

Report for Resolution

Report to Sustainable Development Panel
28 March 2012
Report of Head of Strategy and Programme Management
Subject Draft Affordable Warmth Strategy

Item
7

Purpose

To consider the draft affordable warmth strategy.

Recommendations

To make suggestions/ recommendations on the draft strategy.

Financial Consequences

There are no direct financial consequences of this report.

Corporate Priority and Outcome/Service Priorities

The report helps to meet the corporate priority “to make Norwich a prosperous City” and the key action “to reduce fuel poverty through affordable-warmth activities”.

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Background Documents

None.

Background

1. The council's new corporate plan 2012-15 sets out a key action "to reduce fuel poverty through affordable-warmth activities" to contribute to its corporate priority "to make Norwich a prosperous City".
2. Whilst within the council's environmental strategy 2011-2014 there is the key action to develop an affordable warmth strategy and review the councils approach to affordable warmth work.
3. This is an early draft of the new affordable warmth strategy for Sustainable Development Panel to consider and make suggestions/ recommendations.
4. The draft strategy has so far been developed through the following methods:
 - analysis of customer information including the public consultation used to inform the overarching environmental strategy and drawing on other specific consultations such as the ageing well programme
 - assessment of local needs including the joint strategic needs assessment and indices of multiple deprivation
 - review of the policy context and economic climate and opportunities provided by upcoming legislation e.g. the green deal
 - assessment of the likely resources the council will have to carry out affordable warmth work given its ongoing financial pressures as set out in the medium term financial strategy
 - previous discussions with key partners over their priorities for the City
 - looking at good practice from other areas.
5. The purpose of the affordable warmth strategy once completed is to provide overall strategic direction to council services, contractors and partners in their activities to reduce fuel poverty in Norwich. These activities are set out in service plans and other council plans and those of partners and contractors.
6. Following consideration of the draft strategy by Sustainable Development Panel the strategy will be consulted on with key partners and service users through the Norwich Locality Board, Older Peoples Forum and other mechanisms. The final draft of the strategy will then be brought to Cabinet for approval.

Norwich City Council Affordable Warmth Strategy

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1. Foreword

To be added in

2. Context and purpose

2.1 A fuel poor household is one that cannot afford to keep adequately warm at a reasonable cost. The most widely accepted definition of a fuel poor household is one which needs to spend more than 10 percent of its disposable income on fuel used to heat its home to an adequate standard of warmth (defined by the World Health Organisation as 21°C in the living room and 18°C in the other occupied rooms.)

2.2 Fuel Poverty is caused by a combination of factors including:

- low household income
- homes with poor energy efficiency
- under occupancy
- fuel prices.

2.3 Increases in fuel costs and other household expenses caused by inflation combined with continuing weaknesses in the wider economy will inevitably be exacerbating the problems of fuel poverty. The impending changes to the welfare system are likely to make the situation worse particularly in more deprived urban areas like Norwich.

2.4 In Norwich there are:

- over 10,000 households experiencing fuel poverty. This is 17% of households and compares with 18% of households in England as a whole.
- approximately 2,500 private sector dwellings have a category 1 health hazard due to excess cold. These are dwellings that cannot be heated to a level sufficient to prevent serious health effects due to cold
- 8700 private sector dwellings (20%) fail the decent homes standard because of a lack of adequate heating and insulation. Of these approximately 3400 are occupied by vulnerable people.
- the average SAP rating (a measure of domestic energy efficiency on a scale of 0 to 100 where 100 is the most efficient) in Norwich is 47. This compares unfavourably with the average for England of 51. It is generally agreed that a SAP rating of 65 in a dwelling will remove the threat of fuel poverty in most cases.

