

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

25 February 2013

**Joint Report of the Director of Health and Housing and Cabinet Member for
Housing**

Part 1- Public

**Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken
by the Cabinet Member)**

1 ENERGY INITIATIVES

Summary

This report details two energy initiatives that Members are asked to endorse.

1.1 Affordable Warmth Initiative

- 1.1.1 Tonbridge & Malling B.C. and other Kent local authorities have been approached by Climate Energy who has access to Energy Company Obligation (ECO) funding, which forms part of Green Deal, to provide an affordable warmth solution for vulnerable fuel poor private sector households. Improvements that can be offered include loft and cavity wall insulation, external/ internal wall insulation, and heating repair/replacement including heating controls.
- 1.1.2 Households will need to meet eligibility criteria and be in receipt of certain means tested benefits. The aim is that measures will be 100 percent funded under ECO, however there may be some instances where the funding available does not cover the total cost of a job in which case the householder would be required to pay the funding gap. Funding is available on a first come first served basis and is time limited.
- 1.1.3 Enquiries will be generated through targeted mailings, asking residents to contact Climate Energy by telephone if they are interested in the scheme. Climate Energy will prepare and generate the mailing letters addressed to "the householder" and will meet the cost of the mailing. Due to data protection considerations, the Council will arrange to address and send out the prepared mailing at Climate Energy's expense
- 1.1.4 Literature will use the Coldbusters branding scheme, and include the Council logo advising residents that Climate Energy are "working with" the authority to provide an affordable warmth solution.

- 1.1.5 On contacting the scheme, applicants will be asked a series of questions relating to their benefit ensuring maximisation of income. Also a home energy check will be carried out over the telephone to identify the most suitable measures for the property with the potential funding available being explained. An appointment will be made for the installer from an accredited installer network to call.
- 1.1.6 Climate Energy will provide Tonbridge & Malling B.C. with details on the number of approved applications, completed jobs and measures and a record of carbon saving and notional fuel bill savings.
- 1.1.7 Climate Energy is running the scheme in another six Kent local authority areas - Ashford, Dover, Gravesham, Sevenoaks, Tunbridge Wells and Swale.
- 1.1.8 Advice from Legal services is that we can treat this scheme in a similar way to the earlier proposed Yorkshire Energy Services free insulation scheme, endorsed by Members at the 28 May 2012 meeting of this Board on the proviso that each scheme is considered for suitability as they arise. Therefore if we receive any approach from any other organisation about a similar scheme we will need to consider their proposal also.
- 1.1.9 Legal services have revised and approved the Affordable Warmth Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) proposed by Climate Energy. The MOU will run with immediate effect to the end of March 2013, covering this winter period. We have also checked methods of work and appropriate risk assessments are in place by Climate Energy. Therefore the Climate Energy Affordable Warmth scheme is suitable for endorsement.
- 1.1.10 In order that the scheme could progress and be completed within the timescale of the available funding the Director of Health and Housing the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Housing giving a commitment to retrospectively report this initiative into this meeting of the Board.

1.2 Warm Rural Homes Initiative

- 1.2.1 The aim of this initiative will be to explore two different approaches to raising energy efficiency awareness to homeowners in rural areas of the borough. We will look to offer advice and assistance to households in receipt of income related benefit and signpost to Energy Company Obligation (ECO) funding that forms part of Green Deal. We will analyse the outcomes and use the most successful approach for promoting energy efficiency to residents in other areas in the borough.
- 1.2.2 The initiative will identify two suitable village locations with a higher percentage of solid wall and off gas properties utilising tables of hard to treat housing indices.

- 1.2.3 Eligibility for part of the ECO funding requires the location be classed as non urban with less than 10,000 inhabitants and the household to be in receipt of an income related benefit.
- 1.2.4 In one of the villages we identify we will promote energy saving through a local approach with 'energy champions'. We will mail a general information booklet on energy saving in the home and contact numbers for advice and information. A targeted letter will be sent to further households in receipt of an income related benefit. We will hold an energy advice surgery at a doctor's surgery if possible and link with other health promotions for example smoking cessation and healthy eating. We will also hold a training session for community workers/ members, for example parish councillors, surgery staff, Police Community Support Officers who we hope can subsequently act as out reach promoters for energy efficiency in the home.
- 1.2.5 In the second village we identify we will promote energy saving through visits offering tailored advice. We will mail a general information booklet on energy saving in the home and contact numbers for further advice and information. We will send a letter targeted to households in receipt of an income related benefit to offer information tailored to the householder's property through a free home energy advice visit. This will be on a first come first served basis. The visit will seek to install small low cost energy saving measures, for example radiator reflective panels, generate referrals for ECO funding if appropriate, generate referrals for the Council's Housing Assistance policy including Falls Prevention Assistance and generate referrals for other agencies such as Handyperson schemes, Kent Fire & Rescue Service etc.
- 1.2.6 It is proposed that the mail outs, training and visits are carried out by Climate Energy. We have a budget under Energy Efficiency Initiatives of £3,100 which we anticipate will be adequate to fund this initiative.
- 1.2.7 We will ensure we obtain feedback from the different approaches using the number of referrals and measures completed; resident comments on the usefulness of general information provided at visits and the surgery. We aim to ensure that we can replicate successful elements from each approach in future rural initiatives in the borough.

1.3 Legal Implications

- 1.3.1 Both these initiatives will support our reporting under the Home Energy Conservation Act 1985 (HECA). The revised guidance for HECA requires the Council to publish a further report by March 2013 and two yearly thereafter. In the preparation of the report the authorities are advised they should have regard to "measures developed to implement energy efficiency improvements cost-effectively in residential accommodation by using area based/street by street rollout" and "consider whether certain streets/areas are likely to attract funding from ECO". The rural initiative will particularly support this area of reporting.

1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.4.1 The Affordable Warmth Initiative requires some staffing resources from within the Housing team to manage the mailing. The postage costs will be recovered from Climate Energy. There are no additional financial resources required from the Council.
- 1.4.2 The cost of the Warm Rural Homes Initiative can be met from within existing budget.

1.5 Risk Assessment

- 1.5.1 Failure to develop local advice and support initiatives for the benefit of local communities could lead to residents not benefitting from national funding initiatives and have reputational damage to the Council.

1.6 Recommendations

- 1.6.1 **CABINET** is **RECOMMENDED** to:
- 1.6.2 Retrospectively **ENDORSE** the Affordable Warmth Initiative; and
- 1.6.3 **ENDORSE** the Warm Rural Homes Initiative.

The Director of Health and Housing confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

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Nil

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