

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

November 22nd 2017

BROMSGROVE ENERGY EFFICIENCY FUND AND SCHEME

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Kit Taylor
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Judith Willis
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor Consulted	No
Key Decision	No

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 Following high demand on the Bromsgrove Energy Efficiency Fund (BEEF) since its launch in 2016, it is proposed to transfer funding from next year's allocation and the revenue part of the scheme, in order to enable provision to continue this winter including assisting urgent works for eligible households who have no or inadequate heating and hot water.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **Council is asked to RESOLVE that:**

- 1) **The capital programme for 2017/18 to be increased by £33k to £66k; this reflects the impact of 2018/19 being bought forward to 2017/18.**
- 2) **That the capital programme 2017/18 is further increased by £9k to £75k to be funded from the currently available revenue reserve.**

3 KEY ISSUES

Background

- 3.1 Bromsgrove Energy Efficiency Scheme and Fund assists with heating system improvements and other cost effective energy efficiency measures for low income homeowners, aiming to improve health, wellbeing and financial independence, reduce strain on health and social care services and maintain and improve the quality of housing stock in the District. It is delivered in partnership with local energy advice charity Act on Energy, has been replicated across Worcestershire and was Highly Commended in the West Midlands Energy Efficiency Awards 2017, at which Bromsgrove District Council won Council of the Year.
- 3.2 The scheme was launched in 2016 as a three year programme until the end of the 2018-19 financial year. However, demand has been high since launch and the second financial year funding has already been used leaving no funding available for the coming winter. The high demand is likely to be because of older housing stock. Also, being a relatively affluent district overall, Bromsgrove has not generally been targeted or in some cases even eligible for means tested grant funding schemes. This has led to some households in dire need not being able to get help. Promotion of the scheme and other energy and household support through last winter's Warmer Winter campaign at libraries, community events and via social media and the press, has enabled such households to access the scheme.

Financial Implications

3.3 Capital (e.g. new heating systems/replacements)

Original allocation: £100k

Breakdown of spend:

2016-17 Allocation - £34k, fully spent

2017-18 Allocation - £33k, fully spent

2018-19: £33k

A detailed breakdown of this spend is found in Appendix 1. This is predicted to prevent over £5000 per annum from leaving the district in energy bill payments.

3.4 Revenue (e.g. heating servicing and repair, energy performance certificates, EPCs)

Original allocation: £ 13.5k

Spend so far: £4.5k transferred to Act on Energy (of which £1,275 spent on EPCs)

Remaining: £9k

It has been more economical to replace the boiler or heating system in all cases so far that have come forward for servicing or repair. It is therefore proposed to transfer the remaining £9k to the capital budget. The £3,225 still held by Act on Energy will be used for future EPCs and to offer up to £35 towards a boiler service, e.g. encouraging those who have received works through the scheme to maximise the benefit of these works through regular boiler servicing.

3.5 Bromsgrove Energy Efficiency scheme provides support only when other funding streams are not available or appropriate. Increasing restriction of government-led energy company obligation (ECO) funding has led to increased pressure on the Bromsgrove Energy Efficiency Fund. Funding towards mains gas appliances is now especially limited. Up until the latest ECO scheme, there was also very little ECO funding towards heating in off gas areas, to the disadvantage of rural areas of Bromsgrove, though there has recently been a change in emphasis. (Act on Energy now have access to a limited amount of local authority led 'flexible' ECO funding towards LPG and oil boilers for eligible households; see warmerworcestershire.com 'Statement of Intent' for more information.)

3.6 Additional funding is leveraged into the area where possible. The Warmer Worcestershire partnership successfully bid for funding from National Energy Action (NEA), match-funded by Worcestershire Public Health, to create the Boilers on Prescription Scheme for those with low incomes and cold-related health conditions. In winter 2017-18, £37k grant funding was spent in Bromsgrove District through this scheme, assisting 12 households (9 full gas central heating systems, 2 boiler plus radiator replacements and 1 boiler replacement). Public health did a value for money assessment and found that for their £75k investment across Worcestershire, a range of social benefits have been identified, with potential savings of almost £15k per year to the Health and Social Care system, nearly £10k per year in improved quality of life and other benefits to the economy and environment.

