



## **Harborough District Council**

### **Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy**

**September 2009**

# Contents

<u>CONTENTS</u>	<u>I</u>
<u>LIST OF APPENDICES</u>	<u>II</u>
<u>LIST OF TABLES</u>	<u>II</u>
<u>LIST OF FIGURES</u>	<u>II</u>
<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>1 SECTION 1</u>	<u>2</u>
1.1 DISTRICT PROFILE	2
1.2 NATIONAL PRIORITIES.	5
1.3 REGIONAL PRIORITIES.	5
1.4 LOCAL PRIORITIES.	6
<u>2 SECTION 2 - TYPES OF ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE.</u>	<u>7</u>
2.1 EDUCATION	8
2.2 FINANCIAL	8
2.3 ENFORCEMENT.	10
<u>3 SECTION 3 - FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE</u>	<u>10</u>
3.1 PROPERTY APPRECIATION LOANS	10
3.2 UNSECURED LOANS	16
3.3 RENOVATION GRANTS	20
3.4 EMERGENCY HOME REPAIRS GRANTS	23
3.5 TOP-UP ENERGY GRANTS	26
3.6 DECENT HOMES GRANT	28
3.7 MANDATORY DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS	31
3.8 DISCRETIONARY DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS	34
3.9 FIRE SAFETY GRANT	36
3.10 EMPTY PROPERTY GRANTS	38
3.11 LANDLORD PROPERTY IMPROVEMENT GRANTS	40
<u>4 APPENDICES</u>	<u>42</u>

# List Of Appendices

Appendix A. Appendix ..... 43  
Appendix B. The Decent Homes Standard..... 44

# List of Tables

Table 1. 2005 Housing Condition Survey – Key Findings..... 4

# List of Figures

Figure. 1. Property Profile by Age of Stock. .... 2  
Figure. 2. Comparison of Property House Type in Harborough to the National  
Average. .... 3  
Figure. 3. A comparison of tenure across Harborough District with the East Midlands  
and the National Average. .... 4

## 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.

In conjunction with the Welland Partnership, the original Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy was adopted in 2003 and reviewed and revised in 2005. This strategy outlined the various forms of financial assistance available to increase the number of homes across the district meeting the minimum legal standard.

The Government encourages local authorities to move away from a grants only policy and to look at alternative forms of assistance such as loans and equity release products and with the use of grants for exceptional circumstance. An effective Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy would make available a range of assistance depending on the circumstances of the individual.

The Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy will be monitored and kept under review and amended when deemed appropriate.

# 1 Section 1

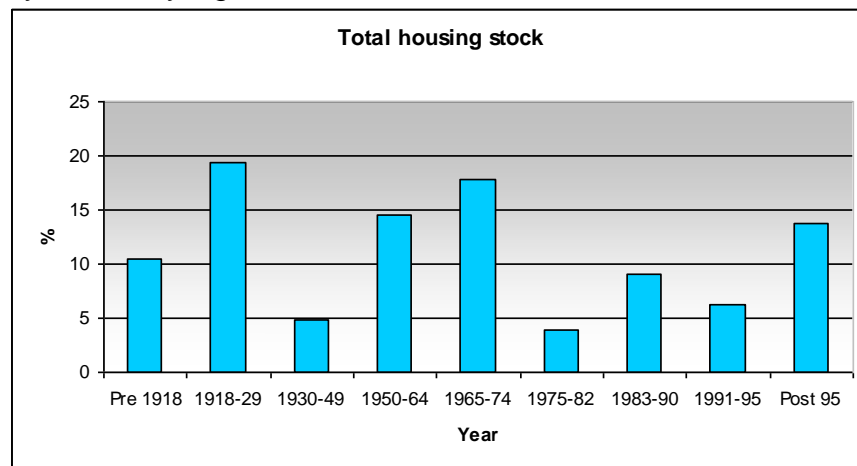
## 1.1 District Profile

Harborough District covers an area of 238 square miles of rural south Leicestershire. It is one of seven Leicestershire districts and lies within the East Midlands Region. The population of approximately 80,000 is split between the two market towns of Market Harborough and Lutterworth, large villages such as Broughton Astley, Great Glen and Kibworth which serve as rural centres, a built up area of Leicester's urban fringe (Bushby, Thurnby and Scraftoft) and numerous small rural settlements. There are around 90 parishes comprising over 34,000 households. The district is predominantly rural and farming continues to be the most widespread land use in the area.

The district has a high quality natural and built environment. The eastern part of the district displays traditional features such as undulating landscapes, stretches of unfenced pastures and cultivated fields and patches of woodland, hedges and trees.

Most of the villages are compact and found in geographical and visually sensitive locations. There are 62 conservation areas and over 1200 listed structures within the district. Fig 1 shows the private sector housing profile by property age for the district.

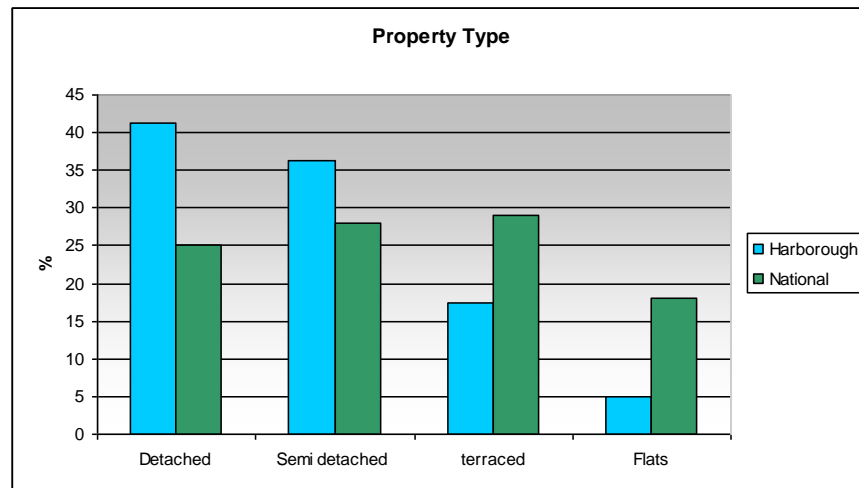
Figure. 1. Property Profile by Age of Stock.



