



EAST STAFFORDSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT COVER SHEET

Title of Report:	Scrutiny Review of Disabled Facilities Grants 2022	To be marked with an 'X' by Democratic Services after report has been presented
Meeting of:	Scrutiny (Value for Money Council) Committee	
	Corporate Management Team	
	Leader and Deputy Leaders	
	Cabinet	



Scrutiny Committee Review Final Report

Title: Scrutiny Review of Disabled Facilities Grants 2022

Scrutiny Committee: Scrutiny (Value for Money Council) Committee

Committee Chair: Cllr Dr R Lock

Sub-group Members Leading Review:

- Cllr Dr R Lock
- Cllr S McGarry
- Cllr L Beech
- Cllr P Hudson
- Cllr T Hadley

Is the Report Confidential? No

If so, please state relevant paragraph from Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972: N/a

SECTION 1: COMMITTEE'S REPORT

1. Introduction

1.1. Background / Context

1.1.1. At the meeting of the Scrutiny (Audit and Value for Money Council Services) Committee held on 24th March 2021, Committee Members agreed to progress a review of Disabled Facility Grants (DFGs). A sub-group of the Committee has been made up of the councillors named above to lead the review on behalf of the Committee.

1.1.2. This review is a follow up on the previous review into DFGs presented to Cabinet in April 2020. The recommendations arising from that review were as follows:

- To set targets for each stage of the process;
- To adopt the Audit recommendation to implement new procedures;
- For the Corporate Plan Target to be reviewed 55 days for urgent & 150 days for non-urgent cases;
- The Environmental Health Manager to provide quarterly performance updates for urgent and non-urgent cases to the Audit (Value for Money) Scrutiny Committee;
- To undertake a follow up of the DFG Scrutiny review within 12 months.

1.1.3. The recommendations as approved by Cabinet in April 2020 were as follows:

- To adopt the Audit recommendation to implement new procedures;
- A summary quarterly and a detailed 6 monthly report be provided by the Environmental Health Manager to the Scrutiny (Audit and Value for Money Council Services) Committee;
- To undertake a follow up of the DFG Scrutiny review following the review in December 2020.

1.2. What is the purpose of the Review?

1.2.1. To identify areas of the DFG service that may need improving.

1.3. What are the core questions the review is seeking to answer?

1.3.1. The core themes of this review are as follows:

- i. Performance of the DFG Service
- ii. Service Improvement
- iii. Key Measures

1.4. What was the Scrutiny Approach

1.4.1. The activities carried out in order to complete the review included desktop studies, review of benchmarking and discussion with relevant Council officers and key partners.

1.5. What is Within the Scope of the Review?

1.5.1. All aspects of the Council's DFG service.

1.6. What is Outside the Scope of the Review?

1.6.1. Aspects not related to the Council's DFG service.

2. Review of Disabled Facilities Grants 2022

2.1. Performance of the DFG Service

2.1.1. What is the end to end process, including all stages, of the DFG process?

2.1.1.1. The end to end DFG process is shown below:

Stage	Description
Stage 0: Initial Enquiry	Initial notification requesting a DFG. If 1 care need then client directed to the ESBC contracted OT. If a child's case or a Trent and Dove resident then the client is directed to Staffordshire County Council or Trent and Dove.
Stage 1: Referral	Referral received detailing the full adaptation that is required to meet the client's needs.
Stage 2: Application	The Adaptations Officers will process an application on behalf of the client. This involves obtaining ownership details of the property, tenant and/or owner permission certificates, financial checks or proof of benefits, drawing up plans and schedules of works, obtaining planning permission and/or building control approval if required, and contractor quotes.
Stage 3: Approval	A full and valid application is considered by the Head of Service for approval. Once approved the works can commence.
Stage 4: Completion	The adaptation has been completed and the works meet the requirements set by the OT. Certificates are obtained from the client, OT, building control (if required) along with any required certificates for electrical work etc and the contractor is paid.

2.1.2. Are there any outside influences that can potentially impact the delivery of the process? E.g. Do we work with any other organisations, and how much of the delivery time is reliant on the input of these other organisations? If there are more than one, is there a significant difference between partner's delivery timelines?

2.1.2.1. Outside influences have been detailed in previous Cabinet reports and appear to have largely been removed. The main ones that remain are due to client delays. The report presented to the Council's Cabinet in December 2022 indicated the below:

