

Appendix B: Coventry City Council Progress Report to the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change in accordance with Section 5 of the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995

March 2015 Progress Report

MEASURES IN MARCH 2013 INITIAL REPORT	PROGRESS BY MARCH 2015
<p>Green Deal</p> <p>We will continue to track the development of the Green Deal market, and will complete an evaluation of the options available to the City Council to influence Green Deal delivery.</p>	<p>The Green Deal was launched by the Government in January 2013. Unfortunately the concept of a loan being used to fund energy efficiency improvements has struggled to find widespread public appeal. We considered how the Council could either become a Green Deal Provider, or enter into a partnership with one, to promote the Green Deal but concluded that neither option was appropriate given the limited appeal of the Green Deal.</p> <p>The Government subsequently introduced a number of changes to the Green Deal, notably 'cash-back' grants that would partially fund the cost of energy efficiency work. The amount of 'cash-back' varies with the type of work to be carried out - for instance in the last round of Government funding, 67% of the eligible cost of external wall insulation could be refunded after completion of the work, up to a maximum of £4000.</p> <p>The 'cash-back' grants have had a greater appeal than the Green Deal loans and the Council's Fuel Poverty Team has been promoting these grants generally through advice and information given to the public, and through specific area-based schemes involving the energy supplier E.ON, and the Mark Group.</p>
<p>Energy Company Obligation (ECO)</p> <p>We will work to maximise the investment of ECO in the City by energy companies and installers.</p>	<p>The ECO was introduced by the Government in January 2013. Under this scheme, obligated energy suppliers can provide funding towards the cost of insulation and heating work in prescribed circumstances.</p>

	<p>Building on the successes that the Council had with the previous obligation schemes, partnership arrangements were developed by the Fuel Poverty Team during 2013 with energy suppliers and contractors to deliver external wall insulation for private householders on a significant scale.</p> <p>Regrettably the announcement of changes to green levies made in the Autumn Statement in December 2013 led to major changes in the ECO. This caused the energy suppliers to advise the Council that they would no longer be able to fund the external wall insulation. A number of projects were affected, including one to offer external wall insulation to up to 1500 private householders in neighbourhoods where Whitefriars were proposing to insulate their properties.</p> <p>The current reduced levels of ECO funding for external wall insulation mean that only part of the cost of the work is covered. This makes it un-affordable for the low income and fuel poor owner occupiers that the Council would wish to particularly help.</p> <p>Housing associations in the city are continuing to fund external wall insulation schemes for some of their properties using the subsidy provided by ECO. In the period 1st April 2013 to 31st December 2014, the two housing associations with the most homes in Coventry, Whitefriars and Midland Heart, have completed external wall installations at 2510 homes.</p> <p>The Fuel Poverty Team is at the moment developing proposals to promote ECO funded cavity wall insulation and loft insulation to householders in the city. In some situations generous ECO funding is available for this work.</p>
<p>DECC competition</p> <p>We will implement the City Council's fuel poverty project following receipt of funding from the Department Energy and Climate Change (DECC). We will again bid competitively for funding should further competitions be announced.</p>	<p>Following a successful bid to DECC, the Council received £597,000 from DECC in March 2013 to implement its fuel poverty project. A further £223,000 of ECO funding was also subsequently secured, enabling the scope and duration of the project to be extended. The project has been developed and implemented by the Fuel Poverty Team and with the final phase nearing completion now, over 80 disabled householders have so far benefitted from insulation and heating improvements to their homes, with the majority getting external wall insulation. A recent initial survey of some householders has shown very positive health improvements after the completion of the insulation and heating improvements.</p>