It can be seen that almost 70% of the housing stock in the district was built prior to 1974 and this could have an impact on the state of repair and energy efficiency of the housing stock generally.

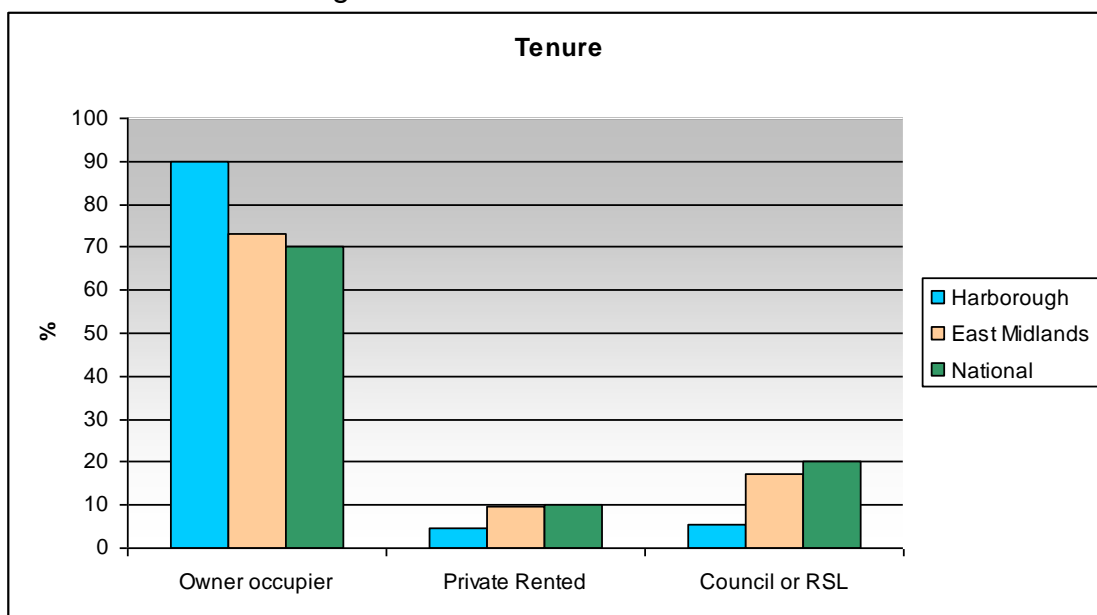
In Harborough district there is a higher percentage of detached and semi-detached properties compared to the national average (Fig 2). This would have an effect on the average repair costs which would be higher for these types of properties compared to the more traditional terraced type dwellings.

Figure. 2. Comparison of Property House Type in Harborough to the National Average.



In addition has a higher rate of owner occupation compared to both the East Midlands as a region and the national average (Fig 3). Whilst it is recognized that the responsibility of maintaining private property rests with the owner, it is appreciated that there will be circumstances where the individual owner occupier will not be in a financial position to pay for essential repairs to be carried out and financial assistance from the local authority will be required.

Figure. 3. A comparison of tenure across Harborough District with the East Midlands and the National Average.



In 2005 a House Condition Survey (HCS) was undertaken of the private sector stock across the district based on a sample of randomly selected dwellings. The key findings of the survey can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. 2005 Housing Condition Survey – Key Findings

Unfit dwellings	2.4%
Dwellings with substantial disrepair – not unit but need at least £5,000 of immediate repairs	30%
Dwellings with a Category 1 Hazard*	18%
Non-decent accommodation**	30%
Number of non-decent dwellings occupied by vulnerable households	1261
Cost of repairs needed to unfit dwellings over a 10 year period	£14.4million
Cost of bringing all private sector dwellings up to the decent homes standard	£25million
Cost of bring dwellings occupied by vulnerable household up to the decent homes standard	£3million

\* As determined by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System defined in the Housing Act 2004

\*\* See “A Decent Home – The definition and Guidance for Implementation” Department for Communities and Local Government.

The 2005 HCS found the level of unfitnes for the area was lower than the national average figure of 4.2% (English House Condition Survey 2001). However the ageing housing stock means that the average cost of repairs is high. In addition the number of people aged 65 and over living in the District is predicated to increase from 17% of the total population to 20% by 2013 which may have an impact on the housing needs of the population.

## 1.2 National Priorities.

Central Government spending review of 2000 set a Public Service Agreement Target to “ensure that all social housing meets a standard of decency by 2010”. In 2002 the Government extended this to include vulnerable households in the private sector. A target of 70% of vulnerable households should live in decent accommodation by 2010, increasing to 75% by 2020.

In 2008 Government published a National Strategy for Housing in an Aging Society – “Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods”. In this strategy Government announced their ambitions to build homes to “Lifetime Homes” standards and a vision of Lifetime Neighbourhoods that are fit for all.

The strategy also included the provision of improved advice and information and expanding help for simple repairs and adaptations, with more investment in major home adaptations to support independence.

## 1.3 Regional Priorities.

The East Midlands Regional Housing Strategy has published and sets out a vision for housing in the East Midlands and to provide public sector and private sector stakeholders with a common framework which helps them to deliver better housing for the people of the region. There are 8 Objectives set out in the Strategy:



- To ensure that regional housing and planning policy are informed by a robust understanding of need and housing market conditions in the region.
- To ensure that everyone in the region is able to both access and afford suitable housing to meet their needs.
- To improve the co-ordination of housing's contribution to economic development within the region.
- To contribute to raising the quality of design in housing, and the creation of sustainable Homes.
- To develop a framework within which regional and local partners can develop sustainable and cohesive communities.
- To ensure that rural affordable housing need is correctly addressed through the Regional Affordable Housing Programme.
- To improve the co-ordination of provision which meets the housing needs of vulnerable people.
- To ensure the region provides a robust response to the housing implications of our ageing population.

