

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET**  
**20<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2007**

<b>COMMUNITY STRATEGY THEME</b>	<b>Internal Organisational theme</b>
<b>CORPORATE PLAN THEME:</b>	<b>Delivering Quality Services</b>
<b>KEY PRIORITY:</b>	<b>Improving Customer Services</b>
<b>STRATEGY:</b>	<b>Benefits service</b>
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	<b>Councillor John Campion</b>
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:</b>	<b>Head of Financial Services</b>
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	<b>Joan Hill Extension No. 2102 Joan.hill@wyreforestdc.gov.uk</b>
<b>APPENDIX 1</b>	<b>Discretionary Housing Payments Policy</b>
<b>AN OPEN ITEM</b>	

**BENEFITS SERVICE – DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS POLICY**

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To propose a Discretionary Housing payments policy for adoption by the Council.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

The Cabinet is asked to **RECOMMEND** to Council:-

The Benefits Service – Discretionary Housing Payments Policy – December 2007, attached as Appendix 1 be approved.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Discretionary Housing Payments are not payments of benefit, they are stand-alone payments made at the discretion of the local authority in cases where it considers that extra help with housing costs is needed. A policy is proposed as attached as Appendix 1 in order to ensure consistency and transparency in the process.
- 3.2 The Benefits section has procedures and controls in place to ensure all applications for Discretionary Housing Payments are administered fairly and within the cash limits allocated by central government.

- 3.3 The policy has been prepared based on current best practise from other local authorities.

#### **4. KEY ISSUES**

- 4.1 Discretionary Housing Payments are not payments of benefit, they are stand-alone payments made at the discretion of the local authority in cases where it considers that extra help with housing costs is needed. The Benefits Service administers payments in accordance with legislation and the requirements of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).
- 4.2 The Benefits Service must not exceed the overall cash limit set each year by central government.

#### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no financial implications associated within this report.

#### **6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 It is a statutory requirement that this authority administers Housing and Council Tax Benefits in accordance with legislation and Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) requirements.

#### **7. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 7.1 If the Council does not have a Discretionary Housing Payments Policy it could be unclear as to the scheme's application and interpretation. Procedures and controls are in place to reduce the risk of any such occurrence.

#### **8. CONCLUSION**

- 8.1 The Benefits Service Discretionary Housing Payments policy has been prepared in accordance with best practise.

#### **9. CONSULTEES**

- 9.1 Corporate Management Team

#### **10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None





## **BENEFITS SERVICE**

# **DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS POLICY**

**DECEMBER 2007**

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**BENEFITS SERVICE – DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS POLICY**

**CONTENTS**

**Introduction**

Aim of the Policy

Background

Scope

**Discretionary Housing Payments**

Purpose

Roles & Responsibilities

Summary

## Introduction

### **HOUSING BENEFITS DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS POLICY**

#### **Aim of the Policy**

1. The aim of the Policy is to set out a clear framework with regards to Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) which are not payments of benefit. They are stand-alone payments made at the discretion of the local authority, subject to an annual cash limit (Permitted Total) in cases where the local authority considers that extra help with housing costs is needed.

#### **Background**

2. The Child support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000 allows authorities to make payments of DHP to customers in receipt of either Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Benefit. The regulations governing DHP are The Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001.

The Government set an annual cash limit and Government contribution, which is specified in annual finance orders.

3. The Council has developed this Policy to ensure that the Benefit Section administers the Discretionary Housing Payments fairly and within the annual cash limit (Permitted Total)

#### **Scope**

4. This policy applies to all applications for Discretionary Housing Payments.

## Discretionary Housing Payments

#### **Purpose**

5. For the purpose of this Policy, the claimant must be entitled to Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit or both.
6. The claimant must complete the Discretionary Housing Payment application form giving details of income and expenditure to show that they require further help with their housing costs.
7. DHP cannot help pay for the following:- ineligible service charges, water charges, increases in rent due to rent arrears, shortfalls in entitlement due to sanctions or suspensions, where Second Adult Rebate is being paid.

## Roles & Responsibilities

8. The Benefit Section must not exceed the overall cash limit set by Government.
9. Funding between the Governments contribution and overall cash limit must have budgetary provision.
10. The duration and level of the DHP will be determined individually for each claim by a designated officer in the Benefits section. When an award of DHP period comes to an end the customer will be required to complete a further DHP application form to renew their award.
11. There are no appeal rights against the decision made on a DHP. A claimant can submit a written or verbal "dispute" and the decision will be reviewed internally by a different designated Benefit Officer to the one who determined the original DHP claim.
12. It remains the duty of the claimant to notify the Benefit Section of any change in circumstance that may be relevant to the continuation of their DHP.
13. It is the duty of the Benefit Section to publicise the Discretionary Housing Payment Scheme.

## Summary

14. The Benefits section will consider all claims on their own merit taking into account those elements of housing costs which cannot be met by Housing Benefit.
15. The Benefit Section will make payments of DHP to Claimants where applicable, having regard for the cash specific sum, comprising both the Government contribution and Council contribution.