



Housing Renewal Financial Assistance Policy 2017 – 2020

Introduction

The Council can offer financial assistance in the form of grants or loans towards helping improving, repairing, etc. the private housing stock in the Borough. This Policy sets out what assistance the Council is able to offer; who can apply, whether it is a loan or a grant, what it can be used for and any conditions attached to taking the assistance.

The Need for a Local Policy

The Regulatory Reform Order on Financial Assistance came into force in 2002. It repealed much of the existing prescriptive legislation governing the provision of renewal grants and replaced it with a wide-ranging power to provide assistance for housing renewal. The only mandatory grant remaining is the Disabled Facilities Grant. The power to provide financial assistance is only available to the Council once we have a published policy in place. This document sets out the Council's policy.

The condition of the private housing stock in Hastings and St Leonards

The 2016 Housing Stock Condition Survey commissioned by the Council estimates that 25.7% of the private sector housing stock fails the governments Decent Homes Standard, which is higher than the national average of 21.8%. The main reason properties fail the Decent Homes Standard relates to failures in thermal comfort and occupants at risk of excess cold.

The estimated cost of making all homes decent in the Borough is estimated by the Housing Stock Condition Survey is £ 27.6 million.

The survey also identified that around 24% of households in the Borough contain a household member with a long-term limiting illness or disability.

In drawing up this policy, we recognise that we are one of the most deprived Local Authority areas in the country, and that housing conditions are worse than the national average. Unemployment rates and levels of benefit dependency are higher than the national average. This impacts upon a homeowner's ability to repair and maintain their property. This is coupled with the limited availability of accessible high street loans.

Policy Objectives

1. To improve the condition of the private sector housing stock by:
 - Improving housing to meet the Decent Homes Standard
 - Improving the energy efficiency of housing
 - Increasing the use of renewable energy technology and technology to conserve water use
2. To decrease the incidences of fuel poverty within private sector housing
3. To bring empty homes back into use
4. To promote and foster an environment of self sufficiency through the recycling of money used to fund financial assistance
5. To enable people to sustain and remain in their homes through disability adaptations.
6. To improve housing within the Central St Leonards Housing Renewal Area and increase the mix of tenure.

The Strategic Context

The Council has in the past been able to make use of Government funding to support its Financial Assistance Policy. However, this funding is no longer available and the Council doesn't have sufficient capital resources to fund a comprehensive assistance programme.

The Council has over the last few years provided loans to assist in meeting the Objectives set out above. This has been done in partnership with an ethical loans company, Parity Trust.

This lending has created a modest fund, which will remain available to lend out in future. The Council will continue to support this fund by maintaining membership with our loans partner and providing a small capital contribution (subject to available resources).

We will continue to complement this activity with the other tools available to the Council to continue to improve the housing stock. These include:

- A comprehensive empty homes strategy which incorporates a Compulsory Purchase Programme for bringing long term empty homes back into use.
- Private Rented Accommodation Licensing Schemes, which requires persons operating HMOs and other privately rented accommodation to license them with the Council.
- An adopted enforcement policy that employs the full range of enforcement options, from informal advice, the service of notices, to prosecution.
- The Council has entered into a partnership with Amicus Horizon to assist with its renewal objectives in the Central St Leonards Renewal Area, through increasing social renting, activities engaging the local community and carrying a proactive enforcement programme in the area.

Financial Resources Available:

The Council has approximately £ 157K available, over the next three years (up to March 2020) for loans towards housing related activities, e.g. repairs.

For Disabled Facilities Grants the funds available for 2017/18 are £ x provided to the Borough Council by East Sussex County Council via the Better Care Fund.

With the exception of Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant, financial assistance measures are DISCRETIONARY. The Council will not approve any assistance, or commit spending on any assistance/property when the budget available has been exhausted. Consequently, the Council reserves the right to defer approval and/or payments, in line with the statutory framework. This is to ensure that budgets are managed effectively.

