

Council – 9th January 2012

Notice of motion - Save Money, Stay Warm, Go Green

I set out below a notice of motion to Council on 9th January 2012 from Councillors I. Shires, D.A. Shires and Barker:

- (1) This Council notes:
 - That British households currently spend more on heating their homes than their counterparts in Sweden where winter temperatures are far lower;
 - That this means a legacy of draughty, cold homes that are expensive to heat – leaving vulnerable local residents facing serious health risks;
 - An over-reliance on fossil fuels, leaving households and businesses exposed to soaring world energy prices.

- (2) This Council recognises the role played by the coalition government in securing:
 - The Warm Homes Discount to give an extra £120 each year to the least well-off pensioners in Walsall to keep warm this winter;
 - A commitment from energy companies to help with free loft and cavity wall insulation for Walsall's poorest households;
 - From October 2012, the Green Deal will aim to insulate all domestic and commercial properties to high standards at no upfront cost to consumers.

- (3) This Council resolves:
 - To support the Green Deal locally by ensuring local residents in Walsall know about the opportunities and helping direct them towards providers.
 - To investigate how else the Council can help with supporting home insulation work – for instance acting as a Green Deal provider itself;
 - To write to the Local Government Association and other appropriate national bodies with details of Walsall Council's plans to keep our residents warm and to tackle climate change.
 - To investigate ways that the Council can assist local residents to save money and keep warm through the provision of information and advice, including through working with partner agencies.

Save Money, Stay Warm, Go Green.

Overview

Walsall Council has led the way securing affordable warmth for many of the boroughs residents over the last 5 years. This has been through a series of initiatives delivered in partnership with NHS Walsall and energy providers and has attracted and delivered millions of pounds of investment in this area.

The details below summarise a range of initiatives that have taken place in the borough:

- Walsall Npower Health Through Warmth Scheme – nearly 2,000 homes improved since project started in 2006.
- Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP) the Council was the first in the country to sign, start and benefit from a CESP (for the Blakenall area). This was followed by the dramatic and eye-catching CESP improvement of Jones House by whg. A further 5 projects are proposed with major promotion of the Birchills CESP undertaken in October and November 2011.
- Carbon Emissions Reduction Target (CERT) work – Loft and cavity walls insulation
- Warmfront – referral to the national initiative

Many of the initiatives have had the benefit of helping reduce heating bills for residents and starting them 'along the line' of 'greener' living. Due to the inter-relationships of work in this area the following key themes are being addressed:

1. Excess Seasonal Deaths (ESD)
2. Fuel poverty
3. The impact of cold and damp homes on the physical and mental health of residents
4. Domestic carbon emissions

Appendix 1 contains a glossary of terms and definitions including ESD. A key national report covering these topics is The Health Impacts of Cold Homes and Fuel Poverty; Marmot Review Team
http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/reports/cold_homes_health.pdf

Maximising Investment into the borough

During 2011 and 2012 a range of major national funds remain which can provide assistance with funding and delivering home insulation works, improved heating systems and pilot power generation projects. The key funds are Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP) and Carbon Emissions Reduction Target (CERT) and these provide significant opportunities to help vulnerable residents secure improvements to their homes. Bids and programmes will continue to be developed by the Council in line with the adopted Housing Renewal Assistance Strategy to benefit the borough. CERT and CESP are due to end as Green Deal and Energy Company Obligations (ECO) start in later 2012.

Promotion and increasing take-up

Walsall Council has continued to promote the grant / loan and advice packages that are available for residents through a variety of methods. This pro-active approach has been highlighted by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health as national best practice within their toolkit 'Good Housing Leads to Good Health'. Methods used include:

- Advice line and home visits
- Bespoke leaflets delivered to all homes in the borough
- Regular media articles
- Web-based information
- Text and leaflet inserts within the NHS Walsall annual flu-jab letter
- Training sessions for support workers and those visiting vulnerable in their homes
- Use of free TV displays within GP surgeries to promote initiatives

When specific initiatives are planned or underway the Council also increases take-up through open events / resident sessions.

The proposed structure and delivery method(s) for Green Deal differ from a number of previous home insulation / heating projects and the Council will have a key role to play in ensuring residents receive impartial and timely advice. Advice will be based upon information from the Energy Savings Trust and other consumer bodies.

Green Deal Assessors Providers and Installers

Secondary legislation is being developed which will define the role of and the organisations and individuals able to operate as Green Deal Assessors, Providers and Installers. It is anticipated that each will be governed through an accreditation system similar to those known to the public, such as the Gas Safe Register (the replacement for Corgi).

