

**REPORT**

To : <b>HOUSING &amp; TECHNICAL SERVICES COMMITTEE AND SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE</b>		Subject : <b>ADMINISTRATION OF TOP-UP FUNDS FOR DISABLED ADAPTATION IMPROVEMENT GRANTS</b>
From : <b>DIRECTOR OF HOUSING AND PROPERTY SERVICES</b>		
Date : <b>8 August 2001</b>	Ref: <b>TMcK/IMcM/AMcS</b>	

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for a scheme of administration for the Top-up Funds in connection with Improvement Grants for Disabled Adaptations. This report has been prepared in consultation with the Director of Social Work.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 While Improvement Grants under the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 can fund up to 75% of the cost of an adaptation to privately-owned houses (subject to a normal maximum grant of £9,450), in many cases the applicant cannot fund the balance of costs without additional assistance from the Council. For this purpose, top-up funding is provided in terms of Section 12(1) of the Social Work (Scotland) Act, 1968. The Social Work Department has, in the past few years, spent around £50,000 per annum in this way, but the need for such expenditure is growing particularly quickly at present.
- 2.2 The Joint Working Group on Equipment and Adaptations considered the administration of these funds as part of its review last year. It concluded that there is no benefit to the service user in having to apply for a grant in one Department (Housing and Property Services) and seek a "top-up" from another (Social Work). With a view to providing a more efficient and streamlined service, both grants and top-up funding could be administered by the same office. On the recommendation of the Joint Working Group, the Social Work and Housing and Property Services Committees therefore agreed, in November 2000, that the administration of the Top-up Funds in connection with Disabled Adaptations for owner-occupiers would in future be managed by the Grants Section within the Housing and Property Services Department, along with the Improvement Grants.
- 2.3 The transfer of responsibility is now being phased in. New applications as from 1 June 2001 are being administered solely by Housing and Property Services, whilst Social Work will continue to deal with top-ups for earlier applications until these have been processed. Funds of £50,000 per annum will be transferred on a recurring basis from Social Work to Non-HRA Housing.

### **3. Proposals**

- 3.1 The scheme has until now been managed on a decentralised basis by the Social Work Area Managers, and has been based on a loose system of priorities. What is now proposed is that the scheme will be managed along with all other grants on a centralised basis. In addition allocation of funds will be on a prioritisation basis, dependant on the number of points given in the Occupational Therapist's assessment of the disabled person's needs. The scoring system used for Council house tenants has now been extended to the owner-occupied sector. This will enable a consistency of approach to be used and will in due course allow comparison between the ease of access to adaptations in the two sectors.
- 3.2 Top-up funds would be allocated, as previously, only to those applicants who cannot afford to proceed with the assistance of the Improvement Grant alone. The top-up could meet the whole of the costs after deduction of the Improvement Grant, or part of those costs where the applicant is able to make some financial contribution themselves. Applicants would have the choice of either proceeding with the works once their Improvement Grant was approved, or of applying for Top-up funding and waiting until such funding was approved.
- 3.3 Applicants would be advised at an early date that top-up funds may not be available at the same time as the grant is approved due to limitations on funds for top-ups. Although applicants would be advised of the number of points which their proposed adaptation had scored under the Occupational Therapy scoring system, and it would be possible to advise applicants of their resultant position on the "Waiting List" for Top-ups, it would not be possible to give applicants predictions or projections of the length of time which they would require to wait until top-up funding could be offered.
- 3.4 In order to spread the funds over the course of a financial year, it is proposed that a system be introduced whereby a twelfth of the funds would be released each month. This would be adjusted to take account of the timelag between approval of Top-ups and expenditure of those monies, which averages three months.
- 3.5 Top-up funds would be allocated monthly to those applicants with the highest number of points. In the event that several applicants had the same number of points, priority would be given to those who had been waiting for Top-up funding for longest.
- 3.6 Where the top-up funding exceeds £10,000, it would be subject to repayment on a sliding scale, if the house is sold within 10 years, and the applicant would be required to grant the Council a Standard Security to this effect, as approved by the Social Work Committee on 25 August 1998. In a situation where the top-up exceeded £20,000, committee approval would also be required.
- 3.7 For larger jobs it is proposed that top-ups be released in instalments in tandem with the Improvement Grants payments.
- 3.8 On occasion, additional costs are incurred during the course of an adaptation which were unforeseen. In such situations, if the extra work is considered to be necessary, it is proposed that additional top-up funds be approved to allow the work to proceed without hardship to the applicant.

- 3.9 Although top-up funding will be administered on a day to day basis within the Housing and Property Services Department, it is recognised that strategic policy formation in this area requires a joint approach with Social Work. Various policy issues will be considered in the coming months such as the potential use of modular extensions and the possibility of assisting owners to move rather than undertake very expensive adaptations. The issue of funding in particular will be kept under review, as additional monies in excess of £50,000 per annum will almost certainly be required in future years, to meet the rising need for adaptations in the private sector. Resourcing this growing need will be unlikely to be achieved through diverting expenditure from other parts of the Non-HRA Revenue budget, but will require additional new expenditure to be allocated by the Council, and this matter will be subject to future reports to Committee in due course.

#### **4. Recommendation**

- 4.1 It is recommended that the scheme of administration as detailed in Section 3 of this report be approved.

#### **5. Further Information**

- 5.1 Further information is available in the Housing and Property Services and Social Work Departments.



**Thomas McKenzie**  
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