

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

Housing and Communities Committee

29 January 2020

Revised Scheme of Assistance for Private Sector Housing

Report by Head of Housing (Report No. 20/33)

Under Section 72 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006, the Council is required to implement and publish a Scheme of Assistance. This report seeks approval for a revised Scheme of Assistance, which supports people in the private sector to maintain, repair, or adapt their own property.

1. BACKGROUND / MAIN ISSUES

- 1.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 was introduced in 2009 and changed the type of help local authorities could provide to private sector owners. This included a move away from providing Improvement and Repair Grants to offering help, advice and practical assistance for people who wanted or needed to carry out work to their own home. The types of assistance available are information, advice, practical assistance and financial assistance.
- 1.2 A grant can, however, still be awarded if a property requires to be adapted to meet the requirements of an occupier with specific medical needs, provided this is supported by an occupational therapist's recommendation.
- 1.3 To enable people to understand what help is available, the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 introduced a requirement for local authorities to set out the different forms of assistance available, in relation to repairs, maintenance, improvements and adaptations for private housing, in the form of a statement of circumstances known as the "Scheme of Assistance"
- 1.4 The Council's current Scheme of Assistance was approved by Housing and Health Committee on 24 August 2016 (Report No.16/355 refers). It has now been revised and updated to reflect changes in legislation and current priorities. The Scheme of Assistance is a legal document and we have simplified this as far as reasonably possible without changing the context or legal requirements.
- 1.5 The Scheme is administered by Housing and Environment. Key areas including major adaptations and the Empty Homes Initiative are co-ordinated across the service. The provision of a Care and Repair service also falls within Housing's remit, as well as energy efficiency measures for private sector homes.

- 1.6 The Care and Repair Service is funded by the Council's General Fund. It provides information, advice and practical assistance to home owners and private tenants who are elderly or have a disability, to enable them to repair, improve or adapt their homes.
- 1.7 The service is currently provided by Caledonia Care and Repair and managed by Caledonia Housing Association. This is currently being re-tendered as a shared service with Angus Council. The shared procurement with our neighbouring authority will provide better economies of scale, resulting in better value. Tender submissions will be assessed by the end of January 2020.
- 1.8 Regulatory Services are responsible for house condition works, for example common repairs advice, statutory notices and missing shares. This work is carried out by Environmental Health officers.
- 1.9 The outcomes of an effective Scheme of Assistance can have a significant and positive impact in people's lives. Examples include:
- care and repair customer surveys, carried out after work has been completed, indicate a 96% satisfaction rate for major adaptations and 100% for small repairs based on the service they have received.
 - the provision of a Care and Repair Service is enabling more elderly and disabled people to remain in their own homes and communities for longer. As the elderly population within Perth and Kinross increases so will the need for an effective Care and Repair service.
 - the comment below was received following an adaptation provided by the Care and Repairs service in November 2019:

"We just want to record our thanks and appreciation for you and your team's work on this. Our father has had his first proper shower for some time, and this, combined with the freedom acquired since the ramp was completed last month, has lifted the spirits of the whole family. You have completely changed our lives"
 - in a tenement building, the owner of one flat refused to participate in proposals to repair the building. Without their financial contribution, no work could be carried out. The award of a "missing share", through the Scheme of Assistance, enabled the willing property owners to carry out the essential common repairs. These repairs could not have been carried without the help available through the Scheme.

- 1.10 The budget for 2018/19 for work carried out through the Scheme of Assistance was £1,190,167 as follows:

Major Adaptations	£	832,326.48
Small Repairs	£	60,000.00
Service provision	£	277,350.00
Fees, etc.	£	14,000.00
Missing share	£	6,490.52
	£	<u>1,190,167.00</u>

- 1.11 Funding helped to provide a variety of measures to support private owners. Completed work included 192 major adaptations, 313 small repairs, 1 secure door entry system and 35 modular ramp installations.
- 1.12 The budget for 2019/20 remains at £1,190,167. The following actions have been completed, primarily through the Care and Repair Service, to the end of September 2019: 69 major adaptations, 72 small repairs, 1 secure door entry system and 20 modular ramp installations. The budget for 2019/20 is currently projected to be fully spent.

2. PROPOSALS

- 2.1 The primary legislation has not substantially changed, and, as a result, the focus of the Council's Scheme of Assistance remains the same. However, the Scheme requires to be updated to reflect the following developments:
- new local initiatives and priorities
 - available resources
 - changes in benefit legislation e.g. introduction of Universal Credit
 - a clearer understanding of what assistance may be available
 - an increasing number of complex adaptation cases
- 2.2 The resources that are available to support the activities outlined in the Scheme of Assistance are limited. As a result, it is necessary to target these to make sure that the assistance is available to those in the greatest need, and also to ensure that local and national strategic objectives are met.
- 2.3 In Perth and Kinross, the Council has identified the following priority works for assistance:
- essential adaptations for people with disabilities.
 - work to bring long-term empty properties back into use as affordable housing.
 - work to properties that are below the Tolerable Standard (BTS) or are at risk of becoming BTS, and other properties with serious disrepair.
 - Work to common parts, particularly in tenement properties, will be given priority.

