

**Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy**

## Contents

	<b>Page No.</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2. Policy Background</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3. Meeting Key Strategic and Service Related Aims and Objectives</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>4. Resourcing the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>5. Delivering Policy Objectives</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>6. The Grant Application Process and How to Access it</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>7. Grant Details</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>7.1 Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants</b>	
<b>7.2 Discretionary Renovation Grants</b>	
<b>7.3 Discretionary Landlords' Empty Homes Grants</b>	
<b>7.4 Discretionary First time Buyers Empty Homes Grants</b>	
<b>7.5 Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants</b>	
<b>8. Prioritisation For Discretionary Assistance Applications</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>9. Grant Terms and Conditions</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>10. Complaints Policy</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>11. Definitions</b>	<b>17</b>

## Appendices

<b>1 Key Service Standards</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>2 Benefits that Allow Qualification for Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>3 Grant Process Flow Diagram</b>	<b>23</b>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 was made on 18 July 2002. It repealed much of the prescriptive legislation governing the provision of previous housing assistance, replacing it with wide ranging powers to provide assistance for housing renewal, based on local needs and achievement of strategic objectives. The Council introduced a policy in 2004, which was aimed at addressing local need and detailed what assistance was offered and how the policy would be administered. Minor amendments have been in the intervening years to reflect legislative changes which impact on the policy.

After almost ten years of operation it is appropriate to review the policy and update it to reflect the changes to the Council's capital programme and the current economic climate.

This is the Council's policy adopted under article four of the Order.

## 2. POLICY BACKGROUND AND IMPLEMENTATION

This Policy has been informed by the Private Sector Stock Condition Survey (and formulated in the light of the Council's corporate plan "Building a Better Ipswich " which is a statement of the Council's vision, service priorities and values.

### **Underlying Principle 2: Value for Money**

#### **GOAL:**

**We will constantly seek to improve the efficiency of the Council, with savings used to protect and improve services and to keep down council tax.**

### **Theme 4: Quality Housing for all**

#### **GOAL:**

**We will help individuals and groups in the local community who experience disadvantage and will work towards everyone having the opportunity of a decent home.**

This Private Sector Renewal policy will be implemented immediately and will be reviewed every three years. Amendment should only be necessary in the case of significant change to policy items. The Operations Manager in consultation with the current executive Housing Portfolio Holder will make changes to the document without the need for formal ratification, where such changes make no significant difference to service provision. Where amendments produce significant change to service provision those amendments will require approval of the Executive before the operational policy is changed.

There may be 'external' factors that require major review earlier than anticipated, e.g.

