



Report of the Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing Department

Executive Board

Date: 4th April 2007

Subject: THE LEEDS AFFORDABLE WARMTH STRATEGY

Electoral Wards Affected:

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call In

Not Eligible for Call In
(Details contained in the report)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Affordable Warmth refers to the financial ability of the householder to achieve sufficient warmth within the home. The Leeds Affordable Warmth Strategy provides a framework to address the issue of fuel poverty across the city. The strategy has been formulated as a result of consultation with a wide range of local service providers and partners who attended workshops in October and November 2006.

The Strategy proposes that the Council engages and works with partners to:

1. Achieve affordable warmth for all households in Leeds.
2. Meet the National and Regional Affordable Warmth Strategic Objectives by 2010 and 2016.
3. Establish a framework with reviewable objectives and targets to assist residents to move out of fuel poverty and into affordable warmth.
4. Target households with vulnerable occupiers.

It is some what opportune that following the reporting of an unprecedented 80% rise in private sector fuel poverty in Leeds over 2006 that this report seeks the adoption of the Leeds Affordable Warmth Strategy and the sign up-to the Affordable Warmth Code of Practice.

1.0 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To recommend that the Council adopts the Leeds Affordable Warmth Strategy (2007 to 2016) putting in place a framework to address the issue of affordable warmth and fuel poverty across the City. This will support the key aims of the strategy through engaging and working with partners to achieve affordable warmth for all Leeds households, meeting National and Regional objectives, establishing reviewable objectives and targets, and targeting primarily households with vulnerable occupiers. The report also recommends sign-up to the Affordable Warmth Code of Practice and encourages partners to the strategy to do the same.

2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Affordable warmth refers to the financial ability to achieve sufficient warmth within the home. The lack of affordable warmth is known as 'fuel poverty'. A fuel poor household is one that cannot afford to keep adequately warm at a reasonable cost, spending more than 10% of income to heat the home to 21°C in the main living areas and 18 °C in other areas of the home. Fuel poverty is clearly linked to general poverty and deprivation and is firmly associated with:
- Low income and debt
 - Poor household insulation standards
 - Inefficient or expensive heating systems
 - Lack of access or availability of affordable fuel and/or tariff options
 - Under-occupation and the size of the home, and
 - Householder behaviour
- 2.2 The Government has recognised fuel poverty as a UK-wide problem. In 2001, a nation-wide Fuel Poverty Strategy was launched which sets out actions to be taken to eradicate the problem of fuel poverty within 10-16 years. This builds upon other national strategies for housing, energy, health, poverty and social inclusion. There is also a regional Fuel Poverty Strategy 'Make Fuel Poverty History,' a regional Affordable Warmth Action Plan for Yorkshire and the Humber and the Regional Housing Strategy which support activity to provide affordable warmth and tackle fuel poverty.
- 2.3 Local Authorities and other local agencies are acknowledged as playing a key role in the co-ordination and delivery of work to eradicate fuel poverty and the Leeds Affordable Warmth Strategy, which will sit below the national and regional strategies, will enable structured, efficient and targeted delivery.
- 2.4 The monitoring of fuel poverty is undertaken on a yearly basis as part of the Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) reporting procedures. To ascertain the data for Leeds, a survey of 20,000 houses is undertaken, recording the energy performance of each dwelling. As part of this survey, households are asked a range of perceptual questions seeking comment on their ability to keep warm and generally healthy within their current income. The data for the 2006 survey shows an unprecedented increase in fuel poverty from 22% to 37% across all private sector households in Leeds. When presented by ward, the statistics show the worst affected ward to have 65% of private sector households subject to fuel poverty.

3.0 AGENCES ALREADY WORKING TO REDUCE FUEL POVERTY

- 3.1 The following agencies are currently operating in Leeds to reduce fuel poverty: The Councils Fuelsavers team, the Leeds Primary Care Trust, ALMO's, Social Services, Environmental Health, Registered Social Landlords (RSL's), Benefits and Welfare Rights, Energy Providers and the Leeds City Council Narrowing the Gap Group.
- 3.2 The Fuelsavers team provide training, briefings and media releases to support access to a range of energy efficiency grants and schemes in both the private and public sector. The ALMO's, as part of their capital programme of decency work and using grants and schemes accessed through Fuelsavers, undertake energy efficiency works to support affordable warmth in the public sector. Environmental Health provides Home Improvement Assistance to improve levels of thermal comfort, working with agencies such as Care and Repair Leeds Ltd. Other partners provide signposting to help for fuel poor households and support with accessing benefit entitlements to increase incomes.
- 3.3 The Narrowing the Gap Group (NTGG) have supported the coordination of affordable warmth activity within the Authority over the previous 9 months, with a action plan of activities and projects. This has included a programme of mailings to over 75,000 homes, targeting of wards having the highest levels of fuel poverty, over 60 intensive worker training sessions to identify fuel poor residents and a range of media releases to promote activity and public response. Currently Care and Repair Leeds Ltd are targeting vulnerable households in the two wards having the highest levels of fuel poverty in the city, the project aims to promote Warmfront Grants to clients already known to them. Warmfront have confirmed that during the period April to December 2006 that 3,076 referrals were received in the Leeds area of which 2,592 were from qualifying households.

