

Committee(s): Housing Management and Almshouse Sub-committee	Date(s): 21 January 2019
Subject: Discretionary Housing Payment Policy	Public
Report of: Andrew Carter	For Decision
Report author: Jacqui McKeating Communities and Childrens Services	

Summary

This report seeks approval for a revised Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) policy.

Funding for Discretionary Housing Payments comes from the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) with a permitted top up from local authorities. The City of London Corporation funding from the DWP for 2018/2019 is £21,607, with an additional £32,411 maximum permitted top up from local authority funding.

DHPs may be awarded when the City of London Corporation considers that a resident or tenant requires further financial assistance towards housing costs and is entitled to either Housing Benefit (HB) or Universal Credit (UC) with housing costs towards rental liability. They are not payments of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit.

Applications for DHP should be made in writing and awards are administered by the Benefits Section within Community & Children's Services. Every claimant who has an entitlement to Housing Benefit / Universal Credit Housing Costs Element for rent and who has such a shortfall is entitled to make a claim for help.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to approve this policy

Main Report

Background

The DHP policy currently in place was agreed by committee in April 2013.

Following an internal audit review of Welfare Reform in 2018, the following recommendation was made

The Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) Policy should be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that the most up to date methodologies are documented. Version controls should be included on policies for easy reference.

The Discretionary Housing Payment policy has now been reviewed and revised as a result of this recommendation

Current Position

1. Since the current DHP policy was approved in 2013, there has been:
 - a significant programme of government Welfare Reform,
 - several relevant judicial reviews
 - changes to benefit regulations.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has issued DHP guidance for authorities, but the method of allocation adopted and decision-making process lies with local authorities.

In practice, reforms, new caselaw and regulations have always been considered when making decision regarding awards of DHPs. However, the current policy does not reference these changes. In particular, the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) are not referenced.

Options

2. It is in the City of London Corporation's interest to have written policies which reflect current regulations and support good decision making

Proposals

3. We ask that the attached Discretionary Housing Payment policy is approved by this committee (Appendix 1)

Corporate & Strategic Implications

4. This policy reflects the aims of the corporate plan to provide modern, efficient and high-quality local services within the Square Mile for residents.

Implications

5. The revised policy includes reference to GDPR and caselaw regarding the treatment of income from Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payments. Without these references DHP applicants may perceive that they are not being treated fairly and consistently, leading to potential reputational damage for the City.

Conclusion

6. This policy is presented for approval to ensure that the City of London Corporation policies are updated to reflect new legislation and caselaw

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Revised Discretionary Housing Payment Policy

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