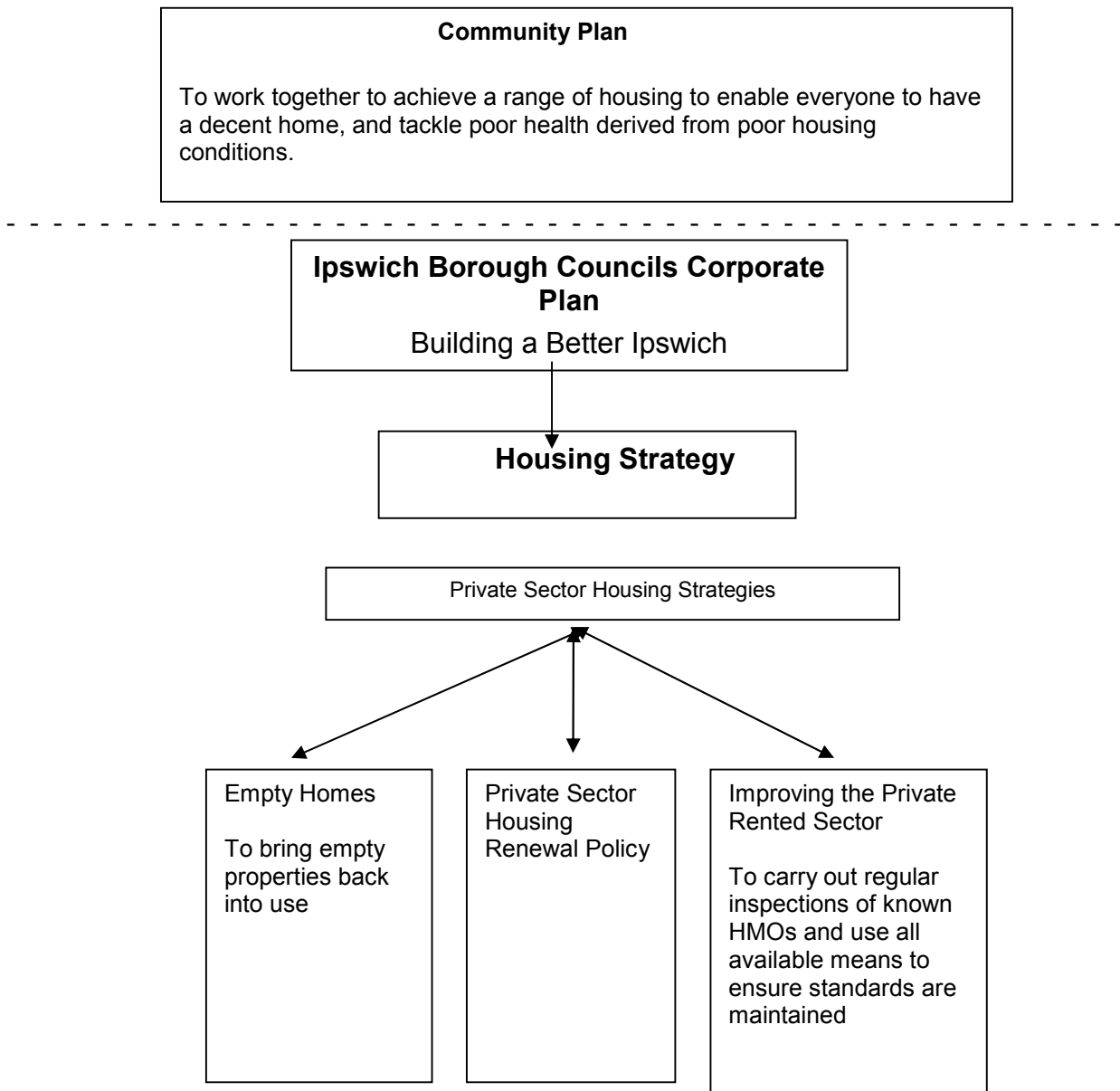
- Changes to Capital Spending Plans

- Acute changes to local circumstances
- National policy/legislative changes
- Local Strategic Partnership influences

In implementing this policy the Council will make reference to all relevant national legislation and guidance that is currently in place or is introduced during the life of the policy. The guidance issued for Housing Renewal will be of particular relevance, especially where it deals with the Housing Health and Safety Rating System and the provision of Mandatory Grants for Disabled Persons' Facilities.

### 3. KEY STRATEGIC AND SERVICE RELATED AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 The Council strategies that inform and link into this Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy are:



### 4. RESOURCING THE PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING RENEWAL POLICY

The Council recognises the needs and benefits of supporting the private housing sector in a targeted and effective manner.

The allocation of capital funding for private sector renewal forms part of the Council's overall Capital Programme and is managed through that process. This is split between mandatory and discretionary grants.

Capital funding assistance for approved works comes from the Council's own resources, although central government directly funds 100% of all expenditure on mandatory

disabled facilities grants. This policy has been formulated so that in the long term, discretionary grants will be repaid to the Council and become a re-circulating fund.

Significant investment is required in order to maintain the housing stock and stop an increasing number of vulnerable households living in poor housing conditions. Whilst a large proportion of owner occupiers are able to fund repair works themselves many, particularly those who are considered vulnerable, require assistance to maintain their properties.

The Council will not approve any grants or commit monies to any grant/property when the spending allocation from the Capital Programme has been exhausted.

## **5 DELIVERING THE POLICY OBJECTIVES**

This policy will be delivered through three main mechanisms. These are the provision of advice and education, enforcement of statutory standards and the provision of financial advice and assistance.

### **5.1 Advice and Education**

The Council will offer general help and advice along with the provision of information on a range of topics to assist people in the private sector maintain and improve their properties. It is anticipated that the type and levels of advice will develop and evolve over time. Wherever possible, the Council will provide such information free of charge, but certain specialised services may incur a charge where the recipient can reasonably be expected to contribute to some or all of the cost.