- a. *Previous reviews have highlighted a number of challenges causing delays within the DFG process, and whilst these have been addressed, the data for 21/22 contains some older cases that will have these historic delays within the timescale. It is important to note that the data relates to all DFGs that have completed in 21/22, however approximately 50% of cases were first received prior to 2020 and therefore these historical delays will be skewing the data as detailed below:*
- b. *Stage 1: The overall average timescales for enquiry to referral have significantly reduced from 90 days to 35 and are within the best practice guidelines for non-urgent and complex cases. Historically we have experienced delays with OT referrals via the registered social housing OT and children's OTs and these have reduced by signposting registered social housing occupants to the in-house OT service and revising the enquiry date that is used by children's OTs to ensure that they are correct and representative. Whilst the timescales for the current year has reduced, there remains some historic cases with OT delays with an average of wait of 273 days between enquiry and referral, which is skewing the overall timescale.*
- c. *Stage 2: The timescales for this stage are in excess of the best practice timescales. Client delays and landlord delays are the main factors that create delays in this stage of the process. We have worked closely with Trent and Dove to reduce the time taken for landlord approval to be granted and this had reduced from 11 to 7 days in 22/23. Client delays are unfortunately an issue that we have limited ability to reduce, with preferred works being a regular delay that impacts on timescales. In 21/22 4 cases have demonstrated average process timescales of 353 working days, with one in excess of 500 working days which has significantly skewed the data for this stage of the DFG process.*
- d. *Stage 3: The timescales for application to approval remain low and are within the best practice guidelines.*
- e. *Stage 4: The new guidelines have taken into account that complex works take longer to complete than simple adaptations, however the timescales for this stage of works are in excess of the best practice guidelines, especially for complex and urgent works. It is important to note that client delays have a significant impact on this stage of the works through delays associated with client contributions and Covid (clients isolating or issues with obtaining parts/building materials). 10 cases had timescales over 150 working days for stage 4, of which 7 were due to Covid or client delays. The new best practice guidelines have recently been incorporated to the contract for the DFG contractors and will be monitored quarterly.*

2.1.3. What are the eligibility criteria and funding thresholds? Have these changed?

- 2.1.3.1. DFGs are mandatory grants which are available to disabled people when works to adapt their home are judged necessary and appropriate to meet their needs, and when it is reasonable and practicable to carry them out having regard to the age and condition of the dwelling or building.
- 2.1.3.2. They are available to people of all ages and in all housing tenures (i.e. whether renting privately, from a social landlord or council, or owner-occupiers) to contribute to the cost of adaptations.
- 2.1.3.3. The maximum amount is £30,000 however this is subject to a means-test (except for children). This means that applicants' income and savings are assessed to determine the amount of any contribution they are required to make towards the cost of the work, and hence the amount of grant available to them.
- 2.1.3.4. The purposes for which a mandatory DFG may be given are set out in section 23(1) of the Act. These include:

- Facilitating access to and from the dwelling
- Making the dwelling safe
- Facilitating access to a room usable as a principal family room
- Facilitating access to a room used for sleeping
- Facilitating access to a room in which there is a lavatory
- Facilitating access to a bathroom
- Facilitating access to a room in which there is a wash hand basin
- Facilitating the preparation and cooking of food
- Improving or providing a heating system to meet the needs of the disabled occupant
- Facilitating the use of a source of power, light or heat by altering the position of controls
- Facilitating access and movement around the dwelling to enable the care of a person who is normally resident there and is in need of such care
- Access to the garden

2.1.3.5. The provision of a DFG is dependent on the works being necessary and appropriate and reasonable and practicable.

2.1.3.6. Necessary and Appropriate - In reaching a decision as to whether works are 'necessary and appropriate' the Council is required to 'consult the social services authority which is Staffordshire County Council's Occupational Therapy team who provide referrals for clients meeting the Care Act eligible needs criteria. Where a client requires an adaptation but does not meet Staffordshire County Councils criteria for an assessment an applicant must obtain an independent Occupational Therapist Assessment from an approved pool of providers. The Occupational Therapist will visit and assess the disabled person's needs and, where necessary, will consult the Council's technical officer when advice relating to technical matters is needed.

2.1.3.7. Reasonable and Practicable - The Council must be sure that it is reasonable and practical to approve a grant for an adaptation having regard to the age and condition of the dwelling. It is not reasonable and practicable to adapt some dwellings, for example:

- where there are multiple or excessive changes in levels
- where the dwelling is in a poor or dilapidated condition
- where moving existing services would be prohibitively expensive
- where the dwelling is a listed building or in a conservation area and the adaptation would be prohibitively expensive or inappropriate
- where the footprint or location of the dwelling makes an adaptation inappropriate
- where the adaptation work would have a negative effect on other residents

2.1.3.8. The mandatory grant has not changed since 2006 and is recognised as being insufficient to fund large adaptations with the current costs of works and therefore local authorities are encouraged to have a discretionary assistance policy that provides additional funding. ESBC introduced this in 2018 as a £15,000 top up to the mandatory £30,000. This was increased in 2021 to £50,000 for exceptional children's cases and £20,000 for all other cases. Discussions held with the service manager indicate that there would be value to applying a standardised approach across Staffordshire in relation to this, and they are actively working towards this.