## 1.4 Local Priorities.

Harborough District Council is fully committed to deliver the Leicestershire Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) through the Local Area Agreements (LAA). The LAA for Leicestershire is based on local priorities agreed by the County Council and its partners, and agreed by Central Government. The LAA has set agreed targets for the provision of new homes, affordability and the provision of support to ensure vulnerable people can live as independently as possible.

In addition Harborough District's Sustainable Community Strategy sets out a vision for improving the quality of life in Harborough District linked to the Leicestershire Performance Framework developed through the

Leicestershire SCS and LAA. The Leicestershire Performance Framework sets out key priorities and private sector housing has a direct input to the following priorities:

- Improved life chances for vulnerable people and places.
- A safe and attractive place to live and work.
- A healthier Leicestershire.

In order to fully contribute to these outcomes, the priorities of the Private Sector Renewal Strategy 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 Section 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 policy framework details a range of loans and grants which the council is currently providing. In addition the council will direct homeowners to other sources of funding available through third parties such as Warmfront and Encerts scheme for energy insulation measures. (Appendix A shows a flowchart of the assistance available).

Financial measures currently available directly through the council are:

- **Property Appreciation Loans** to assist applicants living in non-decent homes requiring financial assistance to enable essential repairs and improvements to be carried out through the release of available equity within the property.
- **Unsecured loans** to assist applicants living in non decent accommodation who require financial assistance and support to improve their property towards meeting the decent homes standard (Appendix B). These loans are aimed at homeowners who are unable to access loans from commercial lenders but can demonstrate the ability to make regular repayments of the loan. Interest would not be charged on these loans and set up costs would be met by the council.
- **Renovation Grants**, where the applicant is unable to afford to repay a loan *and* there is insufficient equity within the property the council will consider a grant to carry out essential repairs and improvements to enable the applicant to remain within their own home.

- **Emergency Home Repairs Grant** to assist vulnerable homeowners who require emergency repairs and improvements to their property, where waiting for other forms of financial assistance would be detrimental to their health and/or the condition of the property.
- **Top-up Energy Grants** to assist residents who have been awarded financial assistance through the Warmfront scheme, where the amount of grant awarded is less than the cost of works required.
- **Decent Homes Grants.** Funding is currently available through the Government Office of the East Midlands (GOEM) to carry out targeted improvements for vulnerable households living in non-decent accommodation. The availability of this form of assistance is dependant on the continuation of funding from GOEM.
- **Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants** to carry out essential adaptation to a property to enable a disabled occupant to remain within their own home.
- **Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants** to enable a disabled resident to relocate where their existing property is not suitable for adaptation.
- **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.

The range of assistance is designed to offer choices to the homeowner to enable them to undertake repairs to their property. However, with the exception of the mandatory disabled facilities grants, 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. The loans and grants are administered through the Home Improvement Agency. Further details on the eligibility of the various financial initiatives can be found in Section 3.

## 2.3 Enforcement.

The council has adopted the Central and Local Government Concordat on enforcement that provides for a measured approach to enforcement delivery. 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 for private sector housing. 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 Section 3 - Financial Assistance

## 3.1 Property Appreciation Loans

Property Appreciation Loans have been developed to enable homeowners to carry out repairs and improvements to their property which could not otherwise be undertaken due to financial constraints. The form of assistance allows homeowners to fund these repairs by releasing part of the equity in their property. The council resources the funds, either through the Private Sector Renewal budget or by accessing alternative sources of funding if and when they are available.

The cost of works is calculated as a percentage of the pre-work value of the property and this percentage is registered as a Land Charge against the property. The amount of loan is dependant on the amount of equity within the property but will not exceed 75% of the available equity or

£25,000 whichever is the lower. On completion of the works, payments are made directly to the contractor and the professional bodies concerned not paid to the applicant.

### 3.1.1 Applicant Eligibility

This product can assist homeowners who are unable to access funding from a commercial lender and evidence to support this will be required.

In addition any person making an application for a property appreciation loan must:

- Live in the property as his/her main residence and
- have an owners interest in the property and
- have a duty to carry out the works in question and
- have owned the property for three years prior to the application.

### 3.1.2 Types of Improvement Works

Properties are eligible for this loan if they do not meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard. A decent home is one which is wind and weather tight, warm and has modern facilities. The full definition of the Decent Homes Standard can be found in Appendix B.

The applicant should be encouraged to complete all works required to achieve the Decent Homes Standard. The works eligible for a loan will be determined by the council following an inspection of the property.

### 3.1.3 Works Not Eligible

Works not eligible for inclusion in a Property Appreciation Loan include:

- Creation of garages/parking spaces.
- Creation of storage space.

- Extensions – in exceptional circumstances consideration will be given to provide an extension where there is evidence of a Category 1 Hazard as determined under the Housing Act 2004 e.g. inadequate kitchen space, over crowding etc.
- Decoration.
- Floor finishing such as carpets, wooden floors, wardrobes or other “furnishings” items.
- Conservatories – in exceptional circumstances the replacement of existing conservatories will be considered where this is the most appropriate course of action.
- Repairs required as a result of malicious damage caused by the occupants.
- Works included as part of an insurance claim.

### 3.1.4 Maximum Loan

The applicant may take out a loan of up to 75% of the free equity in their property to a maximum of £25,000.