In addition, the Council will undertake specific targeted education campaigns in order to achieve certain objectives, e.g. improving domestic energy efficiency.

The provision of advice and education may or may not be linked to financial assistance.

### **5.2 Enforcement**

Enforcement action will not be the first response to minor contraventions of legislation, and will be undertaken in accordance with the Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy. The need for formal enforcement will vary according to the severity of a problem, the imminent risks, previous history, the degree of confidence in a landlord and public interest, etc. However, where there is a statutory duty placed on the Council to deal with properties that fail the statutory standard, enforcement action will be taken in line with government guidance and the Council Enforcement Policy.

### **5.3 Financial Assistance**

Financial assistance will involve a grant, subject to the applicant's financial status and any conditions attached. The grants offered are:

- Discretionary Renovation Grants
- Discretionary Empty Homes Grants
- Discretionary First Time Buyers Empty Homes Grants
- Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants

## 6 APPLYING FOR A GRANT

The Council's policy on assistance takes into account the primary responsibility of owners to maintain their own properties. In addition when determining eligibility, it considers whether they fall into a vulnerable group along with other criteria, such as financial circumstances.

The stages of the application process are detailed in Appendix 3.

The first stage of the process will commence when a prospective applicant makes initial contact to enquire about the availability of assistance. The initial contact will be recorded on the computerised grants administration system; this will include a preliminary financial assessment following which an enquiry/information pack is dispatched. An officer will make a 'home' visit to all enquirers, except where the work obviously would not qualify for any assistance. The visiting officer will assess the types of work involved in line with section 7 of this policy and determine the most suitable type of assistance.

The second stage of the application process is the issue of a scheme of works and the completion and submission of the formal application pack, including appropriate certificates and agreement with terms and conditions, along with the required number of quotations. The Council will then approve a grant based on the quotation provided or the lowest quotations of more than one if required/requested providing that the quotation/s are reasonable.

Where the Council does not deem the quotations to be reasonable the Council will approve a level of grant for which it believes the works could reasonably be carried out. The level of any grant approved may be the total cost of agreed works, or, where the applicant's financial assessment requires them to raise some funding of their own, the difference between the value of their own funding and the total cost of agreed works.

Landlords' grant will be dependent upon the rental income from the property.

The result of the second stage of the process will be conveyed to applicants in writing.

The amount of information required in respect of applications will be commensurate with the likely scale of works involved and as such applicants for Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant will have to provide much less information than those applying for a Discretionary Renovation Grant.



## **7. GRANT DETAILS**

### **7.1 Mandatory Grants for Disabled Persons' Facilities**

The Council will award mandatory grants for disabled adaptations according to legislation and guidance issued by central government which determines, amongst other things, the type of work that can be funded, a maximum grant that may be made, and the test of financial resources that must be made. A separate information leaflet provides more detailed information.

### **7.2 Discretionary Renovation Grants**

The Council will consider applications for discretionary renovation grants from owner-occupiers and occupying long leaseholders, subject to its own terms and conditions. There will be a preset maximum of £10,000 limit for assistance in most cases; the Council will consider the cost of all proposed work in the light of the eligibility of the work and the reasonableness of the cost based on the quotations submitted and the Council's determination of the most satisfactory course of action.

The eligibility of an applicant will be assessed using the current statutory means test for Mandatory Grants. A separate financial assessment will be carried out for first time buyers who are purchasing an empty property. Any grant payable will be reduced by the applicants' contribution that will be calculated using the statutory means test for mandatory grants.

Applications within this heading will be considered to achieve the following:

- a) Bringing a property up to the current statutory standard for housing as detailed in the Housing Health and Safety Rating System. Works are restricted the eligible works to category 1 hazards and category 2 hazards likely to become category 1 hazards within the next 12 months.
- b) Works to repair a property to ensure the integrity of the property or to protect the occupants from immediate exposure to dangerous and/or insecure building elements

### **7.3 Landlord Empty Homes Grants**

Grants to bring long-term empty homes to use but introduce a maximum grant of £10,000 grant conditions will require that any grant aided property is let for 5 years at an affordable rent and the Council will be given nomination rights for 5 years. Affordable rent is defined as Local Housing Allowance level for that type of property.

