



Report to: Cabinet

Subject: Nottinghamshire Affordable Warmth Strategy

Date: 3rd November 2011

Author: Head of Planning & Environment

1. Purpose of Report

This report seeks Cabinet approval to adopt the Nottinghamshire Affordable Warmth Strategy as the basis for its role in working to reduce the number of households in Fuel Poverty.

2. Background

As part of its role in leading the Nottinghamshire Local Area Agreement Sustainability theme, Gedling Borough Council submitted a successful Regional Improvement and Efficiency Programme (RIEP) bid to develop a common approach for all partner organisations to take in encouraging their officers and the public to take action on households in Fuel Poverty, which is defined as households where more than 10% of income has to be spent on heating in order to maintain a satisfactory heating regime.

The approach has been developed by National Energy Action on behalf of the Nottinghamshire County and Districts authorities. It has also been supported by the Nottinghamshire Primary Care Trust.

3. The Strategy

This sets out a vision of 'Affordable warmth for all Nottinghamshire households' and identifies how partner organisations can approach Fuel Poverty, through focusing on 7 activities;

1. Households have access to consistent and comprehensive education, advice, guidance and support on how to achieve affordable warmth.
2. Homes in Nottinghamshire are as energy efficient as possible.
3. Householders are easily able to access grants, discounts and soft loans to achieve affordable warmth.

4. Householders are supported to maximise their income and achieve greater financial capability.
5. Households are supported to access the most advantageous fuel tariff for their circumstances.
6. Householders adopt low carbon fuels and renewable technologies where these contribute to affordable warmth.
7. The Nottinghamshire Affordable Warmth Strategy is successfully delivered and effectively monitored.

In this way, the Strategy focuses on how partners can provide information, and direct householders to support, as opposed to providing that support themselves, duplicating what is already available.

As the Strategy has reached the required milestone, the RIEP has agreed to provide a further £30,000 funding to implement it once it has been agreed by all partners. The NAWS partners, including the District Councils, County Council and PCT, will now agree how this will be delivered to all partners, which is likely to include a variety of support and training measures, and a programme of engagement with other organisations including the Citizens Advice Bureau, Social Landlords and the Energy Savings Trust. The programme of implementation is likely to focus around the following actions;

- Develop training modules, including using e-learning
- Develop on the experience of other affordable warmth initiatives
- Establish Community Warmth Champions
- Promote information about energy efficiency through all available routes including council offices, children's centres, and social care facilities
- Improve the evidence base of vulnerable homes using UNO, and share this with all partners to target these
- Engage with private landlords
- Use all available sources of funding
- Provide advice on switching to the most suitable fuel tariff

4. Implications for the Borough Council

Training for Borough Council staff who have regular contact with members of the public who may be experiencing fuel poverty will raise their awareness of Fuel Poverty issues and enable them to give more targeted information, directing them to the appropriate body for further advice. In particular, this advice could be provided by staff in One Stop, the Call Centre, Housing, Planning, Building Control, and Environmental Health services. Beyond the initial training period, this will not require any further staff resources.

The RIEP grant has already funded the purchase of UNO software, which, through the analysis of economic and housing information, helps partners to identify the areas where fuel poverty is most likely to occur at a local level. This information, coupled with the experience of frontline officers, can then be used to direct information to relevant households.

Directing members of the public in this way will enhance the reputation of the Council, as well as potentially contributing to take up on subsidised insulation

schemes, reducing carbon emissions, and helping to prevent excess Winter deaths and other health issues exacerbated by living in inadequately heated homes.

The Strategy complements policies contained in the Borough Councils Housing Strategy, particularly in relation to actions already identified and researched to deliver initiatives around improving house conditions. However, the Affordable Warmth Strategy does not form part of the Housing Strategy, and as such it does not fall within the parameters of the Policy Framework. Therefore it has not needed to go to Scrutiny before being referred to Cabinet.

The Strategy will also help deliver towards the Borough Councils objectives of;

- Regenerating Priority Neighbourhoods, through encouraging residents to improve the quality of their homes, and
- Reducing the Boroughs carbon footprint and energy usage, by enabling residents to access advice and funding to improve the energy efficiency of their homes, and in particular through co-ordinating with the recently launched Warm Streets campaign.

Recommendation

That Cabinet **adopts** the Nottinghamshire Affordable Warmth Strategy, and appoints a Community Warmth Champion.