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**REPORT TO:** HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

**AGENDA ITEM:** 11

**DATE OF MEETING:** 21 NOVEMBER 2002

**CATEGORY:** DELEGATED

**REPORT FROM:** SANDRA WHILES

**OPEN PARAGRAPH NO:**

**MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:** SANDRA WHILES EXT 5712

**DOC:** s:\cent\_serviccommittee reports\housing & community services\21 nov 2002\proposed changes to disabled adaptations.doc

**SUBJECT:** PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE DISABLED ADAPTATIONS SERVICE

**REF:** MEA/LJW

**WARD(S) AFFECTED:** ALL

**TERMS OF REFERENCE:**

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### 1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 That Committee approves the proposals to place all disabled adaptations work under the control of the Environmental Health Division in the Private Sector Housing Section.
- 1.2 That all applicants for disabled adaptation work apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant and are therefore means tested.
- 1.3 That a further report be taken to Finance and Management Committee in January 2003 outlining proposed staffing structures and detailed costings.

### 2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To outline to Members the proposed changes to Disabled Facilities Adaptations procedures.

### 3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The joint Best Value Review of Private Sector and Public Sector Housing aspects has highlighted that the Council run a different set of criteria of service for disabled persons depending on whether they live in the public or private sector.
- 3.2 A key recommendation of the Review is that disabled adaptations works are placed together under one division with the same level of service to the public whatever tenure they find themselves to be living in.
- 3.3 The Review has further also highlighted problems in communication between the three agencies involved in the Private Sector Disabled Adaptations.

### Private Sector Current Arrangements

- 3.4 All applicants for disabled adaptations apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant. This grant is \* means tested and funds for these grants are provided by contributions from both the Government and the Council based on a 60/40 split.
- 3.5 The Environmental Health Division use County Architects on an agency basis who charge the Council 5% of the cost of the grant works. For this fee the Architects draw plans and, where necessary, supervise works on site.
- 3.6 The distance involved between South Derbyshire District Council's area and Matlock makes on site supervision of work difficult and immediate requests for attendance to resolve problems on site impracticable.
- 3.7 The Occupational Therapists who have to be used to assess disabled facilities works are based at Tollgate at Woodville. They have experienced staffing shortages and this has led to delays in the system of processing.
- 3.8 The Council's Grant Officer and Technical Assistant in the Housing Section of Environmental Health carry out co-ordinating work and final inspections.
- 3.9 Clients face delays and confusion on chasing various agencies involved without one body being accountable.
- 3.10 Current demand amounts to some £900,000 from a budget of £259,000.

### Public Sector Adaptations

- 3.11 There is currently no means tested grants for the public sector housing tenants. Any tenant regardless of means can apply for disabled adaptation work to be carried out. This has led to an ever growing list of persons waiting for adaptation work. Current estimates on carrying out works for the existing persons on the waiting list amount to 2-3 years.
- 3.12 Adaptation works are funded from the Council's Major Repairs Allowance and Housing Revenue Account and amounts to £347,000 for the current financial year. This money also funds an Adaptations Officer post in Housing Division.
- 3.13 By not having a means tested system for Council house tenants, those tenants who could afford works have works funded and those who cannot afford face longer delays than they would do under a means tested system.

\* Also called subject to a test of resources.

## Proposals

3.14 The following proposals aim to give a 'one stop' service to all disabled persons in South Derbyshire District Council regardless of tenure. All disabled persons would apply for a Disabled Adaptation Grant and be means tested.

- a) That adaptations for both Public and Private Sector be moved to the Private Housing Section of the Environmental Health Division. The Housing Division does not have the staffing structure to deliver a unified service.
- b) That all applicants for disabled works be means tested.
- c) That 10% of the disabled adaptation money from the Major Repairs Allowance and Single Capital pot be used to fund a 'one stop' shop arrangement in-house. The monies will be used to fund in-house staff.
- d) Architectural services and site supervision would be delivered in-house.
- e) Negotiations will be held with Derbyshire County Council to attempt to secure an occupational therapist working from Council offices.
- f) The proposals will allow for increased packaging of works and contracts in both the private and public sectors leading to better value for money.

3.15 Many of the delays built into the current system will be resolved by the above proposals. The responsibility for the smooth running of Disabled Facilities Grants will be under the Environmental Health Manager and clients will have the confusion over who to contact regarding progress on their grants removed.

3.16 The proposals will eke out scarce resources by means testing all applicants for disabled adaptations work.

### **4.0 Financial Implications**

4.1 The costs of staff proposals will be funded by charging a 10% fee from the disabled adaptations capital monies and the MRA as is currently the case in the Housing Division.

### **5.0 Community Implications**

5.1 All members of the community would be treated equally by the proposals in the report.

### **6.0 Corporate Implications**

6.1 A more efficient streamlined service would result from the proposals. Full corporate implications regarding staffing will be presented to Finance and Management Committee in January.

### **7.0 Conclusions**

7.1 The Council faces an ever-growing demand for disabled facilities works. The proposals will help to share out scarce resources in a more equitable manner. In addition, the Environmental Health Manager will be bringing a further report to Committee on proposed re-prioritisation of housing capital resources to address the serious shortfall on disabled grant funding.

