

Report to: Scrutiny Committee

Date: Eastbourne 4 Feb 2019

Title: Discretionary Housing Payment Amended Policy 2019/2020

Report of: Director of Service Delivery

Ward(s): All wards

Purpose of report: For the scrutiny committee to review the revised Discretionary Housing Payment Policy for Lewes District Council and Eastbourne Borough Council

Officer recommendation(s): (1) To adopt the revised policy across Eastbourne and Lewes Councils

Reasons for recommendations: To ensure that the Discretionary Housing Payment scheme is administered consistently across both authorities.

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1 Introduction

Prior to JTP and Shared Service each authority had it's own Discretionary Housing Payment Policy (DHP), broadly similar in nature. Moving forward it was considered that one policy would be appropriate. The Policies have therefore been reviewed and amalgamated into one policy

DHPs have been in place since 2001 and are designed to give additional financial help to someone who gets Housing Benefit or the Housing Element of Universal Credit but are still struggling to meet their rental obligations or are unable to get accommodation.

DHPs are intended to be short term help and are not meant to continuously bridge the gap between a customers rents and the benefit they receive.

DHPs are not available to help someone pay their council tax.

2 Information

2.1 Central Government allocate a contribution for Discretionary Housing Payments.

Overall funding for 2018/2019 was £153 million. Funding from the government covers four separate areas

- Core funding
- Local Housing Allowance
- Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy
- Benefit Cap

For 2018/2019 Eastbourne Borough Council's allocation was £310,853

Local Authorities can top up the DHP budget spend up to 2.5 times this amount from their own resources.

Customers have to apply for a DHP and supply an income and expenditure form. Consideration is given to their incomings and outgoings and a decision is made on whether or not to award a DHP.

There is an expectation that customers will reduce any unnecessary expenditure and apply for any welfare benefits they are likely to be entitled to.

3 Main Changes to the Policy

3.1 Non Dependant Deductions will not be covered on an ongoing basis.

If a customer has a deduction made from their Housing Benefit or Universal Credit Housing Costs because they have adults other than their partner living in their household then a deduction may be made from their help with housing costs. This is based on the income of the adult. It is expected that the non-dependant contributes the amount of the deduction to the customer in order to make up the shortfall.

The amount of the deduction is set by Central Government and for 2018/2019 the deductions are made in the following circumstances

Aged under 25 and on Income Support, Income based Job Seeker's Allowance or Income Related Employment and Support Allowance which does not include a component	£15.25
Main phase of Income Related ESA	£15.25
Aged over 18 and working more than 16 hours per week	
• Gross income less than £139.00	£15.25
• Gross income £139.00 – £203.99	£35.00
• Gross income £204.00 - £264.99	£48.05
• Gross income £265.00 to £353.99	£78.65
• Gross income £354.00 to £438.99	£89.55
• Gross income £439.00 and above	£98.30

4 Financial appraisal

The financial awards made under this policy are made from the contribution from

Central Government. Any additional expenditure must be met by the Local Authority. In previous years both authorities have spent the allocation in full as any residue must be returned to Central Government.

5 Legal implications

The administration of Discretionary Housing payments are governed by the Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001.

6 Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) Policy 2019/20

7 Background papers

None.