#### **For Example**

<b>Value of House</b>	<b>£100,000</b>
<b>Mortgage/secure loans</b>	<b>£40,000</b>
<b>Free Equity</b>	<b>£60,000</b>
<b>75% of Free Equity to calculate the</b>	
<b>maximum loan</b>	<b>£45,000</b>
<b>Maximum Loan</b>	<b><u>£25,000</u></b>

Where the cost of works exceeds £25,000, the Head of Health & Enforcement Services has the discretion to award a greater loan provided that the amount of Free Equity does not exceed 75%.

The loan will be awarded following the council's receipt of at least 2 quotations for the eligible work.

### 3.1.5 Minimum Loan

The minimum loan is £2,500. The cost of administering the loan means it is not feasible to offer a Property Appreciation Loan for less than this amount.

### 3.1.6 Loan Costs

The following costs, which may be incurred when the loan is set up, are paid for by the council.

- Agency set up fee
- Initial Valuation fee
- Legal registration
- Local land search
- Land Registry Fee
- Independent Financial Advice (Max £350)
- Solicitor appointed by the homeowner (Max £400)

### 3.1.7 Independent Financial Advice and Solicitors

Applicants will be offered the services of an Independent Financial Advisor following the referral to the Home Improvement Agency and in receipt of a loan offer in principle. This is an optional service and homeowners may choose not to use it. If a client chooses not to consult with an Independent Financial Advisor, they must sign a declaration that this was their choice.



At the same time, all applicants will be advised to appoint a solicitor. If a client chooses not to appoint a solicitor, they must sign a declaration that this was their choice.

### 3.1.8 Payment of the loan

The loan may be paid in whole after completion of all of the eligible works or in parts as work progresses and the balance on completion. Stage payments may be made up to a maximum of 80% of the total cost of works.

The assisted work must be completed within 12 months from the date the loan is awarded or such further period as the council may deem necessary to allow for unforeseen circumstances.

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 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 the contractor on whose quotation the loan was based. Under exceptional circumstances an alternative contractor may be appointed following the approval of the Head of Health & Enforcement Services.

All payments for improvement works will be made directly to the contractor. The payment will only be made following the completion of a certificate of satisfaction with the works by the applicant and the Technical Officer from the Home Improvement Agency unless, in the opinion of the Council, the completion certificate is unreasonably withheld.

### 3.1.9 Loan Repayment Conditions

The loan is repayable in the following circumstance:

- On the death of the homeowner and sale/change of ownership of the property.

- On disposal of the property.
- Early repayment by choice.

The loan is secured against the value of the property but no repayment of the loan is made until there is a change of ownership. The loan is calculated as a percentage of the initial values of the property. The repayment amount is based on the same percentage but of the property value when the loan is redeemed.

### **For example**

**In 2003 a property was valued, prior to the work being carried out, at £100,000 and a loan of £20,000 was made = 20% charge against the property.**

**In 2007 the same property was valued at £175,000 when the applicant wishes to repay the loan. The amount repayable at that time is 20% of £175,000 or £35,000.**

If the value of the property decreases the amount repayable is the minimum sum – i.e. the value of the original loan. In exceptional circumstances, the council may consider decreasing the amount payable; however each case will be considered on its own merits and will be at the discretion of the council.

Where a request for early payment is made by the applicant, the council will provide a settlement figure in writing having first obtained a current market valuation of the property. The applicant must be advised of this and consent obtained that any fee associated with this valuation will be added to the final settlement sum.

Where a property is subject to a Compulsory Purchase Order and a Property Appreciation Loan is registered as a charge against the property, repayment of the loan may be waived at the discretion of the council.

### 3.1.10 Appeals and Complaints

All applicants have the right to make a complaint or appeal against the loan conditions. The applicant should complain to the council using the formal complaints process about any aspects of the service received.

Complaints against the service provided by the Home Improvement Agency should be addressed through the agency's complaint procedure.

## 3.2 Unsecured Loans

The unsecured repayment loan is for applicants living in non-decent accommodation requiring financial support to improve and repair their homes. These loans, up to a maximum of £5,000 are for homeowners who are unable to access funding from commercial lenders but who can demonstrate an ability to sustain a regular payment. There is no interest charged on these loans.

### 3.2.1 Applicant Eligibility

This product can assist homeowners who are unable to access funding from a commercial lender and evidence to support this will be required.

The applicant must have a minimum household disposable income equivalent to 3 times the monthly loan repayment figure. Applicants with a monthly disposable income of £250 or above must be referred to a commercial lender first.

In addition any person making an application for a property appreciation loan must:

- Live in the property as his/her main residence and
- have an owners interest in the property and
- have a duty to carry out the works in question and
- have owned the property for three years prior to the application.

### 3.2.2 Types of Improvement Works

Properties are eligible for this loan if they do not meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard. A decent home is one which is wind and weather tight, warm and has modern facilities. The full definition of the Decent Homes Standard can be found in Appendix B.

The applicant should be encouraged to complete all works required to achieve the Decent Homes Standard. The works eligible for a loan will be determined by the council following an inspection of the property.

### 3.2.3 Loan Amount

The homeowner may take out a maximum loan of **£5,000**. In normal circumstances the minimum loan is £750. This is a guide and the council will be able to use its discretion to offer the most suitable product and loan amount to meet the applicant's needs.

### 3.2.4 Loan Repayment Conditions

The loan repayment period will be agreed between the council and the client. The maximum repayment period will be 5 years.

#### Loan Arrears

There are likely to be 5 types of non-payment:

- (a) One off
- (b) Short term
- (c) Medium term
- (d) Inability to make any further payments
- (e) Refusal to make any further payments

### 3.2.5 Debt recovery process

Stage 1 – Home Improvement Agency is notified by its Finance Department immediately one month's payment is missed.

Stage 2 – The appointed Caseworker contacts the Customer within 24 hours to set up an appointment to discuss the issue within 5 working days of the date of contact.

Stage 3 – A letter is sent confirming the time and date of the appointment.

