

DECISION NOTICE - CORONAVIRUS EMERGENCY RELATED

Key Executive Decision taken by an OFFICER

KEY DECISION

Delivery of the Aids and Adaptation Service

DECISION TAKER:

Name: Richard Protheroe

Job Title: Strategic Director

Signature:

Date:

REASON WHY THIS DECISION DID NOT APPEAR ON THE FORWARD PLAN AND THE URGENCY PROVISIONS WERE NOT FOLLOWED:

This key decision/decision outside the Council's Budget and Policy Framework* was taken as part of the Council's emergency response to the national Coronavirus Emergency. Due to the necessary speed of decision taking at this time it was not possible to comply with the Council's Constitution that includes the requirement to give 28 days' notice of the decision to be taken; publish details 5 clear days before the decision was taken; publish the decision within 2 days of it being taken; and provide the 5 day call-in period before implementation. Nor was it possible to comply with the Urgency provisions in the Constitution

DECISION TAKEN:

The aids and adaptation service will be reduced dealing with new referrals only. These will not be progressed unless assessed as being absolutely necessary / critical.

For critical referrals these will need to be supported by a risk assessment issued by Occupational Therapist that will include determining that there is more of a risk not doing the work than the risk of catching COVID-19.

The reduced service will continue while the current restrictions are in place. This will be reviewed following receipt of any new / alternative advice.

- Stevenage Borough Council will endeavour to complete all works currently on site and also where orders have already been placed. Noting we are receiving reports that some of the contractors are now not willing to continue working, this is likely to increase, but we will

ensure that the site is 'made safe' and all services/facilities connected where works cannot be completed. In some cases the contractor will cease working and not be able to fully make safe, in these instances Stevenage Borough Council will seek completion or 'making safe' from other contractors or the council's Repairs and Voids team – emergency repairs.

- There are now a number of outstanding 'Major Works' that are at risk of not being completed (Extensions, Whole House Refurbishments, Garage Conversions etc.). Stevenage Borough Council will make sure these sites are 'made safe' and that the Tenants are made fully aware of the reasons why these works cannot continue and will provide additional support where needed.
- All new referrals will be logged for future processing. We understand that your Occupational Therapists and Community Care Officers are still managing to complete some home assessments and are carrying-out telephone assessments where this is not possible, so please continue to send your referrals to us so that we are able to fully manage the impending back-log.
- Existing referrals that have not been completed and all new referrals will not be progressed unless assessed by your team as being absolutely necessary / critical. In these instances we will require a full Risk Assessment with your referral; this must clearly determine that there is more of a risk from not doing the work than the risk of catching COVID-19.

Definition of essential / critical:

- Risk to life and health. (Conditions that could lead to health problems particularly for people with pre - existing health concerns)
- Maintaining watertight structure – where this could result in building failure.
- Any defect that could result in an unsafe building or unsafe condition / environment to the household.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

The vast majority of referrals are for the Elderly, Disabled, and Sick vulnerable groups that are most at risk from this Virus, therefore following Government and Public Sector Information (PCI) advice in this matter ensuring the safety of council staff and households while still being able to provide a reduced service that can deal with only the absolute essential cases.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED:

Maintaining the full service was considered, however in line with the advice of not undertaking site visits unless absolutely necessary, the risk of reduced staff numbers and contractors ceasing operations, it was considered that a full service could not be maintained.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

All referrals will be logged but expenditure will be temporarily reduced and backlog of cases build up. These cases will be dealt with when restrictions are lifted incurring future expenditure against the approved budget.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

These works comply with the legal and statutory requirements in relation to the provision of disabled adaptations (e.g. the Equality Act 2010) and good practice guidance, including 'Delivering Housing Adaptations for Disabled People'.

EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS:

There are no implications to Equality & Diversity as a result of the proposed changes and the equalities impact assessment for the Aids & Adaptations policy is still applicable.

CONSULTATIONS:

We have been in communication with the Occupational Therapists, Social Care Access Service and we have confirmed the Council's position of providing a reduced service for dealing with aids and adaptation referrals.

Consultation with members was carried out through the Group Leader Coronavirus Meeting, the leader and portfolio holder where also consulted and all were in agreement with the proposed temporary changes.

Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

I agree that this decision was reasonable in all the circumstances, was urgent and could not reasonably be deferred.

I further agree that any delay likely to be caused by the call -in process would prejudice the Council's or the public interest and that the decision should not therefore be subject to call-in.

Signed:

Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date:

DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISION:

7 January 2021