

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

GOVERNANCE AND TRANSFORMATION CABINET MEMBER

14 September 2016

- 19 (19) **USE OF THE DISCRETIONARY HOUSING FUND** - The Director of Policy and Resources submitted a report considering an alternative set of success criteria with regard to the Discretionary Housing Fund in order to support those in need.

Discretionary Housing Funds were provided annually by the Government to support those households who experienced financial hardship and were unable to meet their full rental liability where this was not fully covered by Housing Benefit.

Success criteria for the scheme were currently as follows;

- first time applications within a given year were given six weeks of support
- they were invited to apply at the end of this period with a full income and expenditure analysis, second time applications were measured against;
 - could they afford to fund the rent shortfall themselves
 - could they make better use of their finances in order to budget more appropriately to fund the shortfall themselves
 - were they taking action to change their circumstances which would allow them to fund the shortfall or remove it as an issue.

As part of the success criteria there was an expectation that the customer was making positive attempts to change their circumstances which would mean the additional financial support was not necessary. Whilst there were no guidelines on what changes the customer could make to change their circumstances, the council would expect customers to (but not exclusively);

- be looking for work/increase in hours worked
- be obtaining budgeting/debt support
- taking a lodger

To improve the effectiveness of the scheme and to make better use of the resources, it was proposed to take a more directive approach to providing the DHP support. Therefore extra financial support from the scheme would be made conditional on households engaging with, and completing the advised course of action recommended by Action Station. This would be support on proactive job searching, building of skills and money management advice in order to maximise employment opportunities.

In order to encourage attendance at Action Station it was proposed that DHP was increased. Full details of proposals, including financial implications, were set out in the report.

Resolved – That the changes to the discretionary scheme and movement of one off additional resources into Action Station, as set out in the report, be approved.