- 2.1.3.9. The Council also provides discretionary assistance for disrepair and unforeseen works and a grant for relocation.
- 2.1.3.10. Full information on the provision of DFGs including eligibility is set out in the Council's Disabled Facilities Grants and Adaptations Policy. Amendments to the Policy providing updated best practice guidelines for the delivery of DFGs were approved by Cabinet in December 2022.
- 2.1.4. Are Occupational Therapists (OT) in-house, contracted etc?
- 2.1.4.1. The Council uses Rehab Jigsaw as a contracted OT service
- 2.1.5. What is the background to the in-sourcing of the service?
- 2.1.5.1. In November 2013, East Staffordshire Borough Council agreed to enter a Participation Agreement with Staffordshire County Council for the procurement of a Home Improvement Agency (HIA) Service across the County and within the Borough. The service provided assistance and support to households to enable them to remain living independently in their own homes and facilitated the delivery of DFGs. The successful tender was won by Revival and following a 1 year extension the contract ended on 31st March 2018.
- 2.1.5.2. A report reviewing options for the future delivery of DFGs in January 2018 recommended the provision of an in-house Disabled Facilities Grant service to provide significant benefits for service users and the Council by adopting a more personalised approach to service delivery, seeking to reduce delivery times and costs through 'smarter' service provision and reduced administration.
- 2.1.5.3. The in-house DFG service began in April 2018 following a short transitional period for active cases that had initially been administered by the previous HIA, Revival.
- 2.1.6. Are there any legacy or ongoing impacts on performance? Are there any barriers to performance / service delivery?
- 2.1.6.1. The biggest barrier reported by the Council's service team is client delays. They have not indicated any operational barriers. The challenges causing delays within the DFG process have generally been addressed, as indicated in the Cabinet report summarised in paragraph 2.1.2.1.
- 2.1.7. Are there issues around social and / or private landlords granting their permission for adaptations? How many permissions are granted or refused?
- 2.1.7.1. Some Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) have a lengthy approval timescale and the Council has worked with Trent and Dove to reduce this. Some landlords and RSLs also refuse to provide permission for the adaptations.
- 2.1.7.2. 5 have been refused by the Landlord since April 2022 and 5 were refused in 2021/22.

2.1.7.3. To explore potential implications relating to RSLs, representatives from Trent and Dove Housing Limited were invited to attend the Committee meeting held on 23rd March 2022. Jennifer Tenant-Foster attended the meeting, accompanied by Jake Hill. They gave a short presentation to the Committee Members.

2.1.7.4. It was noted, at that time, that:

- They had received a total of 52 requests for DFGs in 2021/2022.
- 16 requests were generated by Trent and Dove Occupational Therapists and 36 from Council Occupational Therapists.
- 33 requests were granted
- 3 requests from the Council refused
- 16 were awaiting application / refusal stage.

2.1.7.5. With reference to the refusals in 2021/2022 it was indicated that Trent and Dove have a responsibility to effectively manage its general needs housing stock to future proof it for future customers, deliver value for money and to provide homes which are safe, secure and meet the needs of the local population. The 3 refusals were made up of: 1 involved major structural change to the property and 2 were for family homes that were under-occupied.

2.1.7.6. It was also indicated that, moving forward, Trent and Dove are committed to the following:

- Improving communication throughout all stages of the process, particularly to those who have been refused;
- The review of DFG process with a view to implementing acceptable timeframes for each stage of the process;
- New Adaptations Policy December 2021;
- Focus on sustainable tenancies;
- Creation of an adapted property Housing Register;
- Closer working with their Development Team to ensure the properties they would build to meet the needs of their customers.

2.1.7.7. It was agreed that the representatives from Trent and Dove Housing Limited would attend a further meeting in six months' time to update Members.

2.1.7.8. As such, at the Committee meeting held on 28th September 2022, Members received a follow-up presentation from Jennifer Tenant-Foster, to update the Committee on the disabled facilities grant scheme.

2.1.7.9. It was noted that communications have been improved, customers who are refused are called and given an explanation as to why their application was unsuccessful, by an administrator who works within the Tenancy Sustainment team who supports this process. Trent and Dove's Occupational Therapist also contact the customer to discuss as to why they hadn't been accepted and are signposted to agencies that may be able to help them.

2.1.7.10. Also they were committed in March to undertake a review of how Trent and Dove manage adaptations, considering waiting times shard at the last

scrutiny meeting, and evidenced by some Members receiving complaints from residents in their ward. The review was underway, and improvements have already been made. A vision for the adaptations, which have been the guiding principles, was provided.

2.1.7.11. It was reported that Trent and Dove had refused three disabled facilities grant and the reasons had been given to the customers and their next step going forward. Trent and Dove has also committed £100k per year to fund other (i.e. non-DFG) minor adaptations, and data showing the agreed adaptations was provided.

2.1.7.12. It was noted that Trent & Dove's Older Person's Strategy has been written and adaptations are a key element of it. The first stage is the introduction of a formal register. From April, Trent & Dove implemented a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system which now flags properties as having had an adaptation, so work has started but it will take time to complete this.

2.1.7.13. The vision is to have an adapted register alongside the stock register; once they assess an individual as needing an adapted property, they will form part of this register which will wait for void adapted properties, or for a new build property.

2.1.8. How are resources utilised? Is there sufficient capacity? How many FTE members of staff does the Council have working on DFGs, and how does this compare to other local authorities?