2.4 Fuel poverty can have a range of effects including:

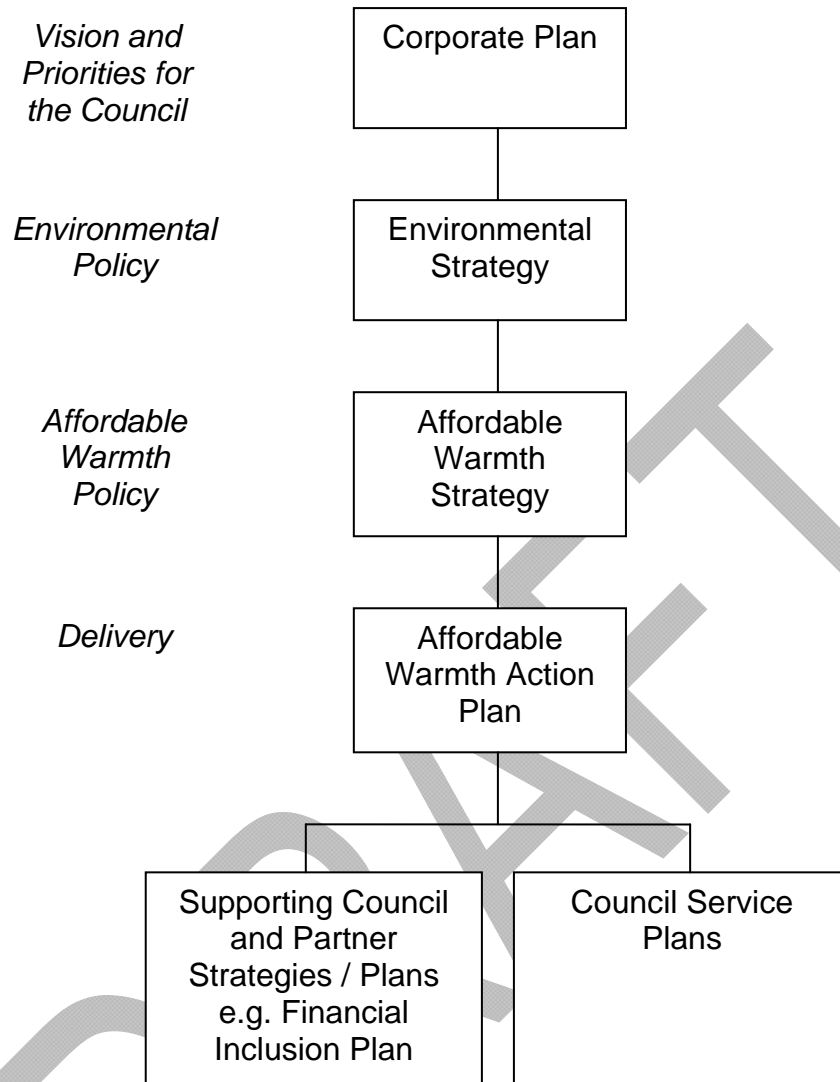
- **Worsening health** – cold homes can increase the risks of strokes and heart attacks. Cold conditions are also thought to lower resistance to respiratory infections and exacerbate asthma and Chronic Obstructive and Pulmonary Disorder (COPD).
- **Excess winter deaths** – during the months of December to March the number of deaths recorded (winter deaths) nationally well exceeds the average death rate for the remainder of the

year. A significant number of these are thought to be linked to cold conditions particularly amongst the elderly.

- **Increased accidents** – mobility and dexterity reduce when people are cold which can increase the risk of falls and injury as well as potentially affecting arthritis.
- **Social exclusion** – people can be reluctant to invite friends to their homes when they are cold, which can result in an increased sense of social isolation.

- 2.5 Many of the effects of fuel poverty set out above are potentially preventable and in addition to the benefits to the individuals themselves could result in significant savings in health care costs.
- 2.6 The council's corporate plan 2012-15 sets out a key action "to reduce fuel poverty through affordable-warmth activities" to contribute to its corporate priority "to make Norwich a prosperous City".
- 2.7 Whilst within the council's environmental strategy 2011-2014 there is the key action to develop affordable warmth strategy and review the councils approach to affordable warmth work.
- 2.8 The purpose of this affordable warmth strategy is to provide overall strategic direction to council services, contractors and partners in their activities to reduce fuel poverty in Norwich. These activities are set out in service plans and other council plans and those of partners and contractors. This approach is summarised in the diagram below.

Strategic Framework for Affordable Warmth Strategy



3. Development of this strategy

3.1 This strategy has been developed through the following methods:

- analysis of customer information including the public consultation used to inform the overarching environmental strategy and drawing on other specific consultations such as the ageing well programme
- assessment of local needs including the joint strategic needs assessment and indices of multiple deprivation
- review of the policy context and economic climate and opportunities provided by upcoming legislation e.g. the green deal
- assessment of the likely resources the council will have to carry out affordable warmth work given its ongoing financial pressures as set out in the medium term financial strategy
- discussions with key partners over their priorities for the City
- discussions with members including through the council's sustainable development
- looking at good practice from other areas.

4. Where do we want to be

4.1 The council's affordable warmth priorities are set out in the table below:

Affordable Warmth Priority	Key Performance Measures
Priority 1 - To help people in the City to reduce their fuel bills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• % of people saying that their fuel bills had reduced following advice• No of private households where council activity helped to improve the energy efficiency of their homes• Number of privately owned homes made safe (including cold hazards)• Amount of external funding secured for affordable warmth activity• Number of council properties meeting the Norwich standard• SAP rating of council homes

Priority 2 - To improve the energy efficiency of housing in the City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No of private households where council activity helped to improve the energy efficiency of their homes • Number of privately owned homes made safe (including cold hazards) • Amount of external funding secured for affordable warmth activity • Number of council properties meeting the Norwich standard • SAP rating of council homes
Priority 3 - To assist people in the City to maximise their income.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income maximisation measure needs to be added in here • % of people saying that debt issues had become manageable following face to face advice • Amount of external funding secured for affordable warmth activity

5. How will we get there

5.1 The council will achieve its affordable warmth priorities through delivery of an affordable warmth action plan.

5.2 This sets out the key activities and actions the council will progress within the following key themes:

- **Awareness** – By increasing awareness amongst council employees, partners, contractors and the public of fuel poverty and how advice and support can be accessed.
- **Advice** - By ensuring that effective advice is available for households to ensure they are on the cheapest energy tariffs, are making efficient lifestyle choices, are maximising their income and are accessing grants that can improve their homes.

