

**Harborough District Council**  
**Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy**

**February 2019**

## **1. Introduction**

The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002 introduced a wide range of discretionary powers to local authorities to enable them to develop a range of financial and other assistance to carry out repairs and improvements in the private housing stock. This intention of this legislation was to give the local authorities the flexibility and discretion to tackle specific local housing issues.

The Government's view is that primarily the responsibility for maintaining privately owned property should be the responsibility of the home owner. However it is mindful that in some circumstances, additional help through grants or other financial assistance is necessary to enable essential repairs and improvements to be carried out. The legislation enables local authorities to tackle the poorest housing occupied by the most vulnerable groups.

Whilst in October 2017 Harborough District Council delegated its disabled facilities grants and certain private sector renewal functions to the host authority of the Lightbulb programme, certain assistance remains with the Council as set in this policy. Lightbulb have developed a common Regulatory Reform Order (RRO) to cover Leicestershire which provides a wider housing offer for the most vulnerable residents in the district. A copy of the Lightbulb RRO can be found in Appendix A.

The priorities of the Lightbulb RRO and Harborough District Council's Private Sector Renewal are:

- To ensure vulnerable people live in decent accommodation.
- To ensure disabled occupants live in suitable accommodation to enable them to live as independent lives as possible.
- To provide low income households financial assistance to carry out essential repairs to their homes.
- To ensure private rented accommodation is safe and in good state of repair.
- To encourage long term empty properties to be brought back into use.

## 2 - Types of Assistance Available.

The types of assistance available can be broken down into three areas

- Education
- Financial
- Enforcement

### 2.1 Education

Wherever possible, officers will work with home owners to raise awareness of their responsibilities and the benefits of maintaining their own homes. The Council will provide advice and information on targeted areas such as home energy conservation.

### 2.2 Financial

The framework details a range of assistance which the Council is currently providing. In addition the Council will direct homeowners to other sources of funding available through third parties such as Lightbulb.

- **Fire Safety Grants.** Available to landlords to carry out essential fire safety improvements to privately rented accommodation to ensure compliance with relevant legislation and guidance.
- **Empty Property Grants.** Available to accredited landlords to bring long term empty properties (empty for longer than 12 months) back into use and made available for the private rented sector.
- **Landlord Property Improvement Grants.** These grants are available to accredited landlords to carry out essential repairs and improvements for private rented accommodation.

All forms of assistance will be dependant on the financial resources available at the time. Where the applicant is eligible for financial assistance, the Council

will not be liable and will not be required to provide assistance if the funding is not available.

### **2.3 Enforcement.**

Enforcement action will not be the first response to minor contraventions of legislation and will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's enforcement policy. The need for formal enforcement may be brought about by various factors such as the severity of the problem, imminence of risk and public interest.

## **3 - Financial Assistance**

### **3.1 Fire Safety Grant**

This grant is available to landlords to carry out essential fire safety works to privately rented accommodation to ensure compliance with necessary legislation and guidance. This grant will only cover any identified fire safety improvements however to qualify for assistance the landlord will be responsible for the removal of any other Category 1 hazards identified in the property. The grant is 100% repayable if the property is sold or no longer made available for letting.

#### **Applicant Eligibility**

The landlord must have an owner's interest in the property and the application must be accompanied by a certificate of future occupation confirming that the property will be made available for letting (to someone other than a family member). The property must be registered with the Land Registry before the grant is approved.

Following completion of the works the dwelling must be free from Category 1 hazards as defined by the Housing Act 2004.

The landlord will **NOT** be eligible for grant assistance where a formal Housing Act notice has been served to enforce the works.

### **Types of Eligible Works**

The grant will be available to provide adequate fire detection and means of escape and other associated works that are part of the overall scheme of fire safety improvements, including gas safety and electrical works.

### **Maximum Grant**

The grant will cover 50% of the total costs of works up to a maximum of **£10,000**.