- 2.1 A household financial contribution of £250 applies towards the costs of works. All households assisted under the scheme so far have been able to meet this contribution.
- 2.2 If we compare BEEF with other schemes locally, Wychavon have allocated £100,000 per annum. Redditch has a similar annual fund to Bromsgrove, but demand on this is steady, probably due to newer housing stock and higher eligibility for energy company funding schemes related to means tested benefits or areas of higher deprivation.
- 2.3 The cost of continuing to deliver the scheme is already covered within the existing Service Level Agreement (SLA) that Bromsgrove District Council have with Act on Energy.
- 2.4 Should the proposed transfers be approved, the fund will have been fully utilised a year earlier than originally anticipated. Following review of the existing scheme, a further report to Members will be presented to propose a future scheme from April 2018. A capital bid for the funding to support this future scheme will be presented to Members as part of the budget setting process.

Legal Implications

- 3.9 The Council has an agenda around improving energy efficiency and reducing carbon emissions in order for the UK to fulfil its obligations under international agreements, EU Law and the Climate Change Act.
- 3.10 The Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 requires energy conservation authorities (of which Bromsgrove District Council is one) to publish a biennial report on our website setting out energy conservation measures that the authority considers practicable, cost-effective and likely to result in significant improvement in the energy efficiency of residential accommodation in its area. The Bromsgrove Energy Efficiency Scheme is included in the 2017-19 Bromsgrove HECA report.
- 3.11 The general power of competence in s1of the Localism Act 2011 empowers the council to undertake such a project.
- 3.12 Bromsgrove District Council has an existing SLA with Act on Energy to deliver energy advice services including the scheme such as this and a legal contract with Act on Energy which provides further detail regarding the specific arrangements of the scheme.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.13 The Bromsgrove Energy Efficiency Scheme and Fund is a good fit with the **Bromsgrove District Council Plan Strategic Purposes:**
- **‘Help me to be financially independent’** gives priority to **providing funding to improve homes to reduce fuel poverty** and working with stakeholders to ensure homes are energy efficient.
 - **‘Help me to live my life independently’** includes working with health and other partners to reduce hospital admissions and to keep people in their own homes. It also prioritises strengthening and supporting families through the ‘Connecting Families’ and

'Sunrise' programmes; the BEEF scheme could contribute here, both through helping identify those in need of support and by providing assistance.

- **Strategic Purpose: Keep my place safe and looking good** aims to encourage our communities to reduce emissions where possible to limit the effect of climate change.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.14 Households assisted through the scheme should now be more able to heat their homes adequately and safely, with more affordable energy bills; see Appendix 1. In the scheme so far, for an average cost of £2265 per household, 31 households have been assisted to upgrade their heating systems, 5 of whom have been enabled to have central heating for the first time.
- 3.15 The scheme has so far helped households across Bromsgrove District, including Beoley, Cofton Hackett, Rubery, Hopwood and Wythall, as well as Bromsgrove Town.
- 3.16 The importance of reducing cold homes for health and wellbeing were explained when this scheme was initiated. 23 out of the 28 beneficiaries had cold-related health conditions and/or were aged over 65 years and/or had children living at home. As an illustration of the benefits of the scheme, the scheme has provided central heating to an older resident who was no longer able to bring coal in for their open fire, enabling them to remain in their own home. Another resident receives financial support due to a cold related health condition that prevents them from working. They were living in a home with grossly inadequate heating but the scheme has enabled them to have gas connected to the property and full central heating installed; it is hoped that this will improve their health and wellbeing.
- 3.17 Domestic building energy performance ratings range from A-G, with A being the best. The government's target for fuel poor homes is to achieve an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) C by 2030. In Appendix 1, where an EPC has been done, this has shown an improvement in EPC rating, with the average rating improving from an E to a D.
- 3.18 In addition to providing assistance with arranging installation, Act on Energy provide a holistic service, e.g. advice on understanding and using heating controls at the post installation EPC visit and assistance in switching energy supplier if that is likely to be beneficial. There is cross-referral between this scheme and the Council's financial independence team.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 Act on Energy ensure that contractors have appropriate accreditation and insurance prior to approving commencement of works.
- 4.2 Act on Energy ensure that quotes are reasonable before approving commencement of works – either by multiple quotes or where it would be inappropriate to have multiple contractor visits for quotes due to customer vulnerability, by comparison with Framework prices for other similar schemes.

- 4.3 The works improve safety and reliability of heating systems. A carbon monoxide detector is included with all installs.
- 4.4 Act on Energy have collected and will continue to collect data to enable auditing of the effectiveness of the programme and this will continue to be monitored by the Council's Climate Change and Energy Efficiency Officer.
- 4.5 Act on Energy liaise for advice regarding any cases that are not straightforward.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Details of Spend

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- **Cabinet Report 7 September 2016 – Bromsgrove Energy Efficiency Fund and Scheme**
- **Bromsgrove District Council HECA Report 2017-19**

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