4.0 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AFFORDABLE WARMTH STRATEGY

- 4.1 The strategy has been developed following workshops which were undertaken with a wide range of partners and stakeholders in October and November 2006. A prioritised list of key aims and objectives believed to reduce fuel poverty in the City was developed during workshops. Suggestions were also put forward by agency representatives on how they or other agencies might assist in the identification of and offer of assistance to fuel poor households.
- 4.2 The partners also agreed to the development of a code of practice (COP) to which partner agencies could sign and commit varying levels of intervention. It is intended that the COP will be rolled out across the City over time. As organisations sign up to the COP, they will be placed on a public register on the council's website.
- 4.3 The Affordable Warmth Strategy proposes the establishment of a coordination group, namely the Fuelsavers Advisory Board (FAB), the continuation of an energy lead Councillor and the implementation of a monitoring agreement through Scrutiny Board (Health & Adult Services). This process will be initiated following the adoption of the strategy by the Council, with the objective to maintain a momentum and a high level support for the strategy framework.
- 4.4 It is proposed that the strategy be further developed over time with an annual plan being developed, themed around the strategic objectives and targets. Specific work or initiatives will be agreed with partner organisations and the Authority and these annual plans will be published on the Councils web site.
- 4.5 A summary of the strategy is provided below. A full copy of the draft strategy is available on the Intranet.

Summary of The Leeds Affordable Warmth Strategy

The Affordable Warmth Strategy for Leeds sets out a coordinated approach to address the problems of cold, damp homes. This strategy was developed in 2006 with local partners and is the result of consultation with a wide range of service providers and interested groups.

The Leeds Affordable Warmth Strategy aims to assist its residents to move out of fuel poverty and into affordable warmth and will therefore facilitate support to improve the health and well-being of some of the city's more vulnerable households.

The Leeds 2006 Fuel Poverty Survey showed that households containing the following vulnerable groups could not afford to heat their home:

60.5% of those recovering from a long-term illness,

52.9% of disabled

38.7% of pensioner households

There are a range of national and regional strategies which support households to move into affordable warmth, the regional plan supports the following key actions

- Influencing Affordable Warmth Policy, Strategy, Funding and Delivery in the Region
- Training and Awareness Raising
- Supporting Local Affordable Warmth Work
- Improving Health and Well Being
- Monitoring and Evaluating of Action Plans

The Strategy seeks to coordinate and enhance the activities of agencies and partners working with households in fuel poverty by putting in place a framework to agree targets and monitor improvements over time. It proposes a Code of Practice (COP) with varying levels of interventions to which partners can sign up to so as to publicly state their commitment to addressing fuel poverty in the City.

Through the COP agencies and partners will be asked to train staff so they can identify clients in fuel poverty, and then to advise and support those clients into affordable warmth or direct them to support from other agencies. Signatures to the COP will be required to include affordable warmth in their relevant strategies, policies and operational documents. They will also be required to include affordable warmth targets in their business plans and to highlight the support they provide through their customer communication links and outlets.

The Strategy Objectives are:

- To establish an Advisory Board to oversee the implementation of the Strategy
- To establish a commitment to the strategy at a high level within the Council
- To sign up partners to Affordable Warmth Code of Practice and to seek where ever possible to embed affordable warmth principles into their strategies and action plans
- To develop and maintain an effective performance monitoring and reporting system
- To seek, assess and keep under review all financial or other resources available to support the provision of affordable warmth
- To develop and deliver with partners an Affordable Warmth annual work plan.