- **Landlord** – By improving the energy efficiency of council homes through our stock improvement work.
- **Partnership** – By working collaboratively with partners in Norwich to make the best use of existing resources and to attract further funding to address fuel poverty.

5.3 The council's affordable warmth action plan can be found in section 7. This will be updated to accommodate new and emerging policy from central government and other sources as appropriate during the length of the strategy.

5.4 Responsibility for the overall delivery of the affordable warmth action plan rests with the corporate leadership team and is coordinated and managed by the environmental strategy team. Specific actions and projects within the programme will be the responsibility of different heads of service and operational managers.

6. How will we know

6.1 Overall progress on the affordable warmth action plan will be monitored through the council's performance management framework. This includes overall progress reporting to Scrutiny and Cabinet through the council's quarterly performance report and through an annual environmental statement.

6.2 To assess the success of our affordable warmth strategy the council will, in particular, monitor the following key performance measures:

- % of people saying that their fuel bills had reduced following advice
- Number of private households where council activity helped to improve the energy efficiency of their homes
- Number of privately owned homes made safe (including cold hazards)
- Number of council properties meeting the Norwich standard
- SAP rating of council homes

6.3 Regular progress reports will also be provided as part of monitoring of the delivery of the wider environmental strategy to the council's sustainable development panel which is a cross party working group chaired by the Cabinet member with responsibility for sustainable development. They will provide additional monitoring, challenge and scrutiny.

6.4 Progress will be communicated regularly to staff through a range of internal communications. This strategy and our annual environmental statement which will include overall progress on our affordable warmth work will be publicly available through our website www.norwich.gov.uk

and supported by a range of external communications to support awareness raising on these issues in the wider city.

- 6.5 Risks to the non delivery of this strategy have been considered. However, from time to time, activities within this strategy may be adversely affected by factors which may fall out for the control of the authority.

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7. Action Plan

No	Key action / projects	Priority	Theme (s)	Key performance measure(s)	Responsibility	Delivery (Timescale)
1	To commission a housing energy and advice team (HEAT) through the voluntary sector to provide advice and support to the public, specifically targeting those in fuel poverty, on how to achieve affordable warmth through lifestyles changes, accessing cheaper energy tariffs and taking advantage of government grants to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.	<p>Priority 1 - To help people in the City to reduce their fuel bills</p> <p>Priority 2 - To improve the energy efficiency of housing in the City</p>	Advice Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of people saying that their fuel bills had reduced following advice No of private households where council activity helped to improve the energy efficiency of their homes 	Environmental Strategy Team	<p>Service commissioned by 30 June 2012</p> <p>Service up and running by 1 August 2012</p>
2	To work with key council partners to develop and carry out a focused external and internal communications campaign leading up to each winter to make the public, employees, and contractors more aware of fuel poverty issues and how advice and support can be accessed.	<p>Priority 1 - To help people in the City to reduce their fuel bills</p> <p>Priority 2 - To improve the energy</p>	Awareness Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of people saying that their fuel bills had reduced following advice 	Environmental Strategy Team, Partnerships Team, and Communications Team	<p>Campaign designed and agreed by 30 September 2012</p> <p>Campaign carried out October – February each</p>

		efficiency of housing in the City				year
3	To work with partners to lobby for national policy changes to support fuel poverty reduction and to try and identify external sources of funding that could be accessed to support affordable warmth work e.g. to pay for winter warmth packs for the most vulnerable residents etc	Potentially all 3 priorities	Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amount of external funding secured for affordable warmth activity 	Environmental Strategy Team and Partnerships Team.	Ongoing throughout period of strategy
4	To co-create with the voluntary sector an innovative new system of financial inclusion and money advice services that can be commissioned, taking into account the changes caused by welfare reform, which will help to ensure that people are maximising their income etc	Priority 3 -To assist people in the City to maximise their income	Advice Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Income maximisation measure needs to be added in here % of people saying that debt issues had become manageable following face to face advice 	Neighbourhood Services Team	Co-creation work and re-commissioning completed by 31 September 2012
5	To identify privately-owned homes where an excess cold hazard exists and to take appropriate action to remove the hazard. This may	Priority 1 - To help people in the City to reduce their	Awareness Advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of privately owned homes made safe 	Private Sector Housing Team	Ongoing

	include the use of improvement notices in the case of privately-rented accommodation and financial assistance for vulnerable owner-occupiers.	<p>fuel bills</p> <p>Priority 2 - To improve the energy efficiency of housing in the City</p>		(including cold hazards)		
6	Landlord services action (s) on improvements to our council stock to be added in here		Landlord	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of council properties meeting the Norwich standard • SAP rating of council homes 	Housing Property Team	