

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

10 SEPTEMBER 2015

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Environment & Housing – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Mike Smith
Health & Wellbeing – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Jim Beall

STOCKTON'S FUEL POVERTY PARTNERSHIP & AFFORDABLE WARMTH STRATEGY/ ACTION PLAN

1. Summary

Stockton's Fuel Poverty Partnership has been operational since September 2013 as a stand-alone thematic partnership within the LSP structure. Fuel Poverty is a cross cutting issue which directly impacts on an estimated 8911 households across Stockton Borough. This report outlines the ambitions of the partnership, highlights the achievements made so far and presents a revised Affordable Warmth Strategy and Action Plan aimed at bringing affordable warmth to many more households.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. Cabinet note the contents of this report and endorse the Affordable Warmth Strategy and Action Plan.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

To acknowledge the contribution that Stockton's Fuel Poverty Partnership is making towards tackling fuel poverty and promoting affordable warmth throughout the Borough in 2015/16 and future years, and to endorse the specific measures outlined in the attached Affordable Warmth Strategy and Action Plan.

4. Members' Interests (the text below is fixed and should not be altered by the author, however, extensive guidance on the Members' Code of conduct is available to officers if required)

Members (including co-opted Members) should consider whether they have a personal interest in any item, as defined in **paragraphs 9 and 11** of the Council's code of conduct and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with and/or taking account of **paragraphs 12 - 17** of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 16** of the code, in any business of the Council he/she must then, **in accordance with paragraph 18** of the code, consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest and the business:-

- affects the members financial position or the financial position of a person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code, or
- relates to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to the member or any person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code.

A Member with a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, may attend the meeting but must not take part in the consideration and voting upon the relevant item of business. However, a member with such an interest may make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to that business before the business is considered or voted on, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under a statutory right or otherwise (**paragraph 19** of the code)

Members may participate in any discussion and vote on a matter in which they have an interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, where that interest relates to functions of the Council detailed in **paragraph 20** of the code.

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

It is a criminal offence for a member to participate in any discussion or vote on a matter in which he/she has a disclosable pecuniary interest (and where an appropriate dispensation has not been granted) **paragraph 21** of the code.

Members are required to comply with any procedural rule adopted by the Council which requires a member to leave the meeting room whilst the meeting is discussing a matter in which that member has a disclosable pecuniary interest (**paragraph 22** of the code)

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DETAIL

Background

1. Fuel Poverty is a challenging health, social and economic and environmental problem which according to the latest Government statistical release affects 8911 households across Stockton Borough (DECC June 2015), representing 11.1% of total households. The estimated rate of fuel poverty in Stockton is above the England rate of 10.4% but below the regional average for the North East at 11.8%. Stockton's fuel poverty estimate is the lowest in the Tees Valley.
2. Fuel Poverty is inevitably more prevalent amongst households:-
 - on a low income
 - containing families with children under the age of 16
 - containing people with disabilities or suffering from long-term limiting illnesses
 - occupied by older people, or under occupied households

The Implications of Fuel Poverty

3. The recognised implications of fuel poverty range from psychological stress, social isolation and causing or exacerbating serious illnesses commonly respiratory or circulatory conditions. Households in fuel poverty have to face a choice between spending money to

heat their home adequately and incur debt or rationing fuel and living in cold and possibly damp conditions that are prejudicial to their health.

4. The negative health impacts of living in a cold home are widely recognised in research and a growing number of practical interventions to tackle the issue and promote well-being. Reducing fuel poverty is therefore a key objective within a variety of local plans including Stockton's Health & Well-being Strategy in addition to the Affordable Warmth Strategy being considered here.

