


Commissioner Decision Report 30 September 2015	
Report of: Aman Dalvi Corporate Director, Development and Renewal	Classification: Unrestricted
Provision of a Home Repairs Grant in the sum of £2,570.04 to Mrs B, under the Tower Hamlets Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy 2013-15	

Originating Officer(s)	Alison Thomas
Wards affected	Weavers
Key Decision?	No
Community Plan Theme	A Healthy and Supportive Community: Reducing health inequalities and enabling people to live independently
Reasons for Urgency	Potential adverse impact on individual resident

Executive Summary

This report relates to the provision of Home Repairs Grants under Part 4.2 of the Tower Hamlets Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy 2013-15.

Under the terms of this policy, these small grants of up to a maximum of £6,000 may be made available to eligible owner-occupiers to enable them to remain in their own homes safely and avoid minor accidents.

Eligible home owners are those who are:

- over 60 years of age, or
- disabled or infirm, or the parent or carer of a disabled child and
- in receipt of an income related benefit or eligible tax credits

Recommendations:

The Commissioners are recommended to:

1. Agree Home Repairs Grants to Mrs B in the sum of £2,570.04 to fund two extended warranties for an internal curved track stair-lift and an external wheelchair step-lift.

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 The criteria set out in the adopted policy are considered by officers to be met and if the Commissioners are satisfied of this then the payment should be made. The sum proposed has been assessed to meet the costs of the works.

3. DETAILS OF REPORT

- 3.1 Under Part 4.2 of the Tower Hamlets Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy 2013-15, Home Repairs Grants up to a maximum value of £6,000 may be available to qualifying owner-occupiers to enable them to remain living in their own homes safely and avoid minor accidents.
- 3.2 To be eligible for assistance the applicant must be either over the age of 60, or disabled, or the parent of a disabled child and in all cases, be in receipt of qualifying means tested benefit. In addition the applicant must:-
- be an owner-occupier who lives in the dwelling as their only or main residence
 - be aged 18 or over on the date of the application (applications for minor adaptations for works to enable a disabled child to be cared for in their own home will be accepted from the parents or carer of that disabled child)
 - have the power or duty to carry out the works (with the appropriate consents where the property is leasehold)
- 3.3 Mrs B is the leasehold owner of, a ground floor maisonette, together with her husband.
- 3.4 Mrs B has suffered from multiple sclerosis for almost 20 years and is now a full dependent wheelchair user and her husband is her full time carer.
- 3.5 As Mrs B's condition deteriorated adaptation works have been carried out to her home to allow her to live as safely and independently as possible. These adaptations include a wheelchair accessible wet floor shower room, an internal stair-lift to allow access to the upper floor and an external wheelchair step-lift to facilitate entry to and from her home.
- 3.6 These adaptations were provided through a Disabled Facilities Grant and were covered by the manufacturer's warranty but when they expire the disabled resident can be left stranded and isolated in their own home if they do not have the resources to fund repairs. This can lead to increased care costs to the Council as additional resources have to be deployed to cope with the situation.
- 3.7 To ensure against this situation arising, Mrs B has applied to the Private Housing Improvement Team for a Home Repairs Grant to provide an

extended four year warranty and annual service for each of the lifts, which will be provided by the preferred lift supplier.

- 3.8 The cost of these two warranties is £2,178.00 together with the Home Improvement Agency fee of £392.04, gives a total grant amount of £2,570.04.
- 3.9 Mrs B meets the eligibility criteria in that she is the leasehold owner of the property, has lived in the dwelling for over fourteen years, is disabled and is in receipt of a means tested benefit.
- 3.10 The application has been considered by the Private Housing Grants Panel and who have made a recommendation that the grant be approved.
- 3.11 This grant is not repayable.

4. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 4.1 A capital estimate of £550,000 was approved as part of the 2015-16 budget process to fund a Private Sector Renewal Grant programme. The scheme is financed from residual ring-fenced resources received from the East London Renewal Partnership. The programme supports the aims and objectives of the Council's Private Sector Housing and Empty Properties Framework, and includes Home Repairs Grants for minor aids and adaptations, energy efficiency, minor repairs, home security, hazard removal and relocation assistance; Empty Property Grants and Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants.
- 4.2 The specific grant considered in this report forms an element of the programme and can be met from within uncommitted resources. The applicant meets the conditions that the Council applies to these grants.
- 4.3 The Council has previously funded the installation of an internal stair-lift and an external step-lift at the property under its mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant scheme. The applicant is seeking a further grant of £2,570 to fund the purchase of extended four year warranties and annual service contracts on the lifts. The application has been considered by the Officer Private Housing Grants Panel and is recommended to the Commissioners for approval.

5. LEGAL COMMENTS

- 5.1. The legal provisions setting out the Council's duties and powers in respect of this grant payment are set out in non-exempt report titled "Provision of Home Repair Grants under the Council's Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy 2013-2015, to four individual owner occupiers.

6. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 By targeting the very limited financial assistance which is still available to the most vulnerable owner occupiers, the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy 2013-15, seeks to mitigate the problems of poor housing conditions and

reduce the pressure on social and health care services and at the same time have a positive impact on the lives of these residents by reducing health and housing inequalities and ensuring their independence and inclusion.

- 6.2 A full Equalities Assessment on the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy has been carried out and which found there to be no evidence to suggest any adverse or negative impact.

7. BEST VALUE (BV) IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Individual grant costs are scrutinised and challenged at a number of stages of the grant process, from initial receipt by the grant officer through to final consideration by the Housing Grant Panel.
- 7.2 The use of small cost housing grants to carry out urgent but minor repair works for elderly and vulnerable home owners and those with disabilities, can ensure that resident is able to live healthily and safely in their own home and can reduce longer term repair costs if nothing is done about the problem. It also reduces the risk of reliance on other council services which may be more costly.

8. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

- 8.1. There are no sustainability implications.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There is a risk that if this small grant is not approved and either of the adaptations fail, the health and wellbeing of this disabled home owner would deteriorate.
- 9.2 There is also the risk that should either of the lifts fail, Mr B could be put at risk of harm as he attempts to physically assist his wife around the home.
- 9.3 There is a further risk that Council may be exposed to much greater costs in the longer term, as there would be additional care funding required for the family to cope with loss of these lifts and Mrs Bs reduced independence.

10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no crime and disorder implications.

11. SAFEGUARDING IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no safeguarding implications.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

Private Sector Housing Strategy 2013-15, Cabinet decision of 31 July 2013.
<http://moderngov.towerhamlets.gov.uk/documents/g4188/Decisions%2031st-Jul-2013%2017.30%20Cabinet.pdf?T=2>
Private Sector Housing Strategy 2013-15.
http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgsi/851-900/868_housing_statements/private_sector_housing_renewal.aspx

Appendices

Grant break-down sheet.
Grant Panel check sheet.
Chair of Private Housing Grant Panel's recommendation sheet

Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

None

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