#### **7.4 First Time Buyers Empty Homes Grants**

Renovation of dwellings, which have been unoccupied for longer than one year where the applicant is a first time buyer and their mortgage is over 80% with savings of less than £7000. Grant aid will be up to a maximum of £20,000. The grant will only be approved if, a valid application is made within the first year of ownership and on completion the works, the property will meet the current statutory standard for housing.

#### **7.5 Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants**

Grants for the adaptation of properties where a statutory DFG is not appropriate for example to help applicants who have been diagnosed with a life limiting condition remain at home or where a property is unable to be fully adapted to meet the client's needs but there is a relevant safety risk that requires addressing. The maximum grant is £3,000.

This type of grant will only be paid if the applicant is in receipt of one or more of the statutorily means tested benefits listed in Appendix 2

#### **Flexibility within the Policy**

The Operations Manager - Housing Support Services has the discretion to:

- Increase the maximum grant level to £20,000 on individual cases where the levels of disrepair require further investment to ensure the property meets the statutory standard for housing on completion of the works
- In consultation with the Housing Portfolio Holder increase the maximum grant level on all grants and the works offered to the Decent Homes Standard where increased budgetary provision has been identified.
- Under exceptional circumstances, and at the discretion of the Operations Manager- Housing Support Services, special provisions for applicants in vulnerable groups, i.e. those aged over 60, persons with disabilities, or families with resident children under 5; who are not in receipt of means tested benefits will be given access to Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants. These applicants will undertake the means test applicable to applications for Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants. Before the Council will consider offering a grant, applicants will undertake a financial means test for Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants, with any notional loan being subtracted from the maximum available grant. The Housing Portfolio Holder will be informed whenever this discretion is exercised.

## **8. PRIORITISATION FOR DISCRETIONARY ASSISTANCE APPLICATIONS**

Grant aid will be targeted at people on low incomes, particularly those considered to be in vulnerable groups such as the disabled, elderly and families with young children.

Priority will be given to properties in the most serious state of disrepair and bringing houses up to the statutory standard for housing at that time, usually via discretionary renovation grants.

Priority will also be given to returning problematic long-term empty properties to use as affordable housing.

## 9. TERMS AND CONDITIONS

The Council will attach suitable conditions to grants it approves under this policy. It requires applicants to enter into a binding legal agreement that will form a charge on the property. The terms of that agreement will prevail over the information in this document.

Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants have conditions attached under the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, details of which are available separately.

The terms, conditions and eligibility criteria for discretionary grants detailed within this policy will be available in writing for all applicants for assistance.

- 9.1 Information provided** to the Council by applicants as part of the application process will be checked thoroughly and may be shared with other departments of the Council and other organisations involved in any aspect of handling public funds to help prevent and detect fraud or in investigation of other possible criminal activities.
- 9.2 Applications or enquiries will only be accepted if they are made on the current form provided by the Council.
- 9.3 Applicants will be required to provide full **details of financial circumstances** on a form provided by the Council. In completing this form applicants will be required to sign a declaration as to the accuracy of information provided and that of supporting paperwork, e.g. wage slips and accounts etc. The Council will routinely carry out cross checks on information provided; item 9.1 above will apply to all such information. If incorrect information is provided to the Council the grant will be repayable on demand.
- 9.4 All applications with the exception of Disabled Facilities Grants must be accompanied by two signed copies of the deed agreement, which state that the applicant will comply with all conditions and that any failure to comply or first disposal or transfer (except a transfer to a spouse or partner living as a spouse on the death of the spouse for Renovation Grants and Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants) of the property will require the grant to be repaid. The grant condition period for Renovation Grants, Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants and First Time Buyers Empty Homes Grants is eighty years, for Landlord Empty Homes Grants is ten years.
- 9.5 Applicants will normally be expected to submit at least two quotations with their application for a grant. However, for Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants will only normally require one quotation. The Council may require further quotations to be

submitted if it so wishes. The Council may accept a single quote where two would normally be required for work from specialist contractors.