Stockton's Fuel Poverty Partnership

5. The new Affordable Warmth Strategy and action plan presented here has been developed and agreed by Stockton's Fuel Poverty Partnership. This is the Partnership's second strategy, reflecting the changing circumstances within Stockton Borough, the contribution of the Partnership since its inception in September 2013, and building on the successes delivered under the original 2014 strategy.
6. Stockton's Fuel Poverty Partnership includes representatives from Public Health, Private Sector Housing, Registered Social Landlords, Private Sector Landlords Representative, Catalyst's Voice Forum, 5 Lamps, Stockton District Advice & Information Centre and GoWarm. The contribution from partners has been generous and the collective knowledge and expertise is invaluable to ensure the Affordable Warmth Strategy and Action Plan continues to progress and achieve positive outcomes. The Partnership has recruited the right representatives to reflect the breadth of the issues to be tackled and partners are taking an active role in setting the Partnership's agenda and delivering meaningful activity.

The Objectives of the Fuel Poverty Partnership

7. The Fuel Poverty Partnership has set a number of objectives targets and developed an action plan to reflect these with an aim of reducing the incidences of fuel poverty. These include priorities such as:-
 - ensuring the most vulnerable residents and the most energy inefficient properties are prioritised and targeted
 - ensuring affordable warmth and the trap of fuel poverty is recognised at the highest levels within the Council and partner organisations
 - Supporting householders to gain the lowest possible energy tariffs, reduce social inequalities in energy costs and maximise their income to help pay energy bills
 - Helping householders to reduce their energy consumption, by improved energy efficiency in their homes, and through better energy usage
 - Providing interventions to support residents in crisis due to cold homes
 - Continually improving the standard, warmth and energy efficiency of all housing

The specific activities aimed at delivering outcomes related to these objectives are the subject of the Action Plan and are commended to Cabinet for endorsement.

The Partnership's Activity to Date

8. Some examples of the important delivery that has taken place under the first Affordable Warmth Strategy in the last 12 months to tackle the Partnership's objectives include:

- A £1m External Wall Insulation programme via the Energy Company Obligation scheme (ECO) to 660 properties in 2014/15 taking the total number of properties improved in the last 3 years to 3165
- During the winter of 2014/15, 855 specific interventions were delivered through the Warm Homes Healthy People (WHHP) programme to support individuals and households to tackle cold homes and promote wellbeing including 111 boiler repairs/replacements to slips, trips and falls prevention;
- The Thirteen Group invested in energy efficiency measures to 1196 homes during 2014/15 comprising of 2358 specific measures from replacement windows, insulation treatments to the installation of photovoltaic panels;
- Stockton District Advice and Information Service provide comprehensive support to residents to address debt, fuel debt specifically and promote income maximisation. The service identified £420,294 in previously unclaimed benefit entitlement for WHHP clients alone during the winter of 2014/15;
- Five Lamps provided advice to residents to help them make informed decisions concerning saving energy and switching energy provider to secure the best value for money tariff. This valuable service supported some vulnerable clients in receiving intensive support to save on utilities;

The Affordable Warmth Strategy

9. The Fuel Poverty Partnership is to be commended for developing and delivering an effective strategy back in 2014 and for following its action plan through to deliver good outcomes, and it has now successfully developed a revised strategy to continually improve the collective approach to delivering affordable warmth. There are 29 projects and actions contained within the attached strategy, partners continue to invest resources to see improvement in peoples properties and lives, and continually seek external funding to progress on this issue.
10. We will continue to monitor progress against the government's fuel poverty Low Income High Cost indicator, how many households in Stockton-on-Tees are suffering without affordable warmth and the performance of domestic housing stock, in assessing how we are performing on fuel poverty. The strategy is presented to Cabinet for endorsement with a report to be provided in 12 months' time detailing performance against the action plan.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

11. There are no financial implications associated with this item.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

12. There are no legal implications associated with this item.

COUNCIL PLAN THEMES

Health and Well Being
Environment and Housing

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

13. This report is not subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

14. None at this stage.

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Education related?

No

Background Papers

Affordable Warmth Strategy and action plan

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

All

Property

Not applicable