At the discretion of the Assistant Director Housing and the Built Environment (or their authorised nominee), in consultation with the relevant Lead Member funding may be re-directed to support the different areas of expenditure pertaining to this policy. Funds may be used for other schemes/assistance (for instance pertaining to flexible assistance corresponding with the outcomes of the Better Care Fund), at the discretion of the Assistant Director Housing and the Built Environment, or their authorised nominee and subject to a cost benefit analysis, where that scheme/assistance has a direct benefit to the objectives of this policy. Any changes will be made in line with the Council's adopted Financial Rules.

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 this policy, as they will not significantly alter the Council's primary approach to the subject.

MANDATORY

Details of Assistance

Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)

The mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is set out in the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 as amended by the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002. Detailed advice on the DFG process can be found in the 'Joint Approach to Adaptations' booklet produced jointly by East Sussex County Council, and the East Sussex district and borough Councils.

Eligibility

All owner-occupiers, tenants, licensees and occupiers are eligible for the grant provided that they are able to satisfy the criteria in Sections 19 to 22 of the 1996 Act. Landlords' may apply for a grant on behalf of a disabled tenant but must satisfy the same requirements. Tenants of Registered Providers (RP's) are eligible to apply for mandatory DFGs, but in these situations, we will firstly investigate the RP's ability to carry out the necessary work, or other options, such as transfer to more appropriate accommodation for the disabled person. Applications for DFGs will be considered where an offer of tenancy has been made by an RP and accepted in principal. Occupants of park homes and houseboats can also apply for DFGs.

We will continue to work in partnership with our Home Improvement Agency, which helps vulnerable clients through the process.

As part of an application for a mandatory DFG, a test of resources must be carried out in order to assess the amount, if any, that the applicant must contribute to the cost of the works. The means test applies to the disabled person and any partner. The applicant is required to provide information about all sources of income and all savings, and to provide evidence to support the information given.

Applicants in receipt of certain benefits may not be subject to the full means testing and will not be required to pay any initial contribution towards the grant, unless the grant exceeds the maximum value:

In addition, means testing will not apply if the disabled person is a child that meets the defined criteria.

The Means Testing process is informed by statutory instrument and subject to change when new statutory instruments are issued by central government.

Eligible Works

These fall into a number of categories:

Facilitating Access and Provision - this includes works to remove, or to help overcome, any obstacles, which prevent a disabled person from moving freely into and around their home, and enable them to use the facilities and amenities within it, for example:

- Facilitating access to and from the dwelling, or building
- Facilitating access to and from the garden and other outside areas
- Facilitating access to the principal family room
- Facilitating access to, or providing a bedroom for the disabled occupant

- Facilitating access to, or providing a room containing a WC, bath, or shower, and wash hand basin
- Facilities for the preparation and cooking of food

Making a dwelling or building safe – this includes works to make the disabled person's home safe:

- Provision of lighting, where safety is an issue
- Adaptations designed to minimise the risk of danger where a disabled person has behavioural problems, which may cause him/her to damage themselves, others, or their home
- Works to improve safety for people with hearing difficulties, e.g. an enhanced alarm system

Heating, lighting and power – this includes:

- Improvement of existing heating system, or, if it is inadequate or unsatisfactory, installing a one
- Works to enable the disabled person to have full use of the heating, lighting and power controls

Dependent residents – this relates to works required enabling a disabled person better access and movement around their home to provide care for another person, who normally resides there. This may include a spouse, partner, or family member, another disabled person, or a child.

DFGs are intended to assist toward works required to the common parts of buildings containing flats, where the disabled person is an occupant of one of the flats. This would usually be limited to works to facilitate access.

We must be satisfied that it is reasonable and practicable to carry out the relevant works having regard to the age and condition of the dwelling, or building. We must also be satisfied that the works are necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled person, and to achieve this we have to consult with the Occupational Therapists and Sensory Impairment Workers employed by East Sussex County Council.

Amount of Assistance

The maximum amount of grant is set by statutory instrument. The current statutory limit on the amount of mandatory DFG is £30,000.

Conditions

In addition to general terms and conditions;

Where the cost of the DFG exceeds £5,000, the Local Authority is able to place a charge against the property (limited to a maximum charge of £10,000); repayable if the property is sold within ten years. This applies only to owner/occupiers. The purpose of this is to allow for recycling of funds for DFGs. In each case the Council will take account of the individual circumstances of an applicant in deciding whether the charge should be made.