Stage 4 – The outcome of the visit is to be discussed with the Agency Manager and the agency's contact within the Council within 24 hours of that meeting.

Stage 5 – Within 5 working days of the meeting with the Customer:

(a) The Caseworker is to write to the Customer confirming what was discussed and agreed and the outcome of discussions with the Council. This could include an agreement to extend the loan term to recover the amount unpaid or an increase in the monthly payments, where disposable income allows, leaving the original term in place.

OR

(b) If the Customer is unable to continue then proof of the change in financial circumstances that has created the problem is to be provided by the Customer. Once provided the Caseworker is to write to the Customer informing them that the matter has been passed to the Council for resolution.

OR

(c) If the Customer refused to continue with the payments then a letter is to be sent informing them that the matter has been handed over to the Council's Legal Department for further action.

Stage 6 – If Finance report that despite agreement being reached, the Customer has not recommenced payment then a telephone call is to be made within 24 hours requesting payment of the arrears by cheque.

Stage 7 – If the Customer has not responded to the telephone request within 10 working days then a letter is to be sent within 24 hours

requesting the Customer contact the agency and pointing out that failure to respond within 5 working days will result in the matter being referred to the Council's Legal Department.

Stage 8 – If the Customer fails to respond within those 5 days then a letter is to be sent by the Agency confirming the matter has been passed onto the Council's Legal Department and that all future contact and correspondence will be between the authority and the Customer.

### 3.2.6 Loan Costs

The following costs, which may be incurred when the loan is set up, are paid for by the council.

- Agency set up fee
- Local land search
- Land Registry Fee

Costs may be incurred if arrears visits are required. These will be added to the loan. It is unlikely that other fees will be incurred in the preparation of an unsecured loan. However where appropriate the following costs will be paid for by the council:

- Valuation fee
- Legal registration

#### **Payment of the loan**

The loan may be paid in whole after completion of all of the eligible works or in parts as work progresses and the balance on completion. Stage payments may be made up to a maximum of 80% of the total cost of works.

The assisted work must be completed within 12 months from the date the loan is awarded or such further period as the council may deem necessary to allow for unforeseen circumstances.

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 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 loan was based. Under exceptional circumstances an alternative contractor may be appointed following the approval of the Head of Health & Enforcement Services.

All payments for improvement works will be made directly to the contractor. The payment will only be made following the completion of a certificate of satisfaction with the works by the applicant and the Technical Officer from the Home Improvement Agency unless, in the opinion of the Council, the completion certificate is unreasonably withheld.

### 3.2.7 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.

Complaints against the service provided by the Home Improvement Agency should be addressed through the agency's complaint procedure.

## 3.3 Renovation Grants

This grant is available to applicants living in non-decent accommodation requiring financial support to carry out repairs and improvements to their property. This product is available to homeowners who are unable to access funding through a commercial lender, do not have sufficient disposable income to demonstrate the ability to sustain regular payments of a repayment loan and who have insufficient free equity in their property to fund a Property Appreciation Loan. The maximum grant payable is £15,000 and on completion of the required works a charge will be

registered against the property for the repayment of the grant when a relevant disposal of the property is made.

A relevant disposal is defined by Section 45 of The Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.

### 3.3.1 Applicant Eligibility

Eligible applicants home owners who must be able to demonstrate they are unable to access funding through a commercial lender, following a financial assessment, the applicant has a monthly disposable income of less than three times the repayment figure for the sum in question and there is less than 75% free equity in the property.

In addition any person making an application for a property appreciation loan must:

- Live in the property as his/her main residence and
- have an owners interest in the property and
- have a duty to carry out the works in question and
- have owned the property for three years prior to the application.

### 3.3.2 Types of Improvement Works

Properties are eligible for this loan if they do not meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard. A decent home is one which is wind and weather tight, warm and has modern facilities. The full definition of the Decent Homes Standard can be found in Appendix B.

The applicant should be encouraged to complete all works required to achieve the Decent Homes Standard. The works eligible for a loan will be determined by the council following an inspection of the property.

### 3.3.3 Maximum Grant

The maximum grant available is £15,000.



### 3.3.4 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. Stage payments may be made up to a maximum of 80% of the total cost of works.

The assisted work must be completed within 12 months from the date the grant is awarded or such further period as the council may deem necessary to allow for unforeseen circumstances.

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 and professional fees or other charges, which has not been given by the applicant or a member of his or her 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 Head of Health & Enforcement Services.

All payments for improvement works will be made directly to the contractor. 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.

### 3.3.5 Repayment of the Grant

Conditions shall be attached to the grant regarding the repayment of any assistance and the applicant shall sign a declaration prior to the approval of the financial assistance agreeing to such conditions.

In the case of a grant, for which part or complete payment has been made, where the applicant disposes of the property, the applicant shall repay the Council on demand, the amount of grant that has been paid.

### 3.3.6 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.

Complaints against the service provided by the Home Improvement Agency should be addressed through the agency's complaint procedure.

## 3.4 Emergency Home Repairs Grants

An Emergency Home Repairs Grant is discretionary assistance available to vulnerable homeowners to help with small scale emergency works of repairs or improvement. The dwelling may be a building of traditional construction, a houseboat or a mobile home.

### 3.4.1 Applicant Eligibility

Eligible applicants must be homeowners or secure tenants which a repairing obligation to the property that are defined as vulnerable. The definition of a vulnerable household for the purpose of this strategy is a household on one or more income related or disability benefit. The relevant benefits are:

- Income Support
- Housing Benefit
- Council tax benefit (does not include single persons 25% discount)
- Income based job seekers allowance
- Attendance allowance
- Disability living allowance
- Industrial injuries disablement benefit
- War disablement pension

- Pension credit
- Working tax credit which includes a disability element and where recipient has a relevant income less than £16,040\*.
- Child tax credit where recipient has a relevant income of less than £16,040\*.

