

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

5TH MARCH 2008

DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENT (DHP) POLICY

Responsible Portfolio Holder	Councillor Denaro
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Financial Services – Jayne Pickering

1. SUMMARY

1.1 To present members with the Discretionary Housing Policy for the Authority.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That the changes to the Housing Benefit scheme, as detailed in the report, be noted and the policy shown at Appendix 1 be approved and adopted.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 On 2 July 2001 a scheme was introduced which granted all Local Authorities powers to make a discretionary award to top up the Housing and Council Tax Benefits statutory schemes. This is known as Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) and each authority receives an amount of subsidy to fund this – for 2007/8 this was £9,320. If the authority exceeds this amount, it must be funded by the authority. Therefore, it is necessary to have a policy to determine when these payments will be made.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The budget for Discretionary Housing Payment is £9,320 per annum, and once this budget is exhausted the authority pay any amount exceeding this. It is therefore important that payments made under this scheme are only paid in accordance with the policy and criteria set, and that payments are monitored against the budget available.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Payments are made within the Councils discretionary powers

6. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES

- 6.1 Approval of this policy contributes to the Council's priority of customer service in ensuring all our customers have a consistent and quality service provided to them.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 The main risks associated with the details included in this report are:

- Customers may be subject to eviction or CTAX recovery court costs

- 7.2 These risks are being managed as follows:

Risk Register: Financial Services

Key Objective Ref No: 2

Key Objective: Efficient and effective payment of benefits to those people who are eligible

8. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Council Tax Benefit and Housing Benefit provides assistance to some of the most safeguarded members of the community. The approval of this policy shows that the Council is committed to ensuring that safeguarded claimants are treated fairly and assisted within the terms of the legislation..

9. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The adoption of the policy and implementation of the Discretionary Policy will ensure that all our customers are treated in a fair and equitable manner and the Council has a robust framework in place to support both officers and clients

10. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The implementation of policy will ensure that the benefit received by the Council is paid to eligible claimants in an effective and consistent way.

11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Procurement Issues - None
Personnel Implications - None
Governance/Performance Management - None
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998 - None

Policy - None
Environmental - None

12. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT

Please include the following table and indicate 'Yes' or 'No' as appropriate. Delete the words in italics.

Portfolio Holder	Yes
Chief Executive	Yes
Executive Director (Partnerships and Projects)	Yes
Executive Director (Services)	Yes
Assistant Chief Executive	Yes
Head of Service	Yes
Head of Financial Services	Yes
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	Yes
Head of Organisational Development & HR	Yes
Corporate Procurement Team	None

13. WARDS AFFECTED

All Wards

14. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Discretionary Housing Payment Policy

15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001 (S1 001 / 1167).

The Housing Benefit (Local Housing and Information Sharing) Amendment Regulations 2007

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