

PRIVATE SECTOR RENEWAL GRANTS

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report provides the position statement on private sector renewal grants for 2000/01 and the implications for 2001/02.

2 DISCUSSION

- 2.2 Following the announcement of the basic credit approvals for 2001/02 Members were informed that the sum available for housing would be £103,000 in total. After meeting the net cost of disabled facilities grants as a priority this left £60,000 available for private sector renewal grants. As the current year's budget is £170,000 action had to be taken in order to restrict grants from the current level. In order to keep within the new allocations for 2001/02 Members agreed that officers should suspend, where possible, approvals on new applications. Members requested a further report on the position for the current financial year.

- 2.3 Applications fall within two categories. They are home repairs assistance grants and renovation grants.

Description	Home Repair Grants	Renovation Grants	Total
Approved and expected to be paid in 2000/01	£63,000	£20,000	£83,000

At the moment the figures appear to show that there is unlikely to be any significant carry over into the next financial year. However on the basis of the above figures the balance of funding available in the current financial year would be £87,000. This represents a lost opportunity to provide assistance. Any new applications approved would almost certainly fall into next financial year.

- 2.4 There are a number of applications awaiting approval and of those which have completed some stage of the application process, there is approximately £78,000 worth of grant applications outstanding. It can be seen that if the £78,000 was authorised it would more than take up the outlying budget for 2001/02. This will mean that there will be no additional approvals of applications for the remainder of this financial year and no approvals for the whole of 2001/02.

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- 2.5 The problem with the management of these grants is that payments have to match resources available within a financial year. Following approval the applicant has a year to undertake the works and therefore expenditure cannot be guaranteed to occur in the year when resources are available.
- 2.6 One option to deal with the situation would be to amend the existing agreement that the Authority has with Springboard Housing Association, for the Home Improvement Agency, so that all capital allocation available is paid over as grant to Springboard and that they then settle the accounts with the contractors following our agreement. This will ensure that payments match capital resources available. The approach has not as yet been discussed with Springboard.
- 2.7 Members have approved support to Springboard for a three year period starting in 1999/2000. DETR have requested that this Authority confirms continuation of support for a three year period starting in 2001/02. Springboard is funded by contributions of £7,500 per year from this Council, £7,500 from Essex County Council Social Services and Government Grant of £15,000. Essex County Council Social Services have confirmed that they wish to increase funding to Springboard by £5,000 per year provided this is matched by the Council. This is part of the supporting people initiative and they see the assistance as general and not directly related to grant support. Given the reduced level of grant it may not appear to be an appropriate time to give a commitment to increasing support to Springboard. However, officers would support the move towards more general help and moving the emphasis away from grant support. Also officers would support the confirmation that our existing level of support would continue for a further three years.
- 2.8 Both Social Services and the reality of our grant support will mean that Springboard will have to focus more attention to helping householders without direct grant support.

3 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 It is proposed that this Sub-Committee **RECOMMENDS**
- (1) That the Service Level Agreement with Springboard Housing Association be amended to cover the payment of the approved capital budget to them and subsequent arrangements to protect the Authority in the payment of grants.
 - (2) That a three year commitment to Springboard at a rate of £7,500 per year from 2001/02 be confirmed.

- (3) That the request for matching funding from Essex County Council be considered.(HFS)

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