The Eligible benefits are set by Government and may be subject to change.

\* The relevant income threshold will be subject to amendments to keep it in line with the Warmfront eligibility criteria.

### 3.4.2 Types of Eligible Work

Discretionary grant assistance is available to remove emergency Category 1 housing Health & Safety Rating System Hazards from a dwelling. Examples of these defects include:

- Risk of immanent electric shock or fire as a result of a defective electrical installation as determined by a suitably qualified electrician's report.
- Risk of carbon monoxide poisoning from a gas appliance as determined by a suitably qualified gas safety engineer.
- Risk of imminent structural collapse of part of the building or structure.
- Dampness considered to be prejudicial to the health of the occupants.
- Repair or replacement of a domestic water heating appliance in accommodation occupied by the elderly, disabled or young children.
- Properties with collapsed drains causing surcharge of effluent, when remedial works are not covered by property insurance.

- Removal of a Category 1 hazard for excessive cold where the property is occupied by the elderly, disabled or young children and immediate access to Warmfront grant aid from the Government is not available.

### 3.4.3 Maximum Grant

Generally the maximum grant will be £2000, however in exceptional circumstances and at the discretion of the council this may be increased to remove the imminent risk.

These grants are subject to the availability of sufficient funding.

The award of an Emergency Home Repairs Grant does not prevent the applicant accessing other forms of financial assistance from the council, such as a Property Appreciation Loan or Repayment Loan.

### 3.4.4 Payment of the Grant

The grant may be paid in whole after completion of all of the eligible works.

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 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 Head of Health & Enforcement Services.

All payments for improvement works will be made directly to the contractor. 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.

### 3.4.5 Repayment of the Grant

There is no repayment of this grant.

### 3.4.6 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.

Complaints against the service provided by the Home Improvement Agency should be addressed through the agency's complaint procedure.

## 3.5 Top-up Energy Grants

A top-up energy Grant is discretionary assistance available to vulnerable occupiers who have been awarded funding through the Government's Warmfront scheme and the cost of works is greater than the grant awarded.

### 3.5.1 Applicant Eligibility

Eligible applicants must be occupiers who are defined as vulnerable. The definition of a vulnerable household for the purpose of this strategy is a household on one or more income related or disability benefit. The relevant benefits are:

- Income Support
- Housing Benefit
- Council tax benefit (does not include single persons 25% discount)
- Income based job seekers allowance
- Attendance allowance
- Disability living allowance
- Industrial injuries disablement benefit

- War disablement pension
- Pension credit
- Working tax credit which includes a disability element and where recipient has a relevant income less than £16,040\*.
- Child tax credit where recipient has a relevant income of less than £16,040\*.

The Eligible benefits are set by Government and may be subject to change.

\* The relevant income threshold will be subject to amendments to keep it in line with the Warmfront eligibility criteria

### 3.5.2 Types of Eligible Work

Discretionary grant assistance is available to top up any grant awarded through the Government's Warmfront scheme for the provision of heating and/or insulation measures.

### 3.5.3 Maximum Grant

Generally the maximum grant will be £1000.

These grants are subject to the availability of sufficient funding.

The award of a Top-up Energy Grant does not prevent the applicant accessing other forms of financial assistance from the council, such as a Property Appreciation Loan or Repayment Loan.

### 3.5.4 Payment of the Grant

The grant may be paid in whole after completion of all of the eligible works.

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 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 Head of Health & Enforcement Services.

All payments for improvement works will be made directly to the contractor. 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.

### 3.5.5 Repayment of the Grant

There is no repayment of this grant.

### 3.5.6 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.

Complaints against the service provided by the Home Improvement Agency should be addressed through the agency's complaint procedure.

## 3.6 Decent Homes Grant

Since 2006-07 funding had been made available from the Government Officer for the East Midlands (GOEM) to target vulnerable households living in non-decent accommodation by providing financial assistance to this group to carry out essential repairs and improvements to make their properties, warm, wind and water tight. Whilst this funding stream continues this type of assistance will be made available to vulnerable households across the district.

### 3.6.1 Applicant Eligibility

Eligible applicants must be occupiers who are defined as vulnerable. The definition of a vulnerable household for the purpose of this strategy is a household on one or more income related or disability benefit. The relevant benefits are:

- Income Support
- Housing Benefit
- Council tax benefit (does not include single persons 25% discount)
- Income based job seekers allowance
- Attendance allowance
- Disability living allowance
- Industrial injuries disablement benefit
- War disablement pension
- Pension credit
- Working tax credit which includes a disability element and where recipient has a relevant income less than £16,040\*.
- Child tax credit where recipient has a relevant income of less than £16,040\*.

The Eligible benefits are set by Government and may be subject to change.

\* The relevant income threshold will be subject to amendments to keep it in line with the Warmfront eligibility criteria.



### 3.6.2 Types of Eligible Work

Discretionary grant assistance is available to carry out essential repairs and improvements to bring a property up to the decent homes standard.

### 3.6.3 Maximum Grant

Generally the maximum grant will be £10,000.

These grants are subject to the availability of sufficient funding.

### 3.6.4 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 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 Head of Health & Enforcement Services.

All payments for improvement works will be made directly to the contractor. 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.

### 3.6.5 Repayment of the Grant

There is no repayment of this grant.

### 3.6.6 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.

Complaints against the service provided by the Home Improvement Agency should be addressed through the agency's complaint procedure.

## 3.7 Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants

Mandatory grant assistance is available for a broad range of essential adaptations to dwelling to enable the disabled occupants to manage as independently as possible and to remain living in their own homes.

The legislation governing these grants is the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 as amended by Schedule 3 of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002.

### 3.7.1 Applicant Eligibility

The mandatory aspect of the grant applies across all tenures; however tenants of Registered Social Landlords would be expected to approach their Housing Association in the first instance.