There is an expectation that the initial adaptation will meet the long term needs of the client, to prevent successive applications. However, it is accepted that further adaptations may be required for a disabled person who has a deteriorating condition. We

will make every attempt to expedite procedures and work to achieve interim solutions, where delays are inevitable.

There is no restriction on DFGs for the same property, and depending on the time lapse between applications, there is provision for any means tested contribution made on the first grant not to be taken into account on a subsequent application. This is five years for a tenants' application, and ten years for an owner-occupier's application.

DISCRETIONARY

Note: All the following types of assistance are discretionary and as such are subject to capital funds being available. For this reason the provision of this assistance may be limited or discontinued at any time

Discretionary Disability Relocation Assistance

Assistance will be considered in certain cases to help enable an applicant to move to a more suitable property. This will be where it is more cost effective than adapting their current home to make it suitable for present and future needs. The new property may need some adaptation. This applies only where works requiring a mandatory DFG are necessary, and includes moving into another Local Authority area as well as within Hastings. All re-housing options will be carefully considered and discussed with the disabled person and others concerned, including Social Services and health professionals, family and friends. The Housing Solutions Officer will be the primary point of contact where relocation is required.

Eligibility

Applicants must be the owner of the property, and the disabled person must be registered, or registerable with the Welfare Authority. For each case a cost benefit analysis will be undertaken taking into account the potential cost of adapting the existing property and of adapting any future property in relation to the amount of eligible assistance.

Eligible Works

The discretionary assistance will cover costs incurred in relocating to the new property, up to a maximum of £10,000. This will include estate agents' fees, solicitors' fees, the relocation of specialist equipment for the disabled person, and removal costs. It will not include stamp duty, an allowance toward the cost of the new property, nor allowances toward furnishing and fittings, etc.

Amount of Assistance

Maximum of £10,000

Conditions

In addition to general terms and conditions;

No further discretionary assistance for the same purpose will usually be payable from three years of the completion of the purchase of the new property, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Any such assistance will be fixed against the property as a charge, repayable with interest upon disposal of the property.

Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant “top-up” Assistance

The maximum amount of mandatory DFG was set by statute in 2008 at £ 30,000. Since this time we have seen an general increase in build costs for adaptations

such that in some instances £ 30,000 is insufficient to provide adaptations to meet the needs of the disabled person and their family.

Eligibility

See mandatory DFG

Amount of Assistance

Maximum £ 10,000 limit

Conditions

See mandatory DFG

Discretionary Disabled Facilities Assistance

Use of the DFG allocation through the Better Care Fund at the Councils discretion to support innovative projects in the borough to improve the lives of disabled residents.

Eligible Works

Assistance to assist disabled residents and their families including but not limited to;

- Fast track minor adaptations – to undertake minor adaptations before someone ends up in acute care
- Lifetime homes – providing homes to Lifetimes Homes standard plus often increases the cost of new development by 10%. Assessed on the basis of need and demand to provide funds to ensure disabled homes are brought forward on sites.

Amount of Assistance

Maximum of £ 30,000

Conditions

See mandatory DFG

Discretionary Housing Renewal Loans

Hastings Borough Council works with Parity Trust, a trusted ethical loans partner, to administer a small fund for housing loans. Availability and accessibility of loans is strictly administered by the Council and Parity Trust and are only approved where the applicant can afford to repay.

Eligibility

The qualifying conditions for the assistance are that the applicant:

- Is aged 18 years, or more
- Is an owner, a tenant (for certain forms of loans only), or has a right to exclusive occupation or at least five years
- Has a duty, or power to carry out works (if applicable)

Visit <http://www.paritytrust.org.uk/home-lending/home-trust-loan> for further information.

Eligible Works

Loans can be used to assist people needing the following types of help:

- Meeting the financial contribution to a mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant
- Topping up a Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant, where the grant does not cover all the costs
- Assisting someone move house, where their home cannot be adapted for their disability needs
- Urgent repairs to a home (owner/occupiers only)
- Renovating homes (owner/occupiers only)
- Assisting in bringing long term empty homes back into use
- Improvements to the energy efficiency of a home
- Other types of help may be considered, dependant on circumstances at the discretion of the Housing Renewal Manager

Amount of Assistance

The amount of assistance is dependent on the affordability of the loan as determined by Parity Trust.