	<p>No further competitions of a similar nature have yet been launched by DECC, although preliminary details of a forthcoming £25m fund for heating work have been announced. Once the full competition criteria have been released, a decision will be made on the submission of a Coventry bid.</p> <p>A bid has however been submitted in partnership with Warwick University and Whitefriars housing association for funding from the Government's Heat Networks Delivery Unit to examine the feasibility of a district heating network in Canley. District heating has the potential to provide space heating and domestic hot water more efficiently than primary fuels and at a stable cost. A decision is expected in the Spring.</p>
<p>Warm Homes Healthy People Fund</p> <p>Following the City's two successful bids to the Department of Health's Warm Homes Healthy People Fund in 2011 and 2012, we will again bid competitively for funding should further funding be announced.</p>	<p>On 11 September 2013 the Secretary of State for Health announced in the House of Commons that the Warm Homes Healthy People Fund would not be repeated and it was suggested that local authorities should look to Government funding made available to address public health priorities. In response to this, the Council's Public Health Department has provided £125,000 and £100,000 respectively for the winters of 2013/14 and 2014/15.</p> <p>This funding has been used to meet heightened winter demand for affordable warmth assistance as a supplement to the year-round services provided to vulnerable and low income households by the Fuel Poverty Team. The 2014/15 winter funding has enabled the appointment of Groundwork West Midlands to provide advice and information services as well as offering free insulation and heating repairs. Both forms of assistance are targeted towards those who need help most - the insulation and heating repairs being focused on residents who are dependent on benefits or who live in designated deprived areas and who are more vulnerable for instance because of ill health or disability.</p> <p>A Keeping Coventry Warm Partnership Board was established in June 2014 to facilitate joint working between partner organisations. The Board aims to reduce ill-health inequalities due to seasonal temperatures, particularly excess cold in the home environment, and support the reduction of fuel poverty. The Fuel Poverty Team, health and social care and Public Health are represented on the Board.</p>

<p>Affordable Warmth Action Plan</p> <p>In accordance with the City Council's Housing and Homelessness Strategy and Climate Change Strategy, we will prepare an Affordable Warmth Action Plan. The Plan will provide further details of proposals to improve the energy efficiency of the housing sector.</p>	<p>The Affordable Warmth Action Plan was agreed in December 2013 and continues to be implemented now.</p> <p>The Plan includes an action to carry out a further 'Switch and Save' collective switching scheme. The first scheme was implemented over a seven week period in 2013, during which over 3000 Coventry households registered for the opportunity to switch to a cheaper energy tariff. The next scheme is now being developed by the Fuel Poverty Team for a planned launch in late March 2015.</p>
<p>Energy efficiency information and advice</p> <p>We will seek to raise awareness of domestic energy efficiency measures and will provide information about the assistance available to home owners, tenants and private landlords.</p>	<p>Since 2013 the Fuel Poverty Team has provided year-round affordable warmth information and advice to homeowners, tenants and private landlords, as well as enabling residents to take advantage of the insulation and heating offers that are available throughout the year. The team has a very clear focus on helping those Coventry residents who are vulnerable or live in low income households.</p> <p>Innovative approaches have been used by the team to engage with vulnerable residents who may need help. This includes providing information and advice to patients attending GP surgeries in the city.</p> <p>During the winter periods of 2013/14 and 2014/15, Public Health funding has allowed more residents to be assisted.</p>
<p>Private rented sector</p> <p>We will seek to raise the awareness of private rented sector landlords of their future legal obligations relating to energy efficiency standards.</p>	<p>In 2012 the Government began outlining proposals that would require privately rented properties to meet minimum energy efficiency standards. DECC established a working group in February 2013 to begin looking at how these proposals could be developed further, and after a consultation exercise last year it was announced in February 2015 that regulations were to be introduced. The proposed regulations will take effect in 2016 and 2018.</p> <p>The Fuel Poverty Team has been raising awareness of the proposals amongst private</p>