Applicants for these grants are subject to a test of financial resources. However for applicants claiming the following benefits no test of resources is required.

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (**not** contribution-based JSA)
- Guarantee Pension Credit (**not** Savings Pension Credit alone)
- Housing Benefit
- Council Tax Benefit
- Working Tax Credit and/or Child Tax Credit **provided that** the annual income for the purposes of assessing entitlement to the tax credit is **less than** £15,050\*

Where the work is required for a disabled child, there is no requirement to carry out a test of financial resources.

\*as amended by legislation when necessary.

### 3.7.2 Works Eligible for a Mandatory Grant.

Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant may be provided for the following purposes:

- facilitating access to and from the dwelling, including the garden
- making the dwelling or building safe for the disabled occupant
- facilitating access to a room used or usable to be used as the principal family room;
- facilitating access to, or providing a room usable for sleeping;
- facilitating access to, or providing a room in which there is a suitable lavatory and/or bathing and washing facilities,
- facilitating the preparation and cooking of food by the disabled occupant;
- improving any heating system in the dwelling to meet the needs of the disabled occupant
- facilitating the use of a source of power, light or heat by altering the position of control of that source or by providing additional means of control;

### 3.7.3 Maximum Grant

The maximum grant available is £30,000

### 3.7.4 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 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 Head of Health & Enforcement Services.

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 local land charge will be registered against the property in line with conditions attached to the grant approval.

### 3.7.5 Repayment of the Grant

In the case of a grant where the approval exceeds £5,000. and for which part or complete payment has been made, where the property is disposed of within 10 years of the certified date, the applicant shall repay the Council on demand such part of the grant that exceeds £5000. but not exceeding £10,000..

Where the property is sold, the Council will consider the conditions set out in The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996: Disabled Facilities Grant (Conditions relating to approval or payment of Grant) General Consent 2008 before making any demand for repayment.

There is no repayment of any grant where the approval is below £5,000.

### 3.7.6 Appeals and Complaints

All applicants have the right to make a complaint or appeal against any condition attached to the loan. The applicant should the council using the formal complaints process about any aspects of the service received.

Complaints against the service provided the Home Improvement Agency should be addressed through the agency's complaint procedure.

## 3.8 Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants

This grant is available to applicants where it is not possible or cost effective to adapt their current property for the needs of the disabled occupant. The proposed new property may still require some adaptation to make it suitable.

### 3.8.1 Applicant Eligibility

Applicants must be homeowners (including park homeowners) and have made an enquiry or application for a Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant which has either been refused or works deemed unreasonable.

All applicants for these grants are subject to a test of financial resources. However for applicants claiming the following benefits no test of resources is required.

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (**not** contribution-based JSA)
- Guarantee Pension Credit (**not** Savings Pension Credit alone)
- Housing Benefit
- Council Tax Benefit
- Working Tax Credit and/or Child Tax Credit **provided that** the annual income for the purposes of assessing entitlement to the tax credit is **less than** £15,050\*

Parents can make an application on behalf of a child under the age of 16 and will be subject to a test of financial resources.

\*as amended by legislation when necessary.

### 3.8.2 Types of Eligible Expenditure.

If it is deemed more suitable for the disabled person to relocate to an alternative property, the following fees and charges may be determined as legitimate removal expenditure

- Survey fees
- Solicitors fees
- Removal costs
- Home Improvement Agency fees

### 3.8.3 Maximum Grant

The total maximum discretionary grant is £15,000 to enable the applicant to move to a more suitable home. Within this grant a maximum of £5000 will be available for legitimate removal expenses and a further £10,000 will be available towards the cost of essential adaptations.

### 3.8.4 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 Head of Health & Enforcement Services.

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 local land charge will be registered against the property in line with conditions attached to the grant approval.

### **3.8.5 Repayment of the Grant**

In the case of a grant where the approval exceeds £5,000 and for which part or complete payment has been made, where the property is disposed of within 10 years of the certified date, the applicant shall repay the Council on demand such part of the grant that exceeds £5000 but not exceeding £10,000.

### **3.8.6 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.

Complaints against the service provided the Home Improvement Agency should be addressed through the agency's complaint procedure.

## **3.9 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.

### **3.9.1 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).

Following completion of the works the dwelling should 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.

### 3.9.2 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.

### 3.9.3 Maximum Grant

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

### 3.9.4 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 Head of Health & Enforcement Services.

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 local land charge will be registered against the property in line with conditions attached to the grant approval.



### 3.9.5 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 amount of grant that has been paid.

### 3.9.6 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.

## 3.10 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.

### 3.10.1 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..

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

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

### 3.10.2 Types of Improvement Works

Properties are eligible for this grant if they do not meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard. A decent home is one which is wind and

weather tight, warm and has modern facilities. The full definition of the Decent Homes Standard can be found in Appendix B.

### 3.10.3 Maximum Grant

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

### 3.10.4 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 Head of Health & Enforcement Services.

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 local land charge will be registered against the property in line with conditions attached to the grant approval.

### 3.10.5 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 amount of grant that has been paid.

### 3.10.6 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.

## 3.11 Landlord Property Improvement Grants

These grants are available to accredited landlords to carry out essential repairs and improvements for private rented accommodation.

### 3.11.1 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).

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

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

### 3.11.2 Types of Improvement Works

Properties are eligible for this grant if they do not meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard. A decent home is one which is wind and weather tight, warm and has modern facilities. The full definition of the Decent Homes Standard can be found in Appendix B.

### 3.11.3 Maximum Grant

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

### 3.11.4 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 Head of Health & Enforcement Services.

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 local land charge will be registered against the property in line with conditions attached to the grant approval.