To provide maximum flexibility for the Borough, Walsall Council is currently working with other Black Country Councils (Wolverhampton, Sandwell and Dudley), in partnership with the HCA, on the potential to support and/or deliver the Green Deal. We are also keeping our options open by signing up to the ability to use the Delivery Partner of Birmingham Energy Savers once appointed.

Assessors

Assessors will visit properties and advise on the energy performance of the home and the potential measures that can be undertaken to improve this. Whilst undoubtedly Green Deal Installers (those who undertake the physical works) are likely to wish to deliver this assessment service there may be many residents (and some Installers) who would wish to have a body such as the Council involved.

The Council will continue to investigate the opportunities for delivering an assessment service (which would be funded directly by Green Deal providers / installers). The technical aspects are still to be finalised by Government, but are expected to be similar to Standard Assessment procedure (SAP) and or Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs).

The government also proposes to release already available EPC information to Green Deal Installers to help them 'direct market' information to residents.

Providers

Green Deal Providers are bodies that will provide the funding for energy measures and will secure contractual agreement with the resident for the repayment of the cost through their energy bill.

Installers

The Council has no Direct Labour Organisation (DLO) at present other than Links to Work and is not in a position currently to develop a 'contracting arm' to undertake installation works such as loft insulation. Through the various funding packages the Council has delivered it has previously secured through major tenders private contractors to undertake this work for residents. It is anticipated that organisations such as whg will seek either independently or in partnership with a partner energy company to become a Green Deal provider.

Key areas that the Council can work in is in helping Green Deal installers maximise:

- a) Take-up of the initiative – impartial advice to residents
- b) The employment (skilled and unskilled) and training opportunities for local people. The Think Walsall initiative will be instrumental in this and the Council is supporting the local colleges with developing relevant training on 'retro-fit initiatives'.

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29th December 2011

Appendix 1 Glossary and definitions

Carbon Emissions Reduction Target (CERT) – source of funding extended to December 2012 which focuses on insulation of homes to reduce level of energy (and therefore carbon dioxide emitted) required to heat homes. http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/funding/funding_ops/cert/cert.aspx

Community Energy Saving programme (CESP) – Energy Company funding directed at tackling carbon emissions on a specific geographic area (Low Super Output area) basis. Can be any tenures and has been extended to October 2012. To be 'viable' an energy company must secure sufficient 'take-up' to achieve carbon reductions.

Excess Seasonal Deaths : These relate to the difference between the number of deaths during the four winter months (December to March) and the average number of deaths during the preceding autumn and summer (April - November). These deaths are of those people who would not have been expected to die due to illness or old age in the next few weeks or months. Many of these deaths are amongst older people, especially women, and those with underlying health problems. People living with underlying heart, circulatory or lung disease are at the highest risk.

Cold related illnesses severely affect cardiovascular and respiratory ailments. The provision of a warm home alleviates these ailments and combats cancer, heart disease, strokes and depression.

- Each one degree Celsius decrease in average winter temperature results in 8,000 additional winter deaths in England.
- Nationally, mortality rises 18% during the winter months. In a bad winter, this could amount to an additional 50,000 deaths. During winter 2010/2011 there were 27500 excess winter deaths
- However, these deaths are preventable; some countries with more extreme weather conditions than the UK experience fewer winter-related deaths. For example, Finland has 45% fewer winter deaths than the UK.
- After cold weather, it takes 40 days for levels of illness and death to return to normal.

Contributory factors to excess seasonal mortality include:

- circulatory diseases (including heart attack and stroke), accounting for around 40% of excess winter deaths
- respiratory illnesses such as bronchitis and pneumonia, which make up around a third of excess winter deaths
- inhaling cold air, causing airways in the lung them to narrow and produce phlegm, worsening chronic lung disease and asthma

Deaths related to heart problems peak after two days, stroke deaths after 5 days, and respiratory deaths peak 12 days after the coldest weather.

Excess seasonal deaths can also occur in the summer due to excessive high temperatures. Again effective home insulation can combat this by keeping heat out of the home.

Health through Warmth: Developed by npower to assist vulnerable private sector residents who have a serious illness or disability made worse by cold and damp in their homes. Project will cease to be delivered locally from end of December 2011. In Walsall it has been delivered by the Energy Efficiency Team in partnership with NHS Walsall and has been both nationally acclaimed and