- 9.6 If the Council believe that applicants or someone acting on their behalf may have been seeking to deceive or defraud the Council then the Council may put forward a case for prosecution.
- 9.7 Grant assistance will only be approved for the benefit of applicants who are able to provide evidence of a **valid National Insurance Number**.
- 9.8 The **discretionary grants** the Council awards are all subject to levels of available funding in each financial year and as such the Council reserves the right to defer approval, or even consideration, of applications for periods of time of its own choosing in order to properly manage its budgets.
- 9.9 Applicants must be **18 years of age or older** at the date of application and in the case of joint applications at least one must be over 18 at the date of application.
- 9.10 The Council will not normally consider an application for a discretionary grant unless the property has been used as a dwelling for at least eleven years before the date of the application. **Applications from the owner-occupiers or long leaseholders of mobile homes will only be considered for a discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant.**
- 9.11 No application will normally be accepted for works required to reinstate any **dwelling designated as defective** under Section 528 or 559 of the Housing Act 1985, although applications for other types of work to defective dwellings will be considered, e.g. for a disabled facilities grant.
- 9.12 Before approving a grant the Council will need to see **proof of ownership** to enable property ownership to be confirmed, a copy of the proof of title should be obtained through Land Registry. Other forms of proof of ownership will be at the Council's discretion.
- 9.13 Applications from tenants for Discretionary Renovation Grants must be from **qualifying tenants** who according to the terms of their lease are responsible for the work for which assistance is being sought.
- 9.14 In the case of applications initiated by a qualifying tenant they must be accompanied by a **tenant's certificate** stating that the applicant is a qualifying tenant of the dwelling and that they or their partner intends to live in the dwelling as their only or main residence. A tenant's application must also be supported by a landlords deed

agreement. In all circumstances work to a property will require the **owners written authority**

- 9.15 Applicants for discretionary renovation grants must have been either owners or qualifying tenants of the property concerned for a period of **18 months prior to the date of application**, except for works to empty properties.
- 9.16 An application for a disabled adaptation under minor works grants will only be considered complete and subsequently processed when it is accompanied by an **Occupational Therapist's report** recommending the necessary works. It would normally be expected that such a report would be provided at the commencement of the enquiry/application process.
- 9.17 Grants for the renovation of empty properties by owner-occupiers will only be considered where the person/s applying for the grant had not owned the property for more than 3 months before contacting the Council about applying for a grant, also a valid application must be submitted within one year of ownership. Discretion to waive this section is lies solely with the Operations Manager – Housing Support Services in circumstances they decided in consultation with the portfolio holder for housing; such as to deal with problematic empty properties.
- 9.18 Applications for assistance towards **works that have already begun or been completed** will not be accepted.
- 9.19 The details of **means testing** referred to in individual grant descriptions shall apply to all applications accompanied by an owner occupier's prior qualifying certificate, by tenants and any for disabled facilities grants. In the case of any application accompanied by a certificate of intended letting then the landlord's levels of grant aid shall apply.
- 9.20 The Council will include the cost of **preliminary or ancillary services, fees and charges** within the calculation of assistance, each submission of fees will be individually considered for reasonableness. The payment of any such fees is conditional on a grant being approved and the completion of all specified works, otherwise the Council will not be held responsible for any fees incurred before or after approval.
- 9.21 Where there has been an award under the Party Wall Act reasonable fees and works to neighbouring properties detailed in the award will be considered eligible for grant aid, only where the works being undertaken are those scheduled by the Council.