2.1.8.1. Following approval of the December 2022 Cabinet report, the Council has 1 technical officer, 2 permanent caseworkers, 1 temporary caseworker (until March 2025) and 1 support officer. The Service Manager has indicated that there is sufficient capacity.

2.1.8.2. The resource equates to 5 Full Time Equivalent employees. Every LA works differently regarding DFGs. It was indicated that some other Staffordshire authorities are in the process of bringing their services in-house following the end of the shared Home Improvement Agency.

2.1.8.3. Further benchmarking information is referred to in Paragraph 2.3.5.

2.1.9. What is the budget?

2.1.9.1. The Council has received a grant of £1,160,392 via the Better Care Fund from Government. It has been this amount since 2020/21, but the Council is not made aware of the amount of funding it will receive until March.

2.1.10. Are there any resource pressures and / or opportunities that could be investigated?

2.1.10.1. The service manager has indicated that they have been reviewing the DFG service since it was brought in-house in 2018. The Council has reduced the timescales associated with delivering adaptations and the Council will continue to manage and review the service to continue this improvement. The service manager has indicated that times had reduced by 19% in the last year, exceeding their target of 10%.

2.2. Service Improvement

2.2.1. Have there been or are there any planned improvements to the DFG process? What are the anticipated timescales?

2.2.1.1. Please refer to Paragraph 2.1.2.1 for further information on improvements made.

2.2.2. Has the total number of days from start to finish, for each application, reduced over the last five years?

2.2.2.1. Yes, from 362 in 2017/18 to 250 in 21/22.

2.2.3. How many applications have been received in each of these years?

Year	Number of DFGs Approved	Number of DFGs Completed	Total DFG Spend
21/22	67	65	£973K
20/21	59	49	£741K
19/20	44	35	£581K
18/19	16	32	£253K
17/18	88	77	£782K

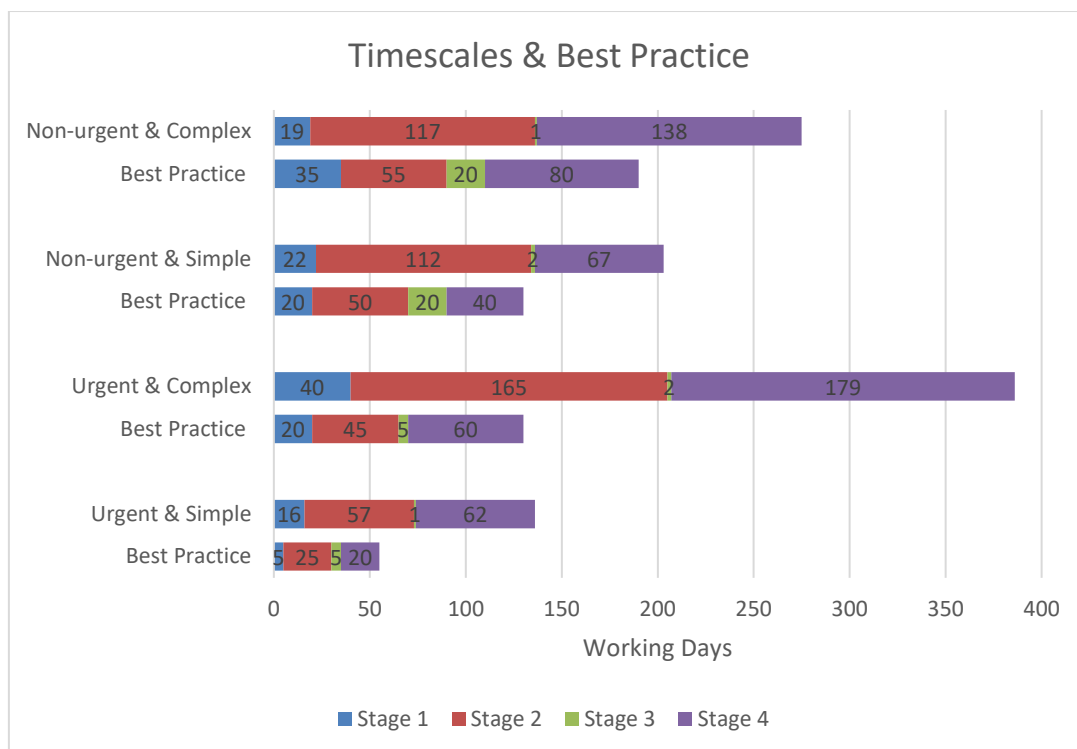
2.2.4. What has been the impact of Covid-19 on the performance? Has this affected the number of applications?

2.2.4.1. It has been indicated by the Service Manager that Covid has resulted in delays due to clients isolating or issues obtaining parts, and that it has not affected the number of applications or approvals.

2.3. Key Measures

2.3.1. How good is the service compared to the Council's agreed metrics? What are the key measures the Council is measuring for example relating to cost / quality / time / satisfaction, etc? What does success look like?

