

Bolton Council

Report to: EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ADULT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Date: 27 October 2010

Report of: DIRECTOR OF ADULT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Report No:

Contact Officer: Andrew Kilpatrick

Tele No:

Report Title: Update on Final Report Findings of the Major Adaptations Scrutiny Panel.

Confidential /
Non Confidential:
(delete as approp)

(**Non-Confidential**) This report does **not** contain information which warrants its consideration in the absence of the press or members of the public

Recommendations:

The Executive Member is asked to approve the initial responses to the Scrutiny Panel's recommendations and to progress work resulting in a further report by April 2011

Decision:

Signed:

Leader / Executive Member

Monitoring Officer

Date:

SUMMARY OF REPORT:

The 1989/96 Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Acts introduced the Disabled Facilities Grant process which currently Bolton at Home manages under its regeneration arm.

During the past twelve months the Major Adaptations Scrutiny Panel have been looking at the whole grant process to find ways of streamlining and improving customer waiting times and experience. This report outlines the Scrutiny Panel's recommendations and the initial response to those proposals.

1.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 1.1 The 1989/96 Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Acts introduced the Disabled Facilities Grant process which currently Bolton at Home manages under its regeneration arm.
- 1.2 During the past twelve months the Major Adaptations Scrutiny Panel have been looking at the whole grant process to find ways of streamlining and improving customer waiting times and experience.
- 1.3 The Panel met on five occasions and during the course of its considerations, and heard oral evidence from others, and received various presentations and updates from officers.
- 1.4 The outcome of the Panel was 10 final recommendations of which this report highlights the progress so far.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION UPDATES

- 2.1 **Recommendation 1. That the application of legal charges post works was reviewed to maximise the use of the legal powers available to Bolton Council through the Regulatory Reform Order.**

Response: Local Land Charges are being placed against properties that have benefitted from the provision of an extension and where the applicant is the home owner. The term of repayment is a maximum of £10,000 on a 5 year reducing scale.

- 2.2 **Recommendation 2. To review the use of land charges where extensions or adaptations to properties were made in cases where criminal injury compensation warrants such action.**

Response: The Disability Team is currently exploring the possibilities of introducing some kind of retrospective recharge via Legal Services.

- 2.3 **Recommendation 3. One of the longest waiting times in the process is for the initial assessment to be undertaken. A resource increase in this area and looking at the feasibility of this, through the reduction of the backlog would have the best effect in that it would take off approximately 90 days of every enquiry.**

Response: Already with some redirection of resources there has been a marked reduction in waiting times for assessment. Process Improvement had identified a suggestion that Social Care may well be better completing all the assessments and then passing recommendations to the Disability Team. This possibility is just at an early stage of discussions.

- 2.4 **Recommendation 4. To ensure that the Building Surveyors employed within the Disability Team dedicate the majority of their time to conducting surveys (and therefore reduce the waiting time for surveys), in accordance with Value for Money principles. In addition, review the day to day project management**

and completion process and consider the use of a Clerk of Works type role or self certified commissioning by contractors.

Response: Process Improvement has helped in identifying areas where the completion process could be carried out by "Trusted Contractors" and able customers which will release more Building Surveyor time to be directed at more complex cases.

- 2.5 Recommendation 5. To review the procurement process of equipment and installation services for adaptations in order to: a) remove the need to get 3 quotes from contractors for every adaptation, b) reduce waiting times by the 30 days it currently takes to get these quotes returned and appoint a contractor, c) reduce costs through the introduction of competition for annual contracts.**

Response: The Disability Team is in the process of approaching both Legal Services and Audit regarding the need for three quotes on DFG works. The Team already reviews the schedule of rates on an annual basis; however at present contractors do not bid annually against these rates. Further investigations will be progressed.

- 2.6 Recommendation 6. To continue to engage with the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities' (AGMA) benchmarking group in order to share intelligence with relevant commissioners and implementing improvements where relevant. For example, looking at the Stockport model and how they deliver their services.**

Response: The Disability team is aiming to continue to engage with this group and looking to visit Stockport before the end of November 2010

- 2.7 Recommendation 7. To continue to use Process Improvement as a means of improving customer experience, service efficiency and to build into connected work associated with the overall transformation of adult social care, especially the development of a strategic approach to prevention. This would enable the Council to explore and fulfil its responsibility to those who needed adaptations, with or without financial assistance.**

Response: This has now been incorporated as an improvement tool.

- 2.8 Recommendation 8. To continue to seek customer feedback on all aspects of the service, from assessments to the provision of adaptations and to follow up all the feedback to determine improved outcomes, through community researchers.**

Response: The Disability Team is currently reviewing the customer questionnaire including the timing of when the questionnaire is completed.

- 2.9 Recommendation 9. To assess if timescales would be reduced through the introduction of dedicated team members and budgets for each of the priority bandings in accordance with historical levels of need for each, through feasible means.**

Management is currently reviewing this option.

- 2.10 **Recommendation 10. To investigate the potential for the efficient use of resources across the local authority and other agencies that could be used to conduct means testing and therefore reduce the times for this element of the process.**

Response: An enquiry has already been placed with Council Tax Benefit and DWP in order to obtain early information in support of the means test.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Recommendation 3 is currently the only recommendation that would have immediate financial implications and this will need to be considered within the current resources available.

4.0 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

An initial / screening assessment has been undertaken and concludes that there will be some differential impact from this proposal, in respect of race, gender or disability.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 The Executive Member is asked to approve the initial responses to the Scrutiny Panel's recommendations and to progress work resulting in a further report by April 2011