

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

12 July 2018

**REPORT OF SENIOR
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport – Councillor Mike Smith

AFFORDABLE WARMTH OUTCOMES 2017/18

1. Summary

Current levels of fuel poverty have been increasing across the UK as energy prices rise and household incomes are squeezed. It is an issue that still affects 9,907 (12.3%) of households across Stockton-on-Tees and there are also persistent inequalities between wards and Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs).

The inability to keep warm at home is more than just a comfort issue; it has a real measurable impact on health and wellbeing. Promoting affordable warmth and tackling fuel poverty remains at the top of our agenda in Stockton-on-Tees and our Affordable Warmth Strategy directs an approach to prioritising key issues, and delivering interventions to address them.

During the winter 2017/18 we have:

- supported 287 households through the Warm Homes Healthy People Programme
- assisted 206 households through Energy Champions
- have saved an estimated £41,000 for 231 households through the Big Community Switch
- brought in **£616,499** of additional income for 354 vulnerable households through various programmes
- Began delivery under a £1.6 m consortium scheme to bring first time central heating systems to fuel poor households

2. Recommendation

Cabinet note the report on outcomes to tackle fuel poverty in vulnerable households

3. Reasons for the Recommendation/Decision

To recognise the efforts of partnership working aimed at tackling fuel poverty and promoting affordable warmth across the borough of Stockton-on-Tees.

4. Members' Interests

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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SUMMARY

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Recommendation

Cabinet note the report on outcomes to tackle fuel poverty in vulnerable households

DETAIL

1. The Government's Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy publish estimates of fuel poverty by Local Authority and Lower Super Output area each June. The 2017 release saw the estimate for England increasing from 10.6% to 11%:
 - The 2017 estimate for Stockton-on-Tees increased from 10.7% to 12.3%.
 - Within the Tees Valley sub region, Stockton-on-Tees has had the lowest estimated level of fuel poverty consistently over recent years and remains the lowest.
 - Stockton-on-Tees estimate remains the joint second lowest in the North East region, second only to North Tyneside at 11.1%.

2. Promoting affordable warmth and tackling fuel poverty is an issue that remains at the top of our agenda across Stockton-on-Tees. In the recent past Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and its partners have delivered support to residents of all ages in an attempt to reduce the burden of rising energy costs and cold and inefficient homes. With 9,907 households still affected by fuel poverty there is still a great deal to do. We are acutely aware that there are inequalities in fuel poverty levels between wards and Lower Super Output Areas across the Borough.
3. The following is a review of the help and support delivered in the period October 2017 to the end of March 2018 aimed at tackling fuel poverty, led by the Affordable Warmth Strategy which is overseen by the Housing Neighbourhood and Affordable Warmth Partnership. The strategy and its accompanying action plan is a joint statement of the Council's and partner's approach to promote and increase affordable warmth, bringing together stakeholders including Council Services, the voluntary and community sector, Registered Providers and Private Sector Landlord towards the common goal of tackling fuel poverty. Our work with Stockton and District Advice and Information Service (SDAIS) has been particularly beneficial during the winter 2017/18 on schemes such as:
 - Warm Homes Healthy People
 - Big Community Switch
 - Energy Champions
 - The Warm Homes Fund

Warm Homes Healthy People

4. Warm Homes Healthy People (WHHP) is a partnership project to provide help and support to some of the Borough's most vulnerable residents at a time when it is most needed with a package of on-going support to tackle poor health and cold homes.
5. WHHP 7 operated from October 2017 until 31 March 2018, funded by Public Health as part of the Better Care Fund. The initiative supported 287 households with 623 interventions delivered by a range of partners:

Yorkshire Homes

Yorkshire Homes (Home Improvement Agency) provided support including laying loft insulation, draught proofing windows, insulating pipework and installing carbon monoxide detectors

Stockton CAB

Stockton & District Advice & Information Service (SDAIS) assisted 148 households, all in their own home, delivering 456 interventions including advice on benefit entitlement as part of an income maximisation service, energy efficiency support and advice on tariff/energy supplier switching and practical support. £509,413 of previously unclaimed benefits has been brought into the Borough; £111,567 of which is already confirmed and an additional £397,846 is in process. £1,797 of energy debt was written off by successful negotiations with energy companies or applications to charitable trusts, and £2,041 was saved for households from fuel provider/tariff switching.

H, V and E

The Council's H, V&E Service delivered 105 interventions to ensure households had operational heating systems including 44 boiler services, 38 boiler repairs and 23 boiler / heating system replacements. The winter of 2017/18 was significantly colder than previous years and resulted in an extended heating season. The increased demand for HV&E services is a reflection of the colder weather and the fact that Energy Company Obligation (ECO) funding for replacement boilers was not available during this winter period.