2.3.1.1. New PIs have been recommended by Government which have only just been incorporated in to the DFG policy. Please see graph below:



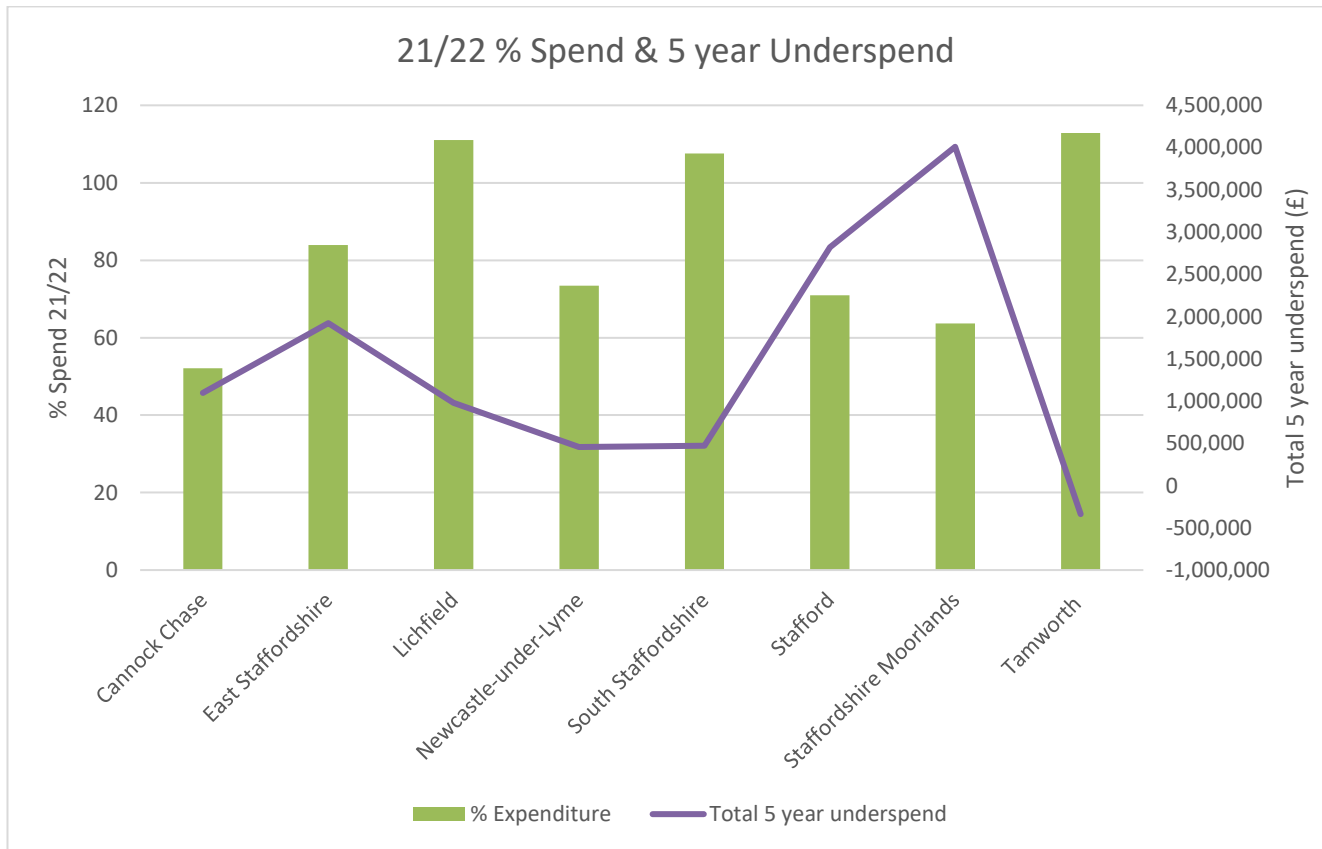
2.3.1.2. There are a number of Key Performance Indicators that have recently been put in place with the contractors as detailed in the table below. These are a recent addition to the process and as such no analysis has been undertaken of the performance against these KPIs as part of this review. The Council will performance manage the contractors against these KPIs moving forward.