	<p>landlords and letting agents for some time, with the message that landlords should consider improving the energy efficiency of their properties well in advance of the new regulations. A pilot ECO-funded project to encourage landlords to improve their properties in advance was developed by the team in 2013. Under the project, the tenants of 357 private lets stood to benefit from the improvements but unfortunately it had to be abandoned early in 2014 in the wake of the changes to green levies announced in the Autumn Statement.</p> <p>Since 2012, the team has discussed the proposals at 3 Coventry Landlord Forum meetings, the most recent being in July 2014. Details of the regulations, and an article on the benefits of external wall insulation, are due to be published in a landlords' newsletter in the next month or so. Further opportunities will also be taken to continue to encourage landlords to improve their properties.</p>
<p>Aerial thermal imaging survey</p> <p>We will implement a further survey of the city in 2013 and will use the results to raise awareness of energy efficiency and to identify households that may benefit from assistance.</p>	<p>Following the success of the Council's 2010 aerial thermal imaging survey, a further one was commissioned and carried out in 2013. Arrangements were again made for Coventry residents to view the results for their homes on the Council's website – this was launched on 31st March 2014 and within the first week over 4000 residents had done so. A link to information on loft insulation was provided and over 600 residents viewed this in the first week.</p> <p>The survey data has also helped to direct loft insulation programmes around the city - Midland Heart housing association has used it to identify which of their properties in the city were losing the most heat and these have been included in their insulation programme.</p>
<p>Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs)</p> <p>We will seek to raise awareness of EPCs and the information they provide, and will analyse data on EPCs to identify households that may benefit from assistance.</p>	<p>It's a legal requirement that, in most circumstances, house owners make available EPCs for prospective house purchasers or tenants. The intention is that this will help them to make informed decisions about the likely energy costs of their new home, and the type of work that's needed to improve its energy efficiency.</p> <p>Trading Standards are the enforcing body for EPCs. In 2014 Trading Standards had 35 contacts or interactions regarding EPCs. The majority of these involved checks to ensure that advertisements contained the correct information. A small number of complaints about EPCs</p>

	<p>were also dealt with and 2 warning letters were issued.</p> <p>Since 2013 the Fuel Poverty Team has provided advice on EPCs to residents where this is required, and this role will continue into the future.</p> <p>Recent changes to the EPC regulations have meant that local authorities can if they wish obtain data on all of the EPCs in their area. The Council has done this and will use the data in making policy and project-level decisions about energy conservation in the city.</p>
<p>Area-based energy efficiency improvements</p> <p>We will actively pursue opportunities to bring inward investment into the city to enable ECO-funded area-based schemes to take place. We will liaise with energy companies, installers and registered social landlords to encourage investment.</p>	<p>Reference has been made under the previous headings of Green Deal and ECO to the work undertaken to initiate area-based insulation schemes for the benefit of low income households.</p> <p>Collaborative work with Whitefriars, Midland Heart and Orbit housing associations had led to proposals to offer ECO-funded external wall insulation to over 2000 private householders in the neighbourhoods where the housing association properties were to be improved. As explained, these proposals had to be abandoned due to Government policy changes.</p> <p>Area based partnership working has nevertheless been undertaken. In the Foleshill area, 198 private homes were improved with external wall insulation in 2013 at no cost to the owners as a result of the Fuel Poverty Team's collaboration with E.ON. Collaboration with SERS, an external wall insulation company, also led to free external wall insulation in 2013 for 100 private homes mostly in the Foleshill area.</p>
<p>Partnership working</p> <p>We will work with local and national partners to improve energy efficiency in Coventry.</p>	<p>Partnership working has been an essential part of the Council's work in delivering energy conservation measures in the last 2 years, and this will continue to be the case in the future. This applies to all aspects of the Fuel Poverty Team's work, whether it is delivering advice and information on how to save money on gas and electricity bills, getting financial support with bills and overcoming fuel debt problems, or whether it's enabling residents to get help with home insulation and heating.</p>

Key partnership arrangements have included:

Housing associations – from mid-2013, a partnership approach to energy efficiency projects has been adopted by Whitefriars, Midland Heart and Orbit housing associations, and the City Council. Regular partnership meetings take place between the partners to share information, co-ordinate schemes and identify opportunities.

Energy suppliers and contractors – the Fuel Poverty Team has worked successfully with E.ON, British Gas, Kier, Rockwarm and SERS on energy efficiency projects since 2013. To attract energy efficiency investment into the city, it's important that the Council provides support to organisations like these by providing information about neighbourhood characteristics and priority areas, assisting with scheme promotion and making referrals. This work will continue in the future - it is only by striving to be a 'partner of choice' that we can secure investment in Coventry homes in preference to other areas of the country.

The third sector – the Fuel Poverty Team has worked closely with a range of third sector organisations, including Groundwork, Coventry National Energy Action, AgeUK, Citizens Advice Bureau and Act on Energy since 2013. The emphasis of this work has been on providing information and advice to low income and fuel poor householders, and the partners regularly cross refer to whichever organisation can best help with an individual's query. Again, this work will continue in the future.