### **Payment of the Grant**

The grant may be paid in whole after completion of all of the eligible fire safety works or in parts as work progresses and the balance on completion and no Category 1 hazards are present in the property

The Council must be satisfied with the works and payment will only be made following receipt of an acceptable invoice, demand or receipt regarding payment for eligible works/expenses and professional fees or other charges, which has not been given by the applicant or a member of his family.

Work must be carried out by one of the contractors whose quotation the grant was based. Under exceptional circumstances an alternative contractor may be appointed following the approval of the Regulatory Services Manger.

The payment will only be made following the completion of a certificate of satisfaction with the works of the applicant unless the completion certificate is unreasonably withheld.

On final payment of the grant a land charge will be registered against the property in line with conditions attached to the grant approval.

### **Repayment of the Grant**

In the case of a grant, for which part or complete payment has been made, where the applicant disposes of the property, or the property is no longer

made available for letting, the applicant shall repay the Council on demand the full amount of grant that has been paid.

### **Appeals and Complaints**

All applicants have the right to make a complaint or appeal against any condition attached to the loan. The applicant should complain to the Council using the formal complaints process about any aspects of the service received. <https://www.harborough.gov.uk/comments-and-complaints>

### **3.2 Empty Property Grants**

These grants are available to accredited landlords to bring long term empty properties back into use to be made available for the private rented sector. For the purposes of this form of assistance a property must have been empty for at least 12 months prior to application. The grant is 100% repayable if the property is sold or no longer made available for letting.

#### **Applicant Eligibility**

The landlord must have an owner's interest in the property and the application must be accompanied by a certificate of future occupation confirming that the property will be made available for letting to someone other than a family member. The property must be registered with the Land Registry before the grant is approved

Following completion of the works the dwelling must be free from Category 1 hazards as defined by the Housing Act 2004.

The landlord must be accredited by a recognized Landlord Accreditation Scheme.

#### **Types of Improvement Works**

Properties are eligible for this grant if they have been empty for more than 12 months and assistance will be provided to remove Category 1 hazards as defined by the Housing Act 2004.

### **Maximum Grant**

The grant will cover 50% of the total costs of works up to a maximum of **£10,000**.

### **Payment of the Grant**

The grant may be paid in whole after completion of all of the eligible works or in parts as work progresses and the balance on completion.

The Council must be satisfied with the works and payment will only be made following receipt of an acceptable invoice, demand or receipt regarding payment for eligible works/expenses and professional fees or other charges, which has not been given by the applicant or a member of his family.

Work must be carried out by one of the contractors whose quotation the grant was based. Under exceptional circumstances an alternative contractor may be appointed following the approval of the Regulatory Services Manager

The payment will only be made following the completion of a certificate of satisfaction with the works of the applicant unless the completion certificate is unreasonably withheld.

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In the case of a grant, for which part or complete payment has been made, where the applicant disposes of the property, or the property is not longer made available for letting, the applicant shall repay the Council on demand the amount of grant that has been paid.

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### **3.3 Landlord Property Improvement Grants**

These grants are available to accredited landlords to carry out essential repairs and improvements for private rented accommodation to remove Category 1 hazards in the property. The grant is 100% repayable if the property is sold or no longer made available for letting

#### **Applicant Eligibility**

The landlord must have an owner's interest in the property and the application must be accompanied by a certificate of future occupation confirming that the property will be made available for letting (to someone other than a family member). The property must be registered with the Land Registry before the grant is approved.

Following completion of the works the dwelling must be free from Category 1 hazards as defined by the Housing Act 2004.

The landlord must be accredited by a recognized Landlord Accreditation Scheme.

#### **Types of Improvement Works**

Properties are eligible for this grant assistance to remove Category 1 hazards as defined by the Housing Act 2004

#### **Maximum Grant**

The grant will cover 50% of the total costs of works up to a maximum of **£10,000**.

#### **Payment of the Grant**

The grant may be paid in whole after completion of all of the eligible works or in parts as work progresses and the balance on completion and all Category 1 hazards have been removed from the property.



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Appendix A – Lightbulb Regulatory Reform Order.