- 9.22 In considering applications for the benefit of people with disabilities the Council will not grant aid adaptations for which County Council Social Services are responsible under the **Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970**.
- 9.23 The Council **may refer enquiries** for assistance to the externally managed schemes such as Warm Front Scheme as appropriate, or to the Home Improvement Agency if appropriate.
- 9.24 The Council may from time to time utilise **special funding** from central government, or other sources aimed at specific subjects to target issues of local and national concern in accordance with any special conditions, e.g. replacement of inefficient boilers. Any special terms and conditions applicable to such initiatives will be appended to the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy, as they will not significantly alter the Council's primary approach to the subject.
- 9.25 The Council may not consider applications from persons, organisations, etc, where there is a possible **alternative source of funding** for maintaining properties, e.g. the NHS.
- 9.26 The Council reserves the right to **re-consider any individual application** against any of these terms and conditions upon the authority of the Operations Manager – Housing Support Services.
- 9.27 Grant will only be paid for work done by one of the people from whom a quotation was submitted with the application, where none of the contractors who submitted are able to carry out the works, further quotations may be sought with the agreement of the Council. Payment will then be made to the appropriate contractor. If a quotation is submitted by someone who is related to the applicant the grant will only be paid on the basis of the cost of the materials not the labour.
- 9.28 Upon the completion of a discretionary renovation grant (as per section 10.4) it will be expected that the property meets the current minimum statutory standard for housing with the exceptions already specified in section 8, any further exceptions to this will require the authority of Operations Manager – Housing Support Services.
- 9.29 The amount of **grant payable** shall be the reasonable cost of undertaking the works plus any associated fees less any owners contribution, up to the total value of the grant approved. Additional funding will only be provided above the original approval level in the event of unforeseen work being needed to allow completion of eligible works or associated works of a nature to protect the health and safety of occupiers, or evidence to show increases in costs to the contractor Private Sector Housing must be able to independently confirm any such increases. A formal re-approval to a higher level of

assistance will be required before any payment above the originally approved level is paid.

9.30 All **payments** shall be conditional upon receipt of an acceptable invoice and will be made direct to the appropriate contractor following agreement with the applicant that works to the appropriate stage have been satisfactorily completed. Where the applicant has already paid the contractor, payment will be direct to the applicant on production of a receipt for payment. In the case of a dispute between the applicant and contractor which is not resolved in a reasonable time period the grant, or part thereof, may be paid to the applicant at the discretion of the Council.

9.31 The **payment** of any grant approved will only be considered after any applicant's contribution has been accounted for in the value of invoices submitted.

9.32 Where, after a grant is approved, an **applicant's circumstances change** or the Council considers that incorrect or incomplete information was supplied with the application and approval would not have been given if the applicant had re-applied, then the Council will normally cancel the grant with immediate effect. If this happens then no further payments will be made, although exceptionally the Council may decide to allow some further payments to be made. Where money has been paid the local authority may demand repayment together with compound interest from the date on which payment was made until repayment, at such reasonable rate as the Council may determine

9.33 In the case of any grant for which part or complete payment has been made, where the applicant **disposes of the property** or, if appropriate, ceases to make it available for letting within the grant condition period (specified as eighty years for Renovation Grants, Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants and First Time Buyers Empty Homes Grants and ten years for Landlord Grants) then she/he shall repay to the Council on demand the amount of assistance that has been paid or such part thereof as required by the deed agreement.

This condition for repayment of assistance set out above does not apply to:

- a. Exceptional circumstances at the discretion of Operations Manager – Housing Support Services in consultation with the portfolio holder for housing.
- b. **Discretionary Disabled Facilities** Grants where the works are for disabled adaptations in line with the statutory discretion for repayment.

In cases where a property is disposed of within the grant condition period and recipients wish to make representations as to the Operations Manager – Housing Support Services why assistance should not be repaid they will be considered by the in



consultation with the portfolio holder for housing, who will determine whether to waive repayment or not.

9.34 It is the **Applicant who employs** the builder to undertake agreed works and the Council have no contractual liabilities in that relationship as their role is only to administer the grant process.

9.35 The **applicant** is ultimately responsible for ensuring the quality of the completed works. Applicants are strongly advised to engage a professional agent e.g. an architect, surveyor or a Home Improvement Agency to act on their behalf/supervise the works on their behalf.

9.36 The Council will consider requests for **interim payments if they are requested before works commence or in exceptional circumstances**. However, it will not normally approve an interim payment of more than 80% of the cost of completed work and in aggregate no more than 80% of the total approved cost of the work before final completion.

9.37 The Council will determine on each approval document the **time period allowed for works** to be completed, which will not normally exceed 12 months and may be significantly shorter for small items of work.

9.38 The grant **works must be carried out** by one of the contractors whose quotations were submitted as part of the application process, the grant having been calculated using the lowest priced quotation. The Council must agree any variance prior to works starting or in exceptional circumstances however they direct.

9.39 The Council will **not normally undertake works on behalf of applicants**, except where works may be due in default of an owner's, tenants, etc, failure to comply with a statutory notice.