Conditions

See general terms and conditions

The Application Process

Making an Application for Assistance

The following conditions apply:

- All applications for assistance shall be made on the appropriate Council application form and be accompanied by all relevant supporting documents
- The minimum age for applicants' is 18 years at the date of application and in the case of joint applications, at least one must be over 18 years at the date of application
- In making an application, the applicant will give us permission to verify such given information with other Council services, or other statutory agencies
- Tenants, as defined within this policy may make applications, where they are eligible for assistance, but the Council will require written consent from the owner of the property before approving the grant/assistance
- Work (where applicable) must be carried out in accordance with any schedule provided by the Council
- Quotes (where applicable) must be itemised, and provisional sums are not acceptable
- Work covered by an insurance claim, or work that should have been covered, will not be eligible for grant/assistance/loan
- We will not normally approve any application for grant/assistance/loan if the relevant works have started before the application is approved, unless the Officer dealing with the grant/assistance/loan has already carried out an inspection and agrees in writing that the works may commence, due to risks to the health and safety of the occupants. This condition can be waived at the discretion of the Housing Renewal Manager
- Assistance will only be approved for the benefit of applicants' who are able to provide evidence of a valid National Insurance Number (where applicable)

Means testing

Where applicable, as part of an application for assistance within this policy a test of resources will be carried out in order to assess the amount, if any, that the applicant will contribute to the cost of the works. The means test will be the same as that applied to mandatory DFGs. The applicant(s) is/are required to provide information about all sources of income and all savings and to provide evidence to support the information given.

Determination of Applications

The Council, in determining an application for assistance under this policy, shall have due regard to the applicants' ability to make any repayment, or contribution proposed prior to approving assistance and applying conditions (if any), in accordance with Article 3 of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 and paragraph 27 of circular 5/2003.

Applications will usually be determined within 60 working days of receipt provided that the application is complete. If information is missing, the applicant will be contacted and advised as to what is required. However, we may take longer to determine an application, to ensure the best use of our financial resources, with the exception of mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants, which will take a maximum of six months to approve.

Approval of Applications

The approval notice will set out:

- The means tested contribution toward the grant/assistance, where applicable
- The amount of grant/assistance consisting of eligible works and fees, where applicable
- Conditions to be applied

Terms and Conditions

Priority Pointing Systems

Priority Pointing Systems may be implemented on all areas of assistance for various reasons, e.g. to adequately manage the resources, (including financial resources available), to ensure those in most need receive assistance. Where applicants' for assistance are subject to a priority pointing system, they will be informed of this and when it is likely they will receive assistance. Such systems are used at the discretion of the Housing Renewal Manager. Copies of the pertinent priority pointing systems are available upon request.

All priority pointing systems will be reviewed at least annually to ensure equitability.

Fees

Fees and charges associated with grant/assistance will be paid as part of the provision of assistance/grant, subject to the maximum amounts of grant/assistance. These include:

- Fees charged by Home Improvement Agency
- Private architects', or surveyors' fees
- Charges for planning permission, or building regulations approval
- Charges relating to Party Wall Act 1996 awards
- Fees relating to structural reports
- The costs of any electrical report carried out by a appropriately qualified electrician, required by the Council, to establish what electrical works are necessary
- Land Registry fees

The Council will determine which fees are eligible for assistance, the level of the fees and whether they are properly incurred.

The maximum fee level is 25% of the eligible assistance value, which includes agent's fees. The Housing Renewal Manager retains the discretion to waive this maximum in exceptional circumstances.

Cost and Reasonableness of Works

The following applies where works are required as part of the assistance:

- 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

- Where the Council does not deem the quotations to be reasonable, the Council will approve a level of assistance for which it believes the works could reasonably be carried out. The level of any assistance approved may be the total cost of agreed works, or, where the applicants' 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

Unforeseen Works

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. The Council must be able to independently confirm any such increases, by means of inspection. No unforeseen works can commence until written confirmation from the Council has been received as to whether these works are reasonable in terms of cost, are truly unforeseen and whether the works are necessary.