#### **3.11.5 Repayment of the Grant**

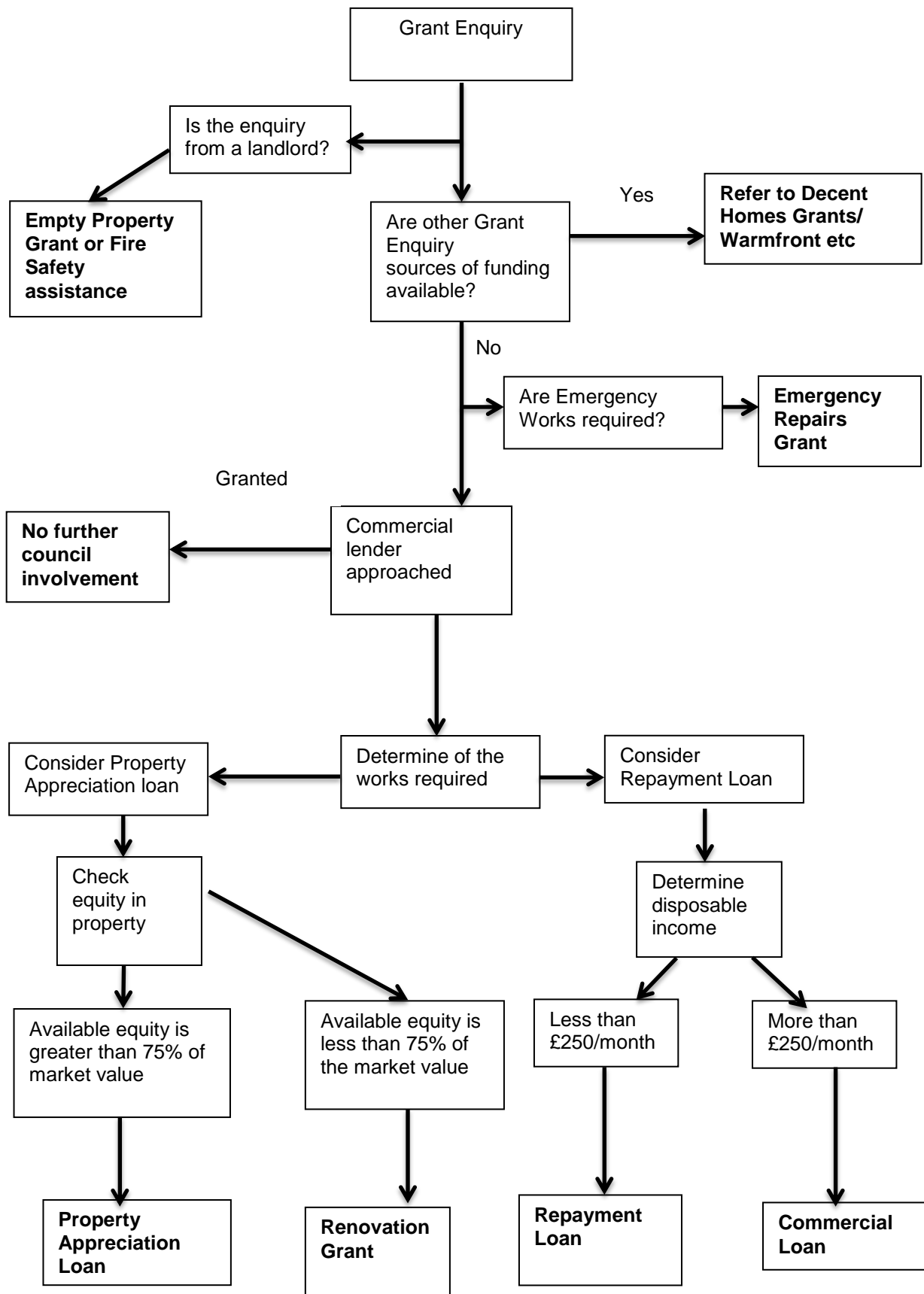
In the case of a grant, for which part or complete payment has been made, where the applicant disposes of the property, or the property is no longer made available for letting, the applicant shall repay the Council on demand the amount of grant that has been paid.

#### **3.11.6 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.

## **4 Appendices**

# Appendix A. Appendix



## **Appendix B. The Decent Homes Standard**

The definition of the Decent Homes Assessment Criteria comes from the Department for Communities Guidance “A Decent Home: Definition and guidance for implementation” June 2006 Update

### **Criteria A – Housing Health & Safety Rating System**

Dwellings failing to meet this criterion are those containing one or more hazards classed as Category 1 under the Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

The principle behind HHSRS is that a dwelling, including the structure, means of access, any associated outbuildings and garden, yard and/or other amenity space, should provide a safe and healthy environment for the occupiers and any visitors.

To satisfy this principle –

- A dwelling should be free from unnecessary and avoidable hazards; and
- Where hazards are necessary or unavoidable, they should be made as safe as reasonably possible.

### **Criteria B – it is in a reasonable state of repair**

Dwellings which fail to meet this criterion are those where either:

- One or more of the key building components are old and, because of their condition need replacing or major repair
- Two or more of the other building components are old and, because of their condition need replacing or major repair.

### **Criteria C – it has reasonably modern facilities**

Dwellings which fail to meet this criterion are those which lack three or more of the following:

- A reasonably modern kitchen (20 years old or less)
- A kitchen with adequate space or layout
- A reasonably modern bathroom (30 years old or less)
- An appropriately located bathroom and WC
- Adequate insulation against external noise (where external noise is a problem)
- Adequate size and layout of common areas for blocks of flats.

A home lacking two or less of the above is still decent therefore it is not necessary to modernize kitchens and bathrooms if a home passes the remaining criteria.

**Criteria D – It provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort**

This criterion requires a dwelling to have both effective insulation and efficient heating. Efficient heating is defined as any gas or oil programmable heating; or

- Electric storage heaters; or
- Warm air systems; or
- Underfloor systems; or
- Programmable LPG/solid fuel central heating; or
- Similarly efficient systems which are to be developed in the future