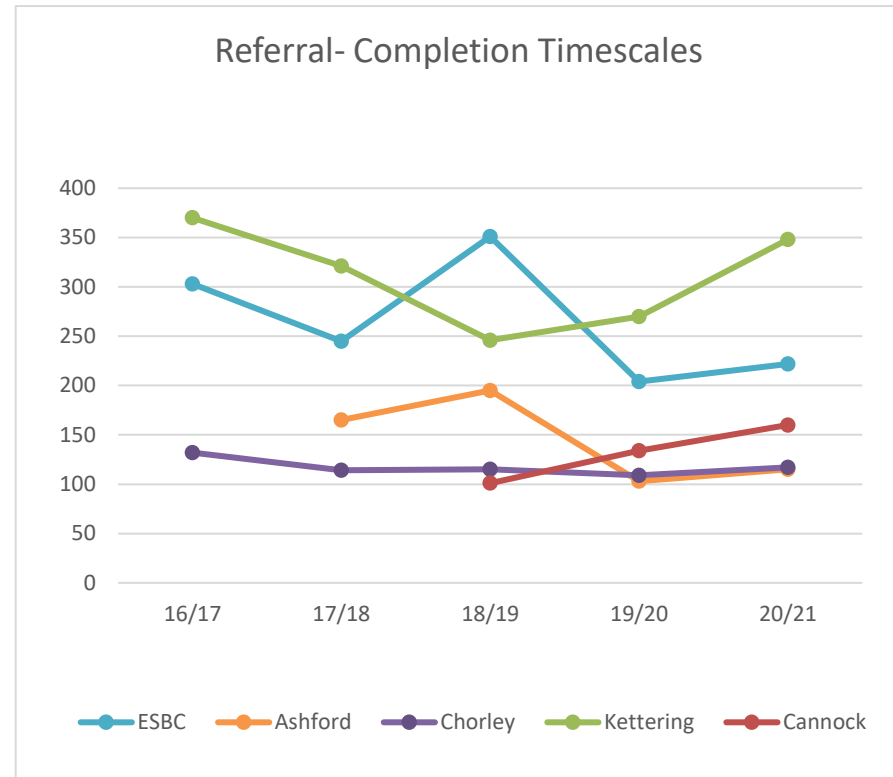
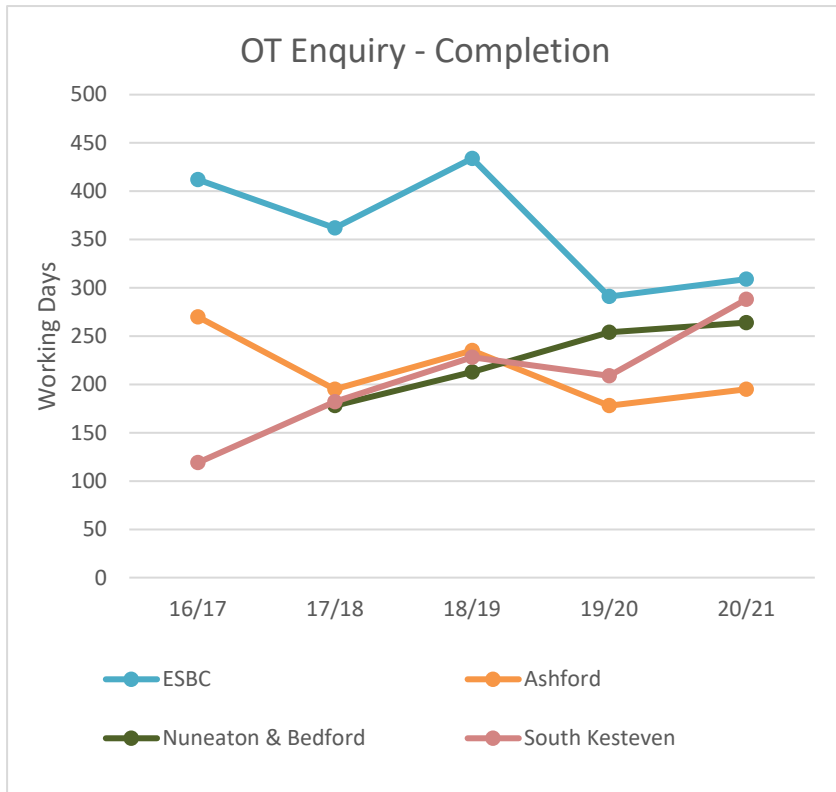
KPI Description	How the information will be provided	Target
Number of Health and Safety near misses safe / unsafe actuals reported monthly	Supplier to provide a quarterly report	10
Number of Health and Safety audits undertaken	Supplier to provide a quarterly report	4
Employee training records are in date	Supplier to provide a quarterly report	95%
Number of accidents	Supplier to provide a quarterly report	0
Number of toolbox talks	Annual Report	4
Clients are satisfied with the works (good vs v good rating)	Suppliers to provide customer satisfaction reports and council to undertake its own research quarterly	95%
Works delivered to quotation	Number of unforeseen works requested per quarter	95%
Provision of quotes received in 10 working days	Suppliers and council records reviewed on a quarterly basis	95%

KPI Description	How the information will be provided	Target
Contractor start date in 15 days of approval	Review of council and supplier records quarterly	95%
Urgent & Simple works are completed in 20 days (approval to completion)	Records provided from the supplier and council on a quarterly basis	95%
Non-urgent & Simple works completed in 40 days (approval to completion)	Records provided from the supplier and council on a quarterly basis	95%
Urgent & Complex works are completed in 60 days (approval to completion)	Records provided from the supplier and council on a quarterly basis	95%
Non-urgent & Complex works are completed in 80 days (approval to completion)	Records provided from the supplier and council on a quarterly basis	95%

2.3.2. How does performance compare to other local authorities?

2.3.2.1. Other Staffordshire authorities may record DFGs differently to the recommended guidance and therefore numbers of grants delivered may not be directly compared. However the service team have provided the charts below comparing spend:





2.3.3. Consider relative performance against statistical and geographical neighbours.

2.3.3.1. A benchmarking questionnaire was also sent to Staffordshire borough / district councils and to CIPFA nearest neighbours. Four responses were received as detailed in **Appendix 1 “DFG Benchmarking”**. Comparative figures for East Staffordshire Borough Council have also been included.