In exceptional circumstances, this term can be waived where the Officer dealing with the grant/assistance agrees either verbally, or in writing, without necessarily carrying out an inspection that the works may commence, due to risks to the health and safety of the occupants.

A formal re-approval of assistance will be required before any payment above, or below, the originally approved level is paid.

Permissions and Consents

The Council will not approve assistance unless the appropriate permissions and/or consents have been obtained, e.g. planning permission, listed building consent, building control approval, consent of the appropriate water company, etc.

Abortive Works

This term relates to situations where an application for assistance has been aborted before works have been completed, e.g. where the applicant has died.

For Disabled Facilities Grants, consideration will be given to payment of a proportion of the grant assistance in line with current legislation and guidance and at the discretion of the Housing Renewal Manager.

Registered Providers

With the exception of mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants and Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant 'top up' assistance, tenants of Registered Providers cannot apply for assistance under any other form of assistance contained within this policy. Registered Providers have a prescriptive duty of care to their tenants and have to meet certain standards and targets pertaining to condition of their properties, e.g. Decent Homes Standard, and are able to access other sources of funding due to their status. Therefore, it is the expectation that Registered Providers will conform to these duties on behalf of their tenants.

Exceptional circumstances and enquiries outside the scope of this Policy

Where exceptional circumstances are stated within this policy and where there is requirement to state those circumstances in order to invoke the discretion of the relevant

person stated, then the circumstances must be stated in writing prior to consideration. All enquiries will be assessed on the merits of the individual circumstances presented.

Any enquiries outside of this policy must be made in writing and will be determined by the Assistant Director Housing and the Built Environment, in consultation with the relevant Lead Member.

Contractor Issues

It is the responsibility of the applicant to obtain quotes (where required). The legal and contractual relationship with regard to the works to be carried out is between the applicant and the contractor/agent, and not between the Council and the contractor/agent. All eligible works must be carried out by a contractor whose quote accompanied the application, unless an alternative quote is submitted and approved by the Council. Where the appropriate works undertaken must be insured, the contractor must provide a recognised warranty for any works.

We may re-assess the amount of assistance if we are satisfied that, owing to circumstances beyond the control of the applicant, the eligible works could not be carried out on the basis of the amount of the quote originally approved, for instance, when a contractor becomes VAT registered prior to the commencement of any works. If a variation to the original scheme is required, we will seek the applicants' consent to the variation.

If the eligible works are carried out by a member of the applicants' family, we will make payment only for the cost of the materials used in carrying out the works. Family members will usually include husband, wife, parents, co-habitees, or their parents, children and their partners, brother, sister, grandparents, grandchild, cousin, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, or in-laws.

Where the applicant has his/her own building company, quotes will only be acceptable if it is a separate legal entity i.e. a limited company.

Buildings Insurance

Applicants must maintain adequate buildings insurance throughout the applicable condition periods, unless they do not have an insurable interest in the property.

Payments

The payment of any assistance is conditional upon the eligible works (where applicable) being carried out to the satisfaction of the relevant Council Officer and upon receipt by the Council of an acceptable invoice for the works carried out and any ancillary charges, or services, as well as any certification required for elements of those works, e.g. Gas Safe Certificate, Part P compliance Certificate, etc. All payments will be made direct to the Home Improvement Agency if the applicant is their client, or to a private agency e.g. a surveyor, or to the contractor. The applicant will be advised that a payment has been made, the amount, and the date of payment. The Council reserve the right to make a payment direct to the applicant in certain circumstances, for example, where there is a dispute over the standard and quality of work with the contractor.

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 90% of the cost of completed work and, in aggregate no more than 90% of the total approved cost of the work before final completion.

Maintenance

Maintenance of a property is the owners' responsibility, and we will take any lack of maintenance into account when considering eligible works.

Prevention of Fraud

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.

We will continue to implement our internal procedures to detect and prevent fraud throughout the assistance process. These procedures have regard to relevant statutory instruments and guidance.

Conditions explained

General

The conditions are local land charges (a charge against the title of the property) for the duration of the condition period, which are binding on the applicant(s) for assistance and any successor(s) in title.

Before approving assistance 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.

