

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

6th December 2011

HOMES INSULATION - FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Brandon Clayton, Housing, Local Environment & Health
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Angie Heighway, Head of Community Services
Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor Consulted	Not applicable
Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

The Council's agreement is sought to accept an offer of £40,000 funding from Worcestershire County Council specifically for the purpose of installing free cavity wall, draught-proofing and loft insulation measures for Borough homeowners aged 60 years or over. This is subject to acceptance of conditions requiring spend of the funding by 31st December 2012, preferred use of Worcestershire based contractors and promotional branding recognition for Warmer Worcestershire.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to RECOMMEND that

- 1) the funding of £40,000 from Worcestershire County Council be incorporated into the Council's existing Energy Efficiency Installations budget and the Capital Programme be amended accordingly; subject to which**

the Committee 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 Borough aged 60 or over to have loft and/or cavity wall insulation and draught-proofing measures installed in their homes free of charge; and**

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- 4) **the Head of Community Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Local Environment and Health be authorised**
 - a) **to expend up to the sum approved by the Council, for the purposes indicated in the report; and**
 - b) **subject to the agreement of Worcestershire County Council, to utilise such funding remaining at 1st April 2012 to extend the insulation offer to any Borough resident irrespective of age or ownership status or for other Home Energy Efficiency initiatives.**

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 In May 2009 the Executive Committee approved an allocation of £40,000 for a scheme to provide loft and cavity insulation measures to householders over 60 years in Council Tax band A-D properties. Current expenditure and commitment stands at £36,500 and the scheme is expected to conclude shortly.
- 3.2 The County Council wishes to forward the funding at the earliest opportunity if accepted given the December 2012 expenditure deadline. Expenditure will therefore extend across to the 2012/13 financial year. Sam Morgan, Financial Services Manager has 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 Clare Flanagan, Legal Services Manager has been consulted with regard to the legal implications.

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Service / Operational Implications

- 3.6 In 2003 the Council in partnership with other Worcestershire Councils, Worcestershire Primary Care Trusts, energy providers and business partners 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.
- 3.7 Results from Worcestershire County Council's Housing Strategy Survey suggest that 20% of dwellings in Worcestershire fail the decent Homes standard as a result of inadequate thermal comfort compared to 17% nationally.
- 3.8 It is envisaged that the funding on offer could enable insulation measures to be installed in approximately 250 properties across the Borough. Besides benefiting the occupants, these measures will also reduce energy consumption thereby contributing to the council's CO₂ Reduction and Climate Change objectives.
- 3.9 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 fulfilling the Council's 'Clean and Green' objective.
- 3.10 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.
- 3.11 Applications received under the scheme will be routed through Act on Energy with monitoring data being incorporated into the reporting process currently used for schemes whilst initial set-up costs will be met from within existing resources.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.12 Over half of the fuel poor households in the Borough include persons over the age of 60 and pensioners living alone are particularly susceptible. 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.

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- 3.13 The funding condition relating to qualifying criteria require only that applicants are over 60 years old thus bridging the gap between the Council's current over 60's scheme and schemes providing free insulation measures to those over 70 years of age.
- 3.14 Worcestershire County Council has 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 funding conditions therefore require that the age qualification be disregarded after the 1st April 2012 and that applications are considered from any Borough resident.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

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

Relevant Correspondence from County Council.
UK Fuel Poverty Strategy 2011.

AUTHOR OF REPORT

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