The Strategy will be reviewed annually with work or initiatives covering the period April to March in the following year, up to and including March 2017. Both the Strategy and Annual Action Plans will be issued on the Leeds City Council Web site. It is proposed that any amendments to the Strategy and the Annual Action Plans be agreed by Partner organisations and the Authority

5.0 ACTION PLANS

5.1 The on going and planned activities for 2007-2008 are currently being brought together under the **Affordable Warmth Strategy Annual Action Plan**. The actions and activities which have been agreed or are currently being developed with partners include:

- A project with the Call Centre to provide energy advice using dedicated trained advisors
- An agreement regarding the provision of top up funding for Warmfront Grants. This will initially help 63 households currently on a waiting list to receive heating and energy measures, the scheme is then to be rolled forward into 2007/8.
- Energy providers energy efficiency commitment for 2007/8 estimated at £1.2 million to support measures to over 3,000 ALMO properties and 1000 others.
- NRF funded schemes with Groundwork "Green Doctor and CASAC to support 450 households with access to measures or grant support and 2,000 households to be checked to identify fuel poverty.
- Warmfront grants for 2007/8 estimated to help 3,000 qualifying households with energy efficiency measures.
- Hot-spots joint initiative with the Fire service visiting peoples homes, estimated to generate 3,000 referrals for energy efficiency advice.
- Warm Zones bid for funding being prepared by Fuelsavers. A three year plan to reach an estimated 12,500 homes.
- Initial work underway to support bidding for £6million Capital Pot Funding running from 2008/9 through to 2012/13 to support heating and insulation measures to over 2,600 private sector properties.
- Pensions service referral target for 2007/8 estimated at 160 households
- NHS referral target for 2007 estimated at 572 households
- City and Guilds energy awareness training to be undertaken by Fuelsavers for 2007/8 – 160 people to be trained
- Training and re-training of front line staff re affordable warmth by Fuelsavers 1,500 people to be trained.
- Project to provide Heatlease into the private sector currently awaiting Counsel Opinion for roll out in 2007/8.
- A range of activities to promote fuel poverty awareness, energy efficiency and grant take up, including targeted mail outs (50,000 +), leaflets with council tax bills, advice surgeries, displays, workshops, distribution of calendar and low energy lamps, establishing a fuel poverty forum and supporting energy week 2007.
- Work with Care and Repair in highest level fuel poor wards, 167 residents contacted 25% of which have been eligible for Health Through Warmth of Warm Front referral, funding being sort to roll forward into 2007/8.

5.2 Activities which are currently being planned and developed to support improved energy efficiency and a subsequent reduction in fuel poverty in terms of public sector ALMOs is shown in the table below. Measures included relate to heating upgrades, Heat Lease provision, cavity wall and loft insulation, some renewable technology inc heat pumps and solar wet systems, provision of gas to none gas homes, and system build and sheltered upgrades which will substantial increase energy efficiency. The table

includes planned financial projections and where possible an estimated number of households who are likely to benefit, from 2007/8 through to 2010/11. The proposed activity is subject to the receipt of government funding and changes which may result as a consequence of the amalgamation of a number of the ALMOs.

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	Totals
Heating Upgrades	£4,919,970	£1,550,000	£1,550,000	£650,000	£8,669,970
(Approx number h/holds)	1,057	775	775	325	2,932
Heatlease	£9,102,700	£6,148,500	£6,159,500	£5,559,500	£26,970,200
(Approx number h/holds)	2,315	1,569	1,572	1,422	6,877
Insulation (CWI & LI)	£1,320,000	£1,270,000	£1,470,000	£820,000	£4,880,000
(Approx number h/holds)	3,264	3,139	3,639	2,014	12,056
Renewables	£190,000	£120,000	£120,000	£140,000	£570,000
(Approx number h/holds)	27	17	17	20	81
Non Gas to Gas	£20,000	£42,000	£20,000	£20,000	£102,000
(Approx number h/holds)	38	81	38	38	197
System build properties inc structural	£7,450,000	£10,409,400	£4,000,000	£1,000,000	£22,859,400
Sheltered Upgrade	£4,805,900	£2,000,000	£2,000,000	£0	£8,805,900
TOTAL	£27,808,570	£21,539,900	£15,319,500	£8,189,500	£72,857,470
(Approx number h/holds)	6,702	5,581	6,041	3,819	22,143

- 5.3 Other partners whom attended the strategy workshops are already been contacted. Following the adoption of the strategy and for those partners signing up to the code of practice, their activities will be added into the Annual Action Plan. Proposed contributions for future years being added to the overall strategy action plan and subsequent annual action plans.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 That the Executive Board adopts the Leeds Affordable Warmth Strategy 2007 to 2016, putting in place a framework to address the issue of affordable warmth and fuel poverty across the City.
- 6.2 That the Executive Board commits the Authority to the Affordable Warmth Code of Practice, and encourages partners to the strategy to do the same.