

CABINET

4th January 2012

HOMES INSULATION FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Kit Taylor
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Angie Heighway
Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor Consulted	Not applicable
Key Decision	Yes

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 The Council's agreement is sought to accept an offer of £40K funding from Worcestershire County Council specifically for the purpose of installing free cavity wall, draught-proofing and loft insulation measures for Bromsgrove District homeowners aged 60 years or over. This is subject to acceptance of conditions requiring the spend of the funding by 31 December 2012, preferred use of Worcestershire based contractors and promotional branding recognition for Warmer Worcestershire.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is asked to **RECOMMEND** that

- 1) **the funding of £40,000 from Worcestershire County Council be incorporated into the Council's 'Energy Efficiency Grants Home Insulation project' budget and the Capital Programme be amended accordingly.**

The Cabinet is asked to **RESOLVE** that

- 2) **authority be delegated to the Head of Community Services to formally accept, and account for expenditure of, the Worcestershire County Council 'Home Energy Efficiency Improvements' funding offer of £40,000 and associated funding conditions;**
- 3) **applications be invited from homeowners within the District aged 60 or over to have loft and/or cavity wall insulation and draught-proofing measures installed in their homes free of charge; and**
- 4) **the Head of Community Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing be authorised**

- a) to expend up to the sum approved by the Council, for the purposes indicated in the report; and
- b) to utilise such funding remaining at 1st April 2012 to extend the insulation offer to any District resident irrespective of age or status or for other Home Energy Efficiency initiatives, subject to the agreement of Worcestershire County Council.

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 Over the past three financial years, the Council's Capital programme has included a budget to provide loft and cavity insulation measures to householders over 60yrs in Council Tax band A-E properties. The Capital programme for 2011/12 no longer includes funding for the project to continue and the budget only remains to meet the committed expenditure approved during 2010/11.
- 3.2 The County Council wishes to forward the funding offered at the earliest opportunity if accepted given the December 2012 expenditure deadline. Expenditure will therefore extend across 2011/12 and 2012/13 financial years. Jayne Pickering and Kate Goldey have been consulted with regard to the financial implications.

Legal Implications

- 3.3 The Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 requires that Local Authorities identify ways to increase energy efficiency in homes by 30% by April 2011.
- 3.4 The UK Fuel Poverty Strategy 2001 clearly identifies the key role of local authorities in ending fuel poverty in vulnerable households by 2010 by delivery of programmes to improve the Home Energy Efficiency of fuel poor households.
- 3.5 Legal Services have been consulted with regard to the legal implications.

Service/Operational Implications

- 3.6 Worcestershire County Council has offered Bromsgrove District Council £40,000 funding for the purposes of offering free home insulation for persons over 60 years of age in the District. The scheme

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is to be promoted using the Warmer Worcestershire brand via the Warmer Worcestershire Network of which BDC is a member.

- 3.7 The County Council offer of funding is subject to the following conditions:-
- i) That the funding is to be used to offer free cavity and loft insulation and draft proofing to over 60's until next Spring, when any remaining funding can be used to offer free insulation to any householder in the District.
 - ii) Where possible the work goes to Worcestershire based contractors or the contractor is required to employ and train local labour.
 - iii) The funding is to be spent by 31st December 2012.
 - iv) The insulation programme is promoted using the Warmer Worcestershire branding.
 - v) The County Council is recognised as a funder in any related publicity.
- 3.8 The Council in partnership with other Worcestershire Councils, Worcestershire Primary Care Trusts, energy providers and business partners has adopted an Affordable Warmth Strategy For Worcestershire with the aim of eradicating fuel poverty and the provision of affordable warmth for all households within 10-15 years. A key aim of the Action Plan is the access of funding and other resources with which to deliver the Strategy.
- 3.9 Results from Worcestershire Countywide Housing Condition Survey suggest that 20% of dwellings in Worcestershire fail the Decent Homes Standard as a result of inadequate thermal comfort compared to 17% nationally.
- 3.10 The offer of funding from the County Council comes at a time when the District Councils funding for Energy Efficiency Grants has been exhausted. It is envisaged that the new funding on offer could enable insulation measures to be installed in approximately 250 properties across the District. Besides benefiting the occupants these measures will also reduce energy consumption thereby contributing to the councils CO2 Reduction and Climate Change objectives.
- 3.11 The provision of grant support and assistance to help address private sector housing conditions, improvement and promotion of energy efficiency and reduction of fuel poverty are all elements that assist in addressing the Council's Climate Change Priority.
- 3.12 The Council has an existing Service Level agreement with Act On Energy whereby the Council receive support and administration in the delivery of the Affordable Warmth Strategy and Action Plan.

- 3.13 Applications received under the scheme will be forwarded to a contractor who will be appointed through a joint procurement process with other Worcestershire District Councils in accordance with the County Council conditional requirements.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.14 Whilst the government's Warmfront Grant provides free insulation measures to over 60's in receipt of means tested benefits approximately 50% of this age group do not qualify for benefits and therefore tend to wait until they reach the age of 70 when they qualify for free insulation measures via government or Energy Provider schemes.
- 3.15 The funding condition relating to qualifying criteria require only that applicants are over 60 years old thus bridging the gap for customers who do not qualify for schemes providing free insulation measures to those over 70 years of age.
- 3.16 Worcestershire County Council have confirmed that the funding is intended to maximise the provision of insulation measures across the County before the government CERT funding expires in December 2012. The offer states that after 1st April 2012 the funding can be used to offer free insulation to any household in the District.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 Worcestershire County Council has confirmed that any funding sum remaining unspent as of 31st December 2012 should be returned. It is however anticipating that an underspend is most unlikely considering the generous qualifying criteria set for applicants under the funding offer conditions.

5. APPENDICES

None

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

AUTHOR OF REPORT

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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