

REPORT TO: COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE ON 16 FEBRUARY 2010

SUBJECT: DISABLED ADAPTATIONS

BY: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 This report is presented to the Communities Committee to highlight the current position with the delivery of disabled adaptations to council housing stock for 2009/10. It seeks further discussion and comment on a range of suggested changes to both specifications and the extent of works carried out in future.
- 1.2 The report is submitted to the Committee in terms of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to the maintenance and improvement of the Council's housing stock.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Communities Committee:-

- (i) considers the current position of the 2009/2010 Adaptations Budget detailed within this report; and**
- (ii) comments on the various options for future delivery of disabled adaptations.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council currently allocates a budget of £0.550m for disabled adaptation works to council properties under the Housing Investment Programme and this annual budget is split between Major Adaptations (£0.450m) and Minor Adaptations (£0.100m). Major adaptation work covers level access or wet floor showers, ramps and major fabric alterations, with the Minor adaptation budget funding smaller items such as external handrails etc.
- 3.2 The budget for the provision of disabled adaptations to the Council's housing stock has been under considerable pressure for a number of years and this has continued into the current financial year. The budget and year-end spend for the previous two financial years and projection for this year is noted in the table below.

Financial Year	Budget	Year End Spend
2007/2008	£0.550m	£0.572m
2008/2009	£0.550m	£0.737m
2009/2010	£0.550m	£0.574m (projected)

- 3.3 The major adaptations budget of £0.450m for financial year 2009/10 is now over committed and new adaptations being added to the programme are currently being scheduled to be on site after the start of the 2010/11 financial year. Current commitment on major adaptations stands at £0.602m. A level of over commitment is however acceptable to allow full spend within the financial year and provide continuity of work into the new financial year. Continuing commitment will however have a knock on effect on next financial years budget, with a substantial proportion of the available funding for 2001/11 being committed at a very early stage in the year. The current budget pressure is also leading to delays in providing adaptations within the agreed timescales contained within the Maintenance Partnership. At present the Council's DLO is being issued with and programming one project per week to control spend under this budget heading.
- 3.4 At this stage of the year, the minor adaptations budget is projected to out-turn at around £0.067m against a budget of £0.100m. Any balances remaining at the year end will be used to supplement the major adaptations budget.
- 3.5 A number of other Local Authorities have been contacted by Officers to ascertain whether similar problems are being experienced in other areas of Scotland. Information received to date certainly points to several of these authorities being in a similar position to Moray, and also having to consider changes to the delivery of their adaptation service. Information and comment from other local authorities are shown within the relevant sections below.

4. DEMAND

- 4.1 One of the main issues with the delivery of the adaptations programme is that year on year demand is impossible to project accurately, the number of adaptations in each year being driven by Occupational Therapy assessments and the needs of individual clients. It may also be the case that changing demographics and an increase in elderly occupants within the housing stock is contributing to the pressures. The table below shows the number of current tenants aged 60 or over in each housing management area and their relative proportion to the overall number of tenants.

	Buckie	Elgin	Forres	Keith	% of all tenants
60-74	307	584	232	217	23.45
75+	253	445	165	157	17.85
Total	1,378	2,582	893	861	41.3

5. ELIGIBILITY

- 5.1 Changes to the eligibility criteria, which the Occupational Therapy Service use for dealing with adaptation requests, were agreed at the Health & Social Care Committee on 6 May 2009 (Paragraph 10 of the minute refers).
- 5.2 The OT section currently work to a HIGH and MEDIUM priority criteria, with HIGH priority requests being passed via the Housing Service to Property Services to progress at the rate of 1 per week. MEDIUM priority assessments are held back until such time as there are no HIGH priority cases, and then also passed through at 1 per week until such time that any HIGH priority cases are received, which then take priority. At the present time there are 8 MEDIUM priority cases on file, the oldest of which dates from July 2009.
- 5.3 In comparison with our relatively simple HIGH and MEDIUM priorities, one local authority currently uses a points based system where the OT section allocates up to a maximum of 40 points to each application based on the client requirements. At the beginning of each financial year, the total budget figure for the year and the ranked applications are used to decide how many of the applications can be progressed that year. After an agreed cut-off date, further applications will not be considered until the next financial year.