Applications initiated by a qualifying tenant must be accompanied by a tenants' 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. In all circumstances, work to a property will require the owners' written authority.

Following completion of assistance, where conditions are attached, the applicant(s) shall, upon receiving a 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 assistance enquired about. Failure to comply with this item will be deemed a failure of conditions, requiring total repayment of assistance plus compound interest at a reasonable rate determined by the Council.

Repayment condition

This relates to the following forms of assistance:

- Disability Relocation assistance

In the case of any assistance for which part, or complete payment has been made, where the applicant disposes of the property then she/he shall repay to the Council on demand the amount of assistance that has been paid plus interest (set at a rate equivalent to Consumer Prices Index), as required by the deed agreement.

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

- Exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Assistant Director Housing and the Built Environment in consultation with the appropriate relevant Lead Member

Specific Conditions relating to Mandatory DFG and Discretionary Disability Assistance

It is a condition of the assistance that the applicant shall notify the Council if and as soon as the equipment installed with assistance is no longer needed. Subsequently, the Council may, upon providing 21 days written notice access, the dwelling in order to inspect the equipment and, where appropriate, remove it. The Council will impose a condition that any specialised equipment such as a stair-lift may be recovered where it is no longer required. In practice, the equipment will be recovered by East Sussex County Council so that it can be reassigned to another person if this is practicable.

Where the cost of the DFG exceeds £5,000, the Local Authority will be able to place a charge against the property (limited to a maximum charge of £10,000), repayable if the property is sold within ten years. This applies only to owner/occupiers. In each case the Council will take account of the individual circumstances of an applicant in deciding whether the charge should be made.

Terms of Repayment

We will usually demand full repayment of assistance in line with the repayment condition set out above, or where there has been a breach of conditions. Before making any demand for repayment the Council will have regard to the relevant person(s) ability to repay when considering whether to require repayment, a waiver of repayment, or entering an agreement to repay on terms, in accordance with Article 3 of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002.

Repayment of assistance is subject to the Council making a demand from a 'relevant person', who has liability to repay the assistance, when the Council believes the assistance has become repayable. The 'relevant person' may be the original applicant for assistance, or any successor in title. The recipient will have an opportunity to make representations as to why the assistance should not be repaid prior to any enforcement action being taken. The following gives examples of the types of circumstances that would be considered, when exercising the Council's discretion not to make a demand, or to demand a lesser amount:

- Where there would be exceptional financial hardship
- A disposal to a disabled individual or to a family with a disabled person(s) where the existing disabled adaptations to the property meet their disability needs.
- A disposal where the proceeds are less than the amount of assistance that has to be repaid
- A transfer by a relevant person on death to another family member, who remains in occupation during the condition period(s)
- A disposal made to a Registered Provider

Where repayment of assistance is required and 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, by registering the debt against the title of the property.

Applications not to repay assistance or to repay a lesser amount must be made in writing to the Assistant Director Housing and the Built Environment.

Development of the Policy

This policy will be subject to an annual review (or sooner if required). Amendment should only be necessary in the case of significant change to policy items. The Assistant Director Housing and the Built Environment in consultation with the relevant Lead Member 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 Cabinet before the operational policy is changed.

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, the Decent Homes Standard, Neighbourhood Renewal Assessment and the provision of Mandatory Grants for Disabled Persons' Facilities.

In accordance with Article 4, this document is the Council's adopted policy for the provision of assistance, allowing the Council to exercise the powers conferred by Article 3 of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 and the additional powers contained within the Order.

Enquiries about Assistance

Enquiries about any of the forms of assistance in the policy, and information about how to apply, should be made to Housing Renewal, Muriel Matters House, Breeds Place, Hastings, East Sussex. TN34 3UY

Tel: 01424 451335, email housingadmin@hastings.gov.uk

Comments about the Policy

Any comments about this policy should be made to:

Housing Renewal Manager
Housing Renewal,
Muriel Matters House,
Breeds Place,
Hastings,
East Sussex.
TN34 3UY

Tel: 01424 451335, email housingadmin@hastings.gov.uk

Appeals about Decisions

Appeals about how the policy is operated in individual cases, for example where assistance is refused, will be considered by the Assistant Director Housing and the Built Environment, or his authorised nominee.