2.4 A copy of the proposed amendments to the Scheme of Assistance was circulated to Council services and partner organisations. The comments and suggestions received are included in the revised Scheme, which is attached for approval as Appendix 2. Consultation took place with the following groups:

- Occupational Therapy (incl. Health & Social Care OTs)
- Caledonia Care and Repair service
- Regulatory Servicers (Public Health, Housing)
- Private Sector Access Team
- Housing Management Team
- Finance
- Legal Services
- Sure Team

2.5 The main changes are also summarised in Appendix 1 of this report.

2.6 The approved Scheme of Assistance will be easily accessible and available on the Council's website. A user friendly, easy read version of the Scheme of Assistance will also be produced and available both on line and in leaflet form. We will also be working with colleagues to create British Sign Language (BSL) videos for key areas of the service.

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The aim of the Council's Scheme of Assistance is to set out the different forms of assistance that may be provided in relation to repairs, maintenance, improvements and adaptations to privately owned and private rented properties.

3.2 It is recommended that Housing & Communities Committee:

- i. approves the revised Scheme of Assistance as detailed in Appendix 2.
- ii. approves delegated authority to the Executive Director (Housing and Environment), to amend the Scheme of Assistance in relation to the delivery of Care and Repair Services, following the tendering process due to take place in early 2020.
- iii. approves that future reviews of the Scheme of Assistance will be in line with the Local Housing Strategy review schedule, unless legislative changes dictate an earlier requirement.

Author

Name	Designation	Contact Details
June McColl	Service Manager	01738 475000 HECommitteeReports@pkc.gov.uk

Approved

Name	Designation	Date
Barbara Renton	Executive Director (Housing & Environment)	17 January 2020

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1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Strategic Implications	Yes / None
Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement	Yes
Corporate Plan	Yes
Resource Implications	
Financial	Yes
Workforce	No
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	No
Assessments	
Equality Impact Assessment	
Strategic Environmental Assessment	No
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	Yes
Legal and Governance	Yes
Risk	Yes
Consultation	
Internal	Yes
External	Yes
Communication	
Communications Plan	Yes

1. Strategic Implications

Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement /Local Outcomes

1.1 The following objectives of the community plan and SOA are relevant to this report:

- (i) Giving every child the best start in life
- (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens
- (i) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy
- (ii) Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives
- (iii) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations

Corporate Plan

1.2 As above.

2. Resource Implications

Financial

2.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Workforce

- 2.2 Not available (n/a).

Asset Management (land, property, IT)

- 2.3 Not available (n/a).

3. Assessments

Equality Impact Assessment

- 3.1 This paper has been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (Equal) with the following outcome:
- (i) Assessed as **relevant** and the following positive outcomes expected following implementation:
- Older and disabled people with more complex needs will have these met by the assistance available through the Scheme of Assistance.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 3.2 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals. However, no further action is required as it does not qualify as a PPS as defined by the Act and is therefore exempt.

Sustainability

- 3.3 These proposals meet the following sustainability criteria:
- Energy conservation through improved insulation measures
 - Re-use of existing resources
 - Where possible using materials from sustainable sources

Legal and Governance

- 3.4 As the proposals contain no fundamental changes from the previous Scheme of Assistance there is no requirement for Head of Legal and Governance to be consulted.

Risk

- 3.5 A risk profile has been developed covering the Scheme of Assistance.

4. Consultation

Internal

- 4.1 Housing and Environment – Finance, Legal Services, Private Sector Housing, Improvements and Repairs, Occupational Therapy Team, Environmental Health have been consulted in the review of the Scheme of Assistance

External

- 4.2 Caledonia Care and Repair were consulted and informed in the development of the revised Scheme of Assistance.
- 4.3 The Tenant Committee Report Panel were consulted on this strategy. They advised “This report shows how adaptations help people to stay in their own homes for longer and continue to feel part of the community.”

5. Communication

- 5.1 The revised Scheme of Assistance will be published on the Council’s website and implemented with partner organisations.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 6.1 Confirmation of budget approval is contained within Housing and Health Committee Report, 27 January 2016, Article 16/28.

7. APPENDICES

- 7.1 Appendix 1 – Scheme of Assistance – Table of Amendments
- 7.2 Appendix 2 - Scheme of Assistance, January 2020