6. COST OF ADAPTATIONS

- 6.1 A recent report prepared by Inclusion Scotland using a 'Freedom of Information Request', gathered information from 30 of the 32 Scottish Local Authorities on a range of information which related to adaptations in both the private and the public sector. The level of information which was provided varied greatly between local authorities, and it is difficult to make direct comparisons of the data within the report due to the level of variations in the information provided. However Moray was amongst a small number of other authorities who provided the average cost of some types of adaptations and this information is provided in the table below for comparison.

	Stair Lift (average cost)	Wet Room (average cost)
Moray Council	£6,468	£5,178
LA1	£2,487	£3,649
LA2	£4,189	£4,062
LA4	£3,016	£3,057
LA5	£1,210	£2,136
LA6	£4,000	£5,000
LA7	£5,800	£4,400
LA8	£1,400	£2,200

Although this information seems to indicate that the cost of installing both wet rooms and stairlift in Moray appear to be the highest in Scotland, only 28% of local authorities who were contacted actually provided this information. The stairlift cost provided by Moray Council related to the installation a curved

stairlift, which is substantially higher. The higher cost of installing wet rooms in Moray could be attributable to a number of factors, including slight differences in specification and higher material costs.

- 6.2 The Inclusion Scotland report also asked the local authorities what had been spent on adapting council dwellings over the period 2004 to 2008. 21 of the 32 local authorities provided this information and the total amounts ranged from just under £1.0m to over £13.0m. Moray Council expenditure was over £1.7m during this same period. The table below shows how Moray compares with a selection of other local authorities.

	Stock (2009)	Capital Spend 2004-2008	Average Yearly Spend per Property based on 2009 stock levels
Moray Council	5,768	£1.776m	£76.98
LA1	5,006	£1.886m	£94.19
LA2	8,055	£2.350m	£72.94
LA3	6,514	£1.500m	£57.56
LA4	12,851	£5.700m	£110.88
LA5	13,666	£4.500m	£82.32
LA6	30,499	£13.1m	£429.52

- 6.3 Two of the local authorities that have responded to the Council's enquiries have indicated that in the past up to 10% of their Capital and Planned Maintenance Programmes Budget was being expended on adaptations. The figure for Moray is currently 9.5%.
- 6.4 The average cost of an adaptation has also risen in recent years and is presently around £6,500 plus fees. This appears to be due to a number of issues, including increased scope of works in some properties, rising material costs and increased building warrant requirements, particularly where ramped accesses are being formed. For comparison purposes the average cost of a private sector adaptation is currently £6,100 plus fees.
- 6.5 Maintenance Partnership rates can be reviewed at any time and a recent yearly saving of approximately £5,500 has been made in wetwall panelling costs as a result of procurement efficiencies achieved by Building Services DLO.

7. OPTIONS

- 7.1 The following options have been discussed by an Officer group from Community Services, Occupational Therapy and Property Services and are submitted to Committee for discussion and approval should Committee feel that these represent an appropriate course of action in order to tackle the current issues within the adaptations programme.

- 7.2 All the options will reduce budget pressure to varying degrees – and the savings that they may achieve have been estimated on the assumption that existing demand for adaptations continues.

Option 1: Shower Curtains

- 7.3 Where a level access tray or ‘wet floor’ shower area is being installed, the Council currently provides half height shower screens and a curtain as standard. It is suggested that unless there is a clear requirement that screens need to be provided – ie there is a carer issue, then a weighted shower curtain is fitted as standard.

Estimated Saving £0.028m

A number of other Scottish Local Authorities do not fit screens, but only provide shower curtains as standard.

Option 2: Wet Wall

- 7.4 Where showers are being installed, ‘wet wall’ panelling is used instead of tiling and in some cases this extends well beyond the immediate area of the shower and necessitates associated works such as removal and refitting of wash hand basins or WC’s. It is suggested that panelling is restricted to the two walls adjacent to the shower area.

Estimated Saving £0.042m.

Feedback from other local authorities who have been contacted indicates that wet wall panelling is only provided to the minimum wall area required to allow use of the facility.