Cleveland Fire

Cleveland Fire Brigade (CFB) delivered an emergency response service 24/7 as part of WHHP7 with 13 households benefitting from temporary, emergency heating, and 17 households benefitting from a fire safety assessment.

The Big Community Switch (BCS)

6. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council promotes the BCS as a means for residents to secure good value for money on their utility bills. Part of a national campaign led by independent organisation iChoosr, the BCS provides an opportunity to receive a unique tariff offer via the power of collective purchasing, and therefore the more registrants involved the better the offer for energy pricing.
7. Two separate 'Switches' were conducted in October 2017 and February 2018 which saw 1014 households register, 231 households change supplier and tariff, who will now benefit from a combined annual saving of £41,544. Since we began promoting BCS in Stockton-on-Tees, over 1074 households have switched to cheaper energy saving a combined £191k per annum.

Energy Champions

8. SDAIS secured funding to target households within the four neighbourhoods with the highest prevalence of fuel poverty. The initiative delivered:
 - energy efficiency advice
 - practical help to switch to cheaper tariffs
 - a full income maximisation service
 - promotion of energy grants and discounts
 - support to manage energy bills/debt
9. As one of 17 national pilot areas, the scheme will influence the approach to promoting affordable warmth for Citizen Advice Bureau's across the UK. A summary of the key outcomes is set out below.
 - 206 households benefitting from advice: 44 in Stockton, 43 in Eaglescliffe, 54 in Billingham, 65 in Thornaby
 - SDAIS switched energy tariff/supplier for 16 households saving an average of £117 per annum for each.
 - Income maximisation work has enabled clients to claim £107,086 of previously unclaimed benefits.

Warm Homes Fund

10. Launched on the 17 July 2017, the Warm Homes Fund (WHF) is providing £150 million nationally over three years to local authorities and registered providers. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council is participating as part of a regional partnership along with six other North East authorities. The £1.6 million of funding secured by the partnership will bring first time central heating to up to 26 fuel poor homes across Stockton-on-Tees that are not currently connected to the gas network. Referrals are being taken until the end of May 2018, with connections to the gas network and installations during the summer months. The Council will also seek to bid for further funding under later rounds of this scheme.
11. The Energy Company Obligation³ (ECO3), will be launched in October 2018 and run until March 2022, funding measures such as loft and cavity wall insulation to external wall insulation (EWI). Earlier rounds of ECO funding saw 3000 homes improved in Parkfield & Oxbridge, Newtown, Stockton Town Centre and Mandale & Victoria. Independent evaluation estimated fuel cost savings of £6.2m since 2012 for householders and 'health related quality

of life' savings of a further 2.6 million. The Council will seek to take advantage of ECO3 in coming years to tackle fuel poverty.

12. Work is underway for the autumn 2018 Big Community Switch, and we will be working directly with employers to promote the BCS to their employees.
13. An evaluation of Warm Homes Healthy People 7 is due to be presented to the Adults Health & Wellbeing Partnership and Adults Health and Wellbeing Joint Commissioning Group in July 2018 in anticipation of funding being made available for a WHHP8.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

14. The report highlights the partnership efforts to tackle fuel poverty and promote affordable warmth across Stockton-on-Tees. The specific interventions referred to are predominantly targeted at areas that have the highest incidence of fuel poverty both at ward and LSOA area level, as such the schemes are attempting to address the needs of the most vulnerable households.
 - Warm Homes Healthy People has specific eligibility criteria including the over 75's, those with a registered disability or homes with a child under five with a long-term health condition exacerbated by the cold.
 - The Big Community Switch is available for all residents, with additional help and support available for those without access to online facilities.
 - Energy Champions was specifically targeted in areas of highest fuel poverty in an effort to bring the resource to those most in need. It was agreed at the HNAW Partnership that the LSOA with the highest rate of fuel poverty in each of the 4 locality areas would benefit from the programme
 - The Warm Homes Fund has criteria set by the funding provider (National Grid) and is specifically for those defined as fuel poor, in receipt of qualifying benefits, not connected to the gas network, and homes that are the least energy efficient.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

15. None

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

16. None

RISK ASSESSMENT

17. This report is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk

COUNCIL PLAN POLICY PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES

18. The reports highlights the partnership working across Stockton-on-Tees to tackle fuel poverty and promote affordable warmth and as such is seeking to address the following Council Plan Policy Principles:
 - Protecting the vulnerable through targeted intervention
 - Promoting equality of opportunity through targeted intervention
 - Developing strong and healthy communities

- Creating economic prosperity

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

19. This report does not contain corporate parenting implications.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

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Education related? No

Background Papers

None

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

All

Property

No implications