

EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION



REPORT OF: Executive Member for Neighbourhood and Prevention Services

LEAD OFFICERS: Director of Adult Social Services (DASS)

DATE: 5th July 2018

PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED: Health and Adult Social Care Prevention Services Neighbourhood and

WARD/S AFFECTED: All

SUBJECT: Affordable Warmth Grants

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Vulnerable people, particularly the elderly, with health conditions are at serious risk of hospital admission and death if they have inadequate heating particularly over the winter. An Affordable Warmth Grant is proposed to help provide heating and draught proofing for these vulnerable individuals funded via surplus money from the Central Heating Fund. As this is a finite pot of money, further funding will be needed to sustain it.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Member:

- (1) Approves delivery of the Affordable Warmth Grant as described in this Paper.
- (2) Notes that further funding will need to be sought in the future to continue with delivery of the Grant or the scheme will have to be dissolved.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Lack of adequate heating and fuel poverty can significantly impact on the health of vulnerable households, especially affecting the very young and the old, and in particular those with heart and respiratory conditions and also affecting mental health and well being.
- 3.2 Excess Cold is by far the most widespread hazard under the statutory Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), especially so in the large number of older houses in the Borough in poor condition.
- 3.3 Landlords are responsible for provision of adequate heating, and this is enforced by our Housing Standards Team and this is being enhanced under the 2016 Housing and Planning Act. As from April 2018 landlords are required to ensure properties have an Energy Performance Certificate of at least Level E. Generally enforcement is not necessary in the social rented sector as landlords are subject to regulatory standards and properties are in better condition. Hence

vulnerable tenants have protection that properties meet minimum standard including home energy efficiency.

- 3.4 However vulnerable owner occupiers are directly responsible for heating their property and many struggle with fuel poverty, having inadequate heating and/or insulation. The government's Energy Company Obligation (ECO) scheme provides funding for home energy measures for those in fuel poverty but there have been significant cuts in both the level and scale of ECO in recent years putting more vulnerable households at risk.
- 3.5 In addition government periodically provides opportunities to bid for funding for home energy measures, but this is on a competitive basis with limited funding available and there is no guarantee a bid will succeed. The Borough has just completed the Lancashire wide (first time) Central Heating Fund assisting many vulnerable households, and it was hoped that this would be sustained via round 1 of the Warm Homes Fund but unfortunately this bid was unsuccessful.
- 3.6 Up to April 2017, Public Health provided a small amount of emergency home energy funding via 'Warm Homes Healthy People' but as a result of the cuts in housing services this funding was reallocated to support the recommissioned vulnerable people support service provided by Care Network and the Council's Home Energy Officer.
- 3.7 Small amounts of charitable funding can be bid for to help vulnerable people with emergency boilers etc but again there is no guarantee of success, bids can take a while to be considered and amounts are small.
- 3.8 It follows from the above that there is a gap in providing help to vulnerable households needing assistance with heating / insulation. All the District Councils in Lancashire provide an Affordable Warmth Grant co-ordinated and funded by Lancashire Public Health and Blackpool Council provide a similar scheme.

4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

- 4.1 Absence of adequate heating can have a massive impact on vulnerable people with long term conditions, leading to hospital admission and death –see a couple of case studies of vulnerable people at Appendix 1.
- 4.2 We regularly receive referrals via Cosy Homes in Lancashire (CHiL - a countywide energy efficiency and affordable warmth partnership) to top up ECO funding for boiler replacements, but as we have no funding for this, we must decline and therefore a household remains without adequate heating in fuel poverty.
- 4.3 It is proposed to introduce an Affordable Warmth Grant. Proposed household eligibility and eligible works are attached at Appendix 2. Broadly it is proposed that vulnerable owner occupier households who are at significant risk of ill health are eligible for a range of heating and draught proofing measures. Landlords have the responsibility for provision of adequate heating, but rented households may exceptionally be eligible if prioritised by a relevant professional.
- 4.4 There is a potential risk that we may not be able to meet the demand for the grant, however our previous experience of managing a similar grant under the Warm Homes Healthy People fund shows that demand is manageable, and similarly the Lancashire Affordable Warmth Grant scheme has managed demand. It should also be noted that the Grant will be part funded by ECO and Charitable contributions.
- 4.4 It is proposed that the new Grant is funded from the surplus from the Central Heating Fund (CHF) as we are unable to pay for several CHF Grants delivered by the energy company SSE because

of the unsatisfactory administration. SSE have accepted that they failed to administer the paperwork correctly and that they are liable for the funding of these grants. £20,347 surplus CHF funding is available.

4.5 In addition the Council already has £23,000 funding that is available in the council's housing growth capital programme allocated for energy saving purposes. It is proposed that this money also be included to fund these Affordable Warmth Grants.

4.5 Given the limited size of this pot there is a potential issue with sustainability of the proposed Affordable Warmth Grant. Funding to Local Authorities via the Lancashire Affordable Warmth scheme which covers all Lancashire Local authorities except the two unitary authorities varies from £25k to £70k. Blackpool spends £70k on a similar scheme. However the Lancashire scheme includes insulation which will initially be excluded from our scheme as the priority is to get proper heating in the property and address significant draught proofing issues. On this basis it is considered that the funding will last for one year after which further Public Health funding is being sought.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Health and Well Being Review is prioritising housing interventions to improve health and there is a comprehensive public health service specification under Social Determinants of Health for all housing services to contribute to health outcomes.

5.2 Home Energy measures are a key component of the Corporate Plan Objective to Improve Housing Quality, and the associated KPI to remove hazards from properties.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The surplus Central Heating Fund monies of £20,347 will be ring fenced for the proposed Affordable Warmth Grant.

6.2 The £23,000 available in the council's housing growth capital programme allocated for energy saving purposes will also be included to fund these Affordable Warmth Grants.

6.3 The total fund is £43,347 which will be administered by the Housing Standards team. The Eligibility criteria are set out in Appendix 2. The referrals for this fund will be received from CHiL using their application forms.

6.4 Further funding will need to be sought in the future to continue with delivery of the Grant or the scheme will have to be dissolved.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 SSE have confirmed that they have no claim on the surplus CHF monies.

7.2 The Memorandum of Understanding for CHF between the Council and Government states that 'In the event that the Authority does not use all the Grant to secure delivery of the Proposal... the Parties will work together to agree how the Authority will spend any unspent Grant funding in line with the objectives of the Central Heating Fund...(para' 30a). Government have now confirmed that they approve the proposed use of surplus Grant. If it is not used in this way it will need to be repaid to the Government.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The proposal can be delivered within existing resources, subject to future funding of the Home Energy Officer being agreed in the budget process.

9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below. Where appropriate please include the hyperlink to the EIA.

Option 1 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2 In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision.

Option 3 In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. (*insert EIA attachment*)

10. CONSULTATIONS

10.1 There have been consultations with the Lancashire CHiL Operational Group.

11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded and published if applicable.

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BACKGROUND PAPER:	
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