2.3.3.2. This exercise indicates that the Council has generally improved its own performance over recent years, as shown in the table below:

East Staffordshire DFG Performance Summary 2018-2022

Year	Number of FTE working on DFG processing	Annual Budget for DFG Adaptations	Percentage of Annual Budget Spent in Year	Number of Applications Received	Number of Applications Refused	Number of Adaptations Completed	Average time from request to approval (weeks)
2018/19	2	£947,755	27%	20	0	32	11
2019/20	3	£1,022,684	57%	36	0	35	0.4
2020/21	3	£1,160,392	64%	58	0	49	0.2
2021/22	4.8	£1,160,392	84%	67	0	65	0.2
2022/23 (Apr to Dec)	4.8	£1,160,392	52%	56	0	41	0.4

2.3.3.3. Taking the most recent full financial year, a comparison of CIPFA Nearest Neighbour authorities responding to the Committee's benchmarking is below. While there are gaps in the data the Council generally appears to compare favourably:

CIPFA Nearest Neighbours DFG Performance Comparison 2021/22

Authority	In-house or outsourced?	Number of FTE working on DFG processing	Annual Budget for DFG Adaptations	Percentage of Annual Budget Spent in Year	Number of Applications Received	Number of Applications Refused	Number of Adaptations Completed	Average time from request to approval (weeks)
East Staffordshire	In-house	4.8	£1,160,392	84%	67	0	65	0.2
Mendip	DFG Function is in-house. HIA project manages 90% of applications	1	£1,009,598	95%	77	0	69	1
Carlisle	*	**	£2,155,574	£2,021,873	274	N/A	301***	6 days****
Bassetlaw	In-house	2	£1,265,000	48%	85	4	53	25
Cannock Chase	In-house	3	£1,051,244	*****	49	N/A	49	14.7
Chorley	In-house	3	£878,988	87%	160	Unknown	115	13

* The RRO Housing Assistance policy delivery is split between the in-house Home Improvement Agency (Homelife Carlisle) and the Council's Housing and Pollution Team. The H&P team deliver mandatory DFG function, discretionary is both services. Homelife also deliver other grants outside the DFG allocation.

** HIA is 1 FT Team Leader, 1 case officer and 1 case worker for hospital discharge. H&P is equivalent 0.2 Service Manager, 1.4 equivalent staff for DFG delivery and 1 FT Trusted Assessor

***Formal application to approval

**** Core mandatory DFG referrals have increased in the last 4 years, but we have changed our reporting on cases so numbers appear lower. The HIA previously reported on types of grants approved, rather than persons assisted.

***** Can't collate spend on works with on-costs.

2.3.4. Are there any networks in place that facilitate benchmarking, exchange of best practice etc?

2.3.4.1. Yes via [Foundations](#) which is the National Body for Disabled Facilities Grant and Home Improvement Agencies in England. They are contracted by Government to oversee a national network of nearly 200 home improvement agencies (HIAs) and handyperson providers across the country. In practice they:

- Have Regional Advisors who can provide expert advice and support
- Supply consultancy services* if partners need more in-depth support
- Run events like the DFG Champions Roadshows and the National Healthy Housing Awards
- Provide specialist training courses* including free in-house training on DFGs
- Offer the leading online case management database* for the sector
- Give grant funding for measures and pilot projects through Foundations Independent Living Trust
- Maintain this website with a host of information and practical resources.

*At a cost.

2.3.5. Are there any additional key measures that could be agreed that would aid service performance and improvement?

2.3.5.1. The service team indicated that Customer Satisfaction Questionnaires could aid improvement. They do not conduct a customer satisfaction questionnaire but it is something that they are incorporating with the new contractors. All works are however signed off by the caseworker, the OT and the client and any snagging issues are identified and rectified at that stage.

2.4. Background Papers

2.4.1. Over recent years the Council's Cabinet have received a report, as available from the Council website:

- [Cabinet 13 December 2022 \(eaststaffsbc.gov.uk\)](#) (Agenda Item 6)
- [Cabinet 20th December 2021 \(eaststaffsbc.gov.uk\)](#) (Agenda Item 12)
- [Cabinet - 14th December 2020 \(eaststaffsbc.gov.uk\)](#) (Agenda Item 12)
- [Cabinet - 9th December 2019 \(eaststaffsbc.gov.uk\)](#) (Agenda Item 8)