Option 3 : Vinyl Flooring Contribution

- 7.5 Where Level Access trays are being installed, the Council currently lays non-slip vinyl flooring to the remainder of the room. It is suggested that vinyl flooring is no longer provided by the Council, and that tenants are offered a contribution of £50 towards provision of their own flooring. Advice and information would also be provided to tenants recommending a range of appropriate flooring. Under the standard tenancy agreement, floorcoverings are normally the tenants responsibility. The Council currently follows a similar process where kitchens are being replaced. The existing floor surface would be prepared by the Council for application of the flooring.

Estimated Saving £0.015m

Option 4: Agreed Basic Specification

- 7.6 A basic specification for standard adaptations types will be agreed between Community Services, Occupational Therapy and Property Services. Works beyond the basic specification will only be carried out in exceptional circumstances. Additional works currently carried out can include the replacement of WC’s, wash hand basins and extract fans on a purely cosmetic basis where there is no necessity to replace as part of the

adaptation works. As the extent of work can vary between installations, the estimated saving are provisional and difficult to quantify accurately.

Estimated Saving £0.025m

Option 5: Decoration

- 7.7 At present, the Council carries out full decoration to the affected room(s). It is suggested that decoration provision on adaptations is moved more in line with the council's agreed general decoration policy. This would mean that if surrounding surfaces are only slightly affected by the works, the existing surfaces are 'made good', and decoration vouchers is issued to tenants. Tenants qualifying for assistance in having the decoration work carried out by the Council under section 8 of the policy relating to 'Assistance to Decorate', would however have their decoration carried out for them. It is suggested that decoration vouchers in relation to adaptation works are issued to the value of £75 in line with those offered for kitchen upgrades.

Estimated Saving £0.045m

One of the local Authorities contacted, confirmed that they do not carry out any redecoration works in rooms when carrying out adaptation works, but merely make good to existing decoration as is suggested above.

- 7.8 If all of the above specification based changes are implemented the annual savings could be in the region of £0.155m. With the average cost of providing each adaptation also likely to drop from approximately £6500 to £5700 (exclusive of fees) this could mean that an additional 20 to 25 adaptations could be carried out per annum in future years for the same budget figure.
- 7.9 In addition to the above proposals, there may be other options that have not been explored, and there is an opportunity for the Committee to put forward suggestions which could then be investigated in more detail by Officers.

8. PROTOCOL AND PROCEDURES

- 8.1 A Protocol and Procedure has been developed to formalise and detail the arrangements between the Housing Service, Occupational Therapy and Property Services to deliver adaptations to Council dwelling, providing an operational framework by which services will be provided for tenants with a disability. A copy of the Protocol and Procedures has been made available to Members on the Member's Sharepoint Site.

9. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Single Outcome Agreement/Service Improvement Plan

This proposal relates to:

- (i) Local Priority 4 – Housing/Homelessness
- (ii) the Service Improvement Plan priorities 2.3 - Improving housing quality, and 2.4 – Improving housing service quality

(b) Policy and Legal

Maintenance and Improvement works are carried out in order to meet statutory legal requirements and in accordance with current relevant policies.

(c) Resources (Financial, Staffing and Property)

The financial implications associated within this report are dealt with in paragraphs 3.1 to 3.3, and 5.3 to 5.8 above. There are no staffing implications associated with this report. The improvement and maintenance of the housing stock will ensure that it remains sustainable in the longer term both physically and environmentally. There are no European funding implications.

(d) Consultations

Consultations have taken place with the Director of Community Services, Chief Housing Officer, Acting Head of Community Care, Housing Programmes Manager, Housing Needs Manager, Senior Area Housing Manager, Property Manager, DLO General Manager, Home Improvement Services Manager, Occupational Therapy Manager, Operational Support Manager (OT) and Deborah Bosworth (Principal Accountant), who agree with this report.

10. CONCLUSION

10.1 This report seeks the further views, comment and recommendations of the Communities Committee on the proposals to deal with pressures on the Adaptations Budget.

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Background Papers: held on file by the Capital Programmes Manager
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