grants in March.

Members also suggested that for the future scrutiny committee a cross county scrutiny function be conducted with Councils with similar issues on the disabled facilities grant. It was clear that recruitment of Occupations therapist was part of some of the issues with the assessment process for the Grant application.

Discussion ensued regarding whether the Committee should receive a report back on the Disabled Facilities Grant or whether a six-month review was required. However, considering the urgency of the issues with Orbit and the implications for the applicants it was agreed to endorse the proposed suggested included in the Information Bulletin.

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

- 1.1 That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee strongly endorsed the proposed 'Changes to Disabled Facilities Grant 3.0 to 3.7' in the Information Bulletin to Cabinet.**
- 1.2 That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive a report back after the Cabinet Meeting in March 2019 on the agreed future arrangements for the Disabled Facilities Grant and that the report included the conclusions and the legal implications of the contract with Orbit, to be considered at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2019.**