3. Conclusions

- 3.1. The review into DFGs encompassed a number of forms of data collection & analysis, including multiple interviews with Trent & Dove, and with Service managers. It is clear that while the service had a number of challenges to face with both internal and external processes when the review was launched, further exacerbated by the pandemic, many of these issues have now been resolved, or are in the process of being resolved.
- 3.2. The service is however still outside the best practice timescales for DFG completion, and as such there is value in continuing the current annual reporting process (recommendation 4.1). Some amendments are advisable in order to maintain suitable oversight and incentivisation in this area. In discussions with service managers the sub-group recommended the annual reports include analysis both with and without outliers, caused by a few very protracted applications, significantly skewing the data averages for stage 1-4 completion. In terms of oversight there would be value in including the Scrutiny Value for Money Committee in the distribution of the annual DFG report as the committee in the relevant corporate priority area (Recommendation 4.2). Discussions with service managers indicated that targets had been set for DFG timescale reduction last year of 10%. Given the service achieved time reductions of 19%, and no forward target has yet been set, we recommend targets continue to be set, in consultation with the service head to ensure a suitable target (Recommendation 4.3).
- 3.3. Given satisfaction surveys were conducted prior to the in-sourcing of the service, and given the current lack of reliable data regarding how residents feel about the process itself, we would recommend putting these back into place, and making the data from these part of the annual reporting process (Recommendation 4.4).
- 3.4. It is clear from discussions with Trent & Dove that the current plan to put in place an adapted housing register would have significant benefits to all parties. It would enable Trent & Dove to assign appropriate housing based on projected future needs. It would remove some applications from the DFG altogether, and could potentially enable residents to avoid lengthy adaptation of properties unnecessarily. However, it is also clear that completion of the register is not currently a core priority for Trent & Dove, and as such recommend pressure be brought to bear to encourage them to complete the register as soon as possible (Recommendation 4.5).
- 3.5. In relation to the Council's staffing of the service it is clear that improved staffing levels are bringing timescales down towards the best practice guidelines. However, the current plan proposed in the 2022 annual DFG report, is to make one post permanent (support officer) and the other remain fixed term (housing adaptations officer). Given the trend of increasing DFG application numbers, and in the interests of continuing service improvement and investment in personnel, we would recommend consideration towards making both positions permanent (Recommendation 4.6). The flexibility inherent in officer contracts should ensure effective use of personnel regardless of any future uncertainty in DFG government funding & workload.

4. Recommendation(s) of the Committee

- 4.1. To continue the current annual approach to DFG reporting.
- 4.2. To include Scrutiny VFM in the annual reporting process.

- 4.3. For a suitable target reduction for stage 1-4 completion timescales to be set for the coming year.
- 4.4. For satisfaction surveys to be applied following stage 4 completion going forwards.
- 4.5. For Trent and Dove to be encouraged appropriately to complete their adapted housing register as soon as possible
- 4.6. For Cabinet to review the proposed plan reported in the annual DFG review for 2022, to consider whether making both positions permanent would be beneficial.

5. Appendices

- 5.1. Appendix 1. DFG Benchmarking.

SECTION 2: OFFICER CONSIDERATIONS

6. Financial Considerations

*This section has been approved by the following member of the Financial Management Unit: **Lisa Turner***

- 6.1. The cost of the service is funded by the DFG grant the Council receives from Government. The more spent on delivering the service, the less grant the Council has available for DFGs.
- 6.2. The funding the Council receives from Government is not guaranteed, and the Council does not know how much it will receive until approximately February / March for the following financial year. There is therefore a risk that funding may be reduced or not received.
- 6.3. The post recommended by the Committee to be considered to be made permanent is Grade 5 (SCP 12-17) in the Council Pay Range (£24,496 to £26,845 per annum). The basis of the post originally being fixed term was to support dealing with the backlog in applications. If the post were to be made permanent, unless there is a similar uplift in Government Grant, this would increase the percentage of the grant used to deliver the service on an ongoing basis. Should the size of the team need to be scaled back in the future, unless there is scope for re-deployment the cost of any compensation would fall directly on the budget (as opposed to being met from the ring-fenced grant).

7. Legal Considerations

*This section has been approved by the following member of the Legal Team: **John Teasdale***

- 7.1. There are no significant legal issues arising directly from the recommendations of the Committee.

8. Risk Assessment and Management

- 8.1. The main risks arising from this Report and the Council achieving its objectives are as follows:
- 8.2. **Positive** (Opportunities/Benefits):
 - 8.2.1. Effective scrutiny of performance to ensure the ongoing provision of a service that is effective and responsive to local needs.
- 8.3. **Negative** (Threats):

8.3.1. The funding the Council receives from Government is not guaranteed, and the Council does not know how much it will receive until approximately February / March for the following financial year.

8.4. The risks do not need to be entered in the Risk Register.

8.5. Any financial implications to mitigate against these risks are considered above.

9. **Equalities and Health**

9.1. **Equality Impacts:** The subject of this Report is not a policy, strategy, function or service that is new or being revised. An equality and health impact assessment is not required at this time.

9.2. **Health Impacts:** The outcome of the health screening question does not require a full Health Impact Assessment to be completed. An equality and health impact assessment is not required.

10. **Human Rights**

10.1. There are no Human Rights issues arising from this Report.

11. **Sustainability** (including climate change and change adaptation measures)

11.1. Does the proposal result in an overall positive effect in terms of sustainability (including climate change and change adaptation measures) **Not applicable**