9.40 The Council or their agents will hold final authority to determine what works are included on **grant schedules** although it is acceptable for agents authorised by the Council, to draw up initial schedules of work which may be reduced or added to by the Council in terms of work qualifying for possible assistance.

9.41 The responsibility to gain all **necessary approvals for works** to be undertaken with assistance rests with the applicant or their agent, such approvals may be Planning Permission or Building Regulation Approval or any of the matters raised within the terms and conditions of grant assistance.

9.42 In the case of a grant paid for works to a Landlord Empty Home Grants the owner allows the condition of the home to deteriorate so that enforcement action is taken by means

of statutory notice within ten full years of final payment being made then she/he shall repay to the Council on demand the full amount of the grant that has been paid plus compound interest at a reasonable rate as determined by the Council.

9.43 If in any position whereby **repayment of grant** is required the applicant fails to make the necessary arrangements the Council will seek to recover the money through the courts, which may involve obtaining a charging order.

9.44 In the grant condition period (specified as eighty years for Renovation Grants, Discretionary Disabled Facilities and First Time Buyers Grants and ten years for Landlord Grants) following final payment of grant monies the applicant shall upon written request from the Council, reply in writing, within 21 days of the date of the request stating how she/he is **complying with any of the terms and conditions** of the grant enquired about.

Failure to comply with this item will be deemed a failure of grant conditions requiring total repayment of grant plus compound interest at a reasonable rate determined by the Council.

9.45 The conditions relating to **repayment of grant** apply equally to whichever deed was signed.

9.46 In the event of a recipient of assistance pursuing a **successful insurance claim**, action for legal damages, etc which covers the cost of works for which grant was previously paid the applicant will on demand repay the total value of grant paid relating to such works or the value of the insurance payment/legal damages if lower.

**NB: grant applicants must demonstrate that they have contacted their insurance company and to be progressing with the insurance claim prior to assistance being agreed to.**

9.47 The Council may exercise its right to require surplus equipment to be returned under the conditions as specified under the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (as amended) and the disabled facilities grant application. Any revenue obtained from the reused equipment will be returned to the capital programme.

## 10 COMPLAINTS POLICY

The law entitling the Council to offer assistance precludes the Council from making grants outside the policy. This means that the policy has been drafted so as to retain flexibility in important matters. The Council has a general duty to consider the condition of the private sector housing stock upon which the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy is based. All initial enquiries for assistance about the condition of private sector housing will be considered; in the event of assistance being refused under this policy then this information will be conveyed to the applicant in writing.

The Council aims to offer a first class service. In the event that any customer is unhappy with the service provided we would first of all ask them to let the person who has been dealing with their case know and give them the opportunity to improve matters or put the situation right.

If the customer is still dissatisfied after contact with the case officer they should then contact the Senior Environmental Health Officer, who will provide a full written response within ten working days, this is not possible an interim response will be made indicating when a response maybe expected.

There is no appeal against the outcome of 'means testing'. However, applicants who disagree with means test can informally request a further calculation to be under taken.

Where customers are aggrieved with either the policy or the service provided by Private Sector Housing they are entitled to make a complaint via the Councils formal complaints procedure.

## 11 DEFINITIONS WITHIN THIS POLICY

“Administration Charge”	Will be imposed by the Council to cover the cost (plus VAT) of its officers organising works in default of an owner, e.g. after a statutory notice has not been complied with or when a responsible person requests the Council to organise works.
“Agreed Works”	are those works appearing on a schedule produced or authorised by the Council
“Certified Date”	Means the date certified by the local housing authority as the date on which the execution of eligible works is completed to their satisfaction.
“Charge on a Property”	Is where the local authority legally records a debt on the local land charges record, and recovers the debt, plus interest, upon its sale if not settled beforehand.
“Date of final payment of grant”	Is the date the Council completes payment of the grant assistance.
“Deed Agreement”	Is a contract signed by all applicants stating that they abide by the conditions of the grant.
“First Time Buyer”	Is a single person or member of a couple who have not been a mortgagee either alone or as part of a couple previously and has a connection with Ipswich. See connection with Ipswich definition
“Formal Action”	Is the service of any statutory notice or formal letter requesting works be carried out to meet the requirements of the current statutory standard for housing
“Fuel Poverty”	Is the recognised definition of fuel costs exceeding ten percent of the disposable income once housing benefit has been taken into account.
“Grant Condition Period”	Is the length of time specified in the deed agreement that requires the property to be occupied as per the deed agreement and that disposal or transfer (unless the transfer is to a spouse or partner living as spouse on the death of one of the parties) or the property is no longer let within that time frame will require repayment of the grant.
“Local Housing Allowance”	Is the rent as defined by the local Rent Officer for each type of property in the Ipswich area.
“Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant”	is defined as per in the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, as amended, or as in any successor statutory definition.
“Means Tested Benefits”	is any income-based benefit received by an applicant, as defined and listed in a separate information sheet.
“Member of a Couple”	Means a member of a married or unmarried couple and are members of the same household.
“Member of a Family”	Includes spouses, persons who live together as husband and wife, parents, grandparents, children, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, nephews and nieces.
“Partner”	Means member of a couple.
“Person with a disability/people with disabilities”	She/he is registered as a person with a disability or, in the opinion of the Social Services Authority is registerable as a person with a disability. This definition recognises the fact

	that the majority of people will not be on a register.
“Persons not related or connected with the owner of a dwelling”	Means not being a member of the owner’s family in accordance with the definition of ‘Member of the family’.
“Preliminary or Ancillary Services, Fees and Charges”	<p>which may be included in a grant application are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• technical and structural surveys;</li> <li>• design and preparation of plans and drawings; and preparation of schedules of works;</li> <li>• obtaining of estimates and valuations;</li> <li>• applications for building regulations approval and planning permission;</li> <li>• supervision of works;</li> <li>• disconnection and reconnection of electricity, gas, water and drainage utilities made necessary by the works (but no charges arising out of non-payment of bills);</li> <li>• Advice on contracts and on financing the cost of works.</li> <li>• Fees associated with the Party Wall Act</li> </ul> <p>Including such services given by or through home improvement agencies.</p>
“Proof of Title”	Is to be provided by the applicant in the form of a Land Registry proof of title
“Property”	Includes any building or part of building used or intended to be used in whole or in part as a dwelling including a mobile home.
“Qualifying Tenant”	Means a tenant who within their tenancy agreement has the responsibility to repair or maintain the element of a structure for which they are seeking assistance.
“Reasonable Repair”	Means the Council shall have due regard to the age and character of a dwelling and the locality in which it is situated, but not its state of internal decoration, when considering its condition.
“Related”	Use definition for “member of the family”
“Statutory Notice”	Is a notice requiring owners/responsible persons to carry out work or some other action with regard to their property. The notice is served using the power of a national law and failure to comply may result in prosecution through the courts or works being carried out at the responsible persons expense.
“Substantial Disrepair”	Means repairs to a single property, being required to put it in reasonable repair that will cost over £1,000.
“Works in Default”	Means works that the Council organises and possibly carry out as a result of the recipient of a statutory notice failing to comply with its requirements within a reasonable period of time.
“Working Days”	Means days excluding Saturday and Sundays.

## Appendix 1

### Key Service Standards

The Private Sector Housing Team is committed to providing a fair responsive and cost effective service. The service that is provided will be measured against a number of challenging performance standards.

- First response to a service request within 5 working days of receipt of complaint.
- Written response made to letters within 7 working days of receipt of letter.
- All initial grant enquiries to be processed to a point of initial inspection within 15 working days of receipt of enquiry.
- Schedule of works prepared within 10 working days of initial inspection.
- Full application pack sent to 'applicant' within 20 working days of agreed works being scheduled, or, in the case of disabled facilities grants, of the Occupational Therapists written agreement of schedules.
- Grant approvals to be issued within 15 working days of a complete application being received or after receipt of outcome of independent financial advice where appropriate.
- Payments to be made within 30 days of receipt of invoices conditional on grant completion being certified prior to receipt of invoice.
- 95% of customers to be satisfied with the level of service provided.

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Benefits that Allow Qualification for Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants**

- Income Support,
- Income Based Job Seekers Allowance,
- Council Tax Benefit,
- Housing Benefit,
- Working Tax Credit (excluding households who get Child Tax Credit only),
- Guarantee Credit.

APPENDIX 3

Grant Application Process

