



Appointments to Discretionary Housing Payments Committee

SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Discretionary Housing Payments Committee (DHPC) is an ad hoc committee, which meets to consider appeals from claimants, who are dissatisfied with their assessment of the Discretionary Housing Payment element.

The Committee last met in November 2009, but a case has now arisen, which necessitates that it meet again, to consider an appeal.
- 1.2 No Members were specifically appointed to the DHPC at the Annual Meeting of the Council in May 2012.
- 1.3 DHPC has previously been a sub committee of the Taxi Licensing and Appeals Committee, made up of any three members of that committee, to include the Chair or one of the Vice Chairs. As DHPC has never been disestablished, this practice can continue.
- 1.4 Members of the Taxi Licensing and Appeals Committee, who have not previously attended a DHPC, will need to be trained before they can hear an appeal.

RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To add the Discretionary Housing Payments appeal function to the responsibilities of the Taxi Licensing Appeals Committee, as a sub committee.
- 2.2 To require that DHPC be made up of any three members of that committee, to include the Chair or one of the Vice Chairs
- 2.3 To instruct officers to ensure that members of DHPC are trained in the appeal function before they sit on any appeals.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 To enable elected Members to hear Discretionary Housing Payment Appeals. The Council's Appeals Procedure specifically allows for Member involvement
- 3.2 As no Members were appointed to DHPC at the Annual Meeting it is necessary to seek specific approval from Council before convening an appeal.
- 3.3 The Taxi Licensing and Appeals Committee has consistently been the Committee responsible for Discretionary Housing Payment appeals.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4.1 Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) provide customers with further financial assistance when a local authority considers that help with housing costs is needed.
- 4.2 The regulations covering DHPs are the Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001. In most cases claimants will be entitled to Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit
- 4.3 The total amount of DHPs that the Council can award is limited by legislation.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 To have no formal appeals procedure, but this would leave the Council exposed to Judicial Review if consistency of process could be brought into question.

This report has been approved by the following officers:

Legal officer	Olu Idowu – Head of Legal Services (General)
Financial officer	NA
Human Resources officer	NA
Service Director(s)	Stuart Leslie – Director of Legal and Democratic Services
Other(s)	Philip O'Brien – Head of Democratic Services

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Background papers:	None
List of appendices:	Appendix 1 – Implications

IMPLICATIONS

Financial and Value for Money

- 1.1 None arising directly from this report

Legal

- 2.1 DHPs are covered by the Discretionary Housing Payments (Grants) Order 2001
- 2.2 The Council's policy for dealing with appeals specifically allows for Member involvement

Personnel

- 3.1 None arising directly from this report

Equalities Impact

- 4.1 None arising directly from this report

Health and Safety

- 5.1 None arising directly from this report

Environmental Sustainability

- 6.1 None arising directly from this report

Asset Management

- 7.1 None arising directly from this report

Risk Management

- 8.1 None arising directly from this report

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 9.1 The administration of DHP appeals contributes to the Council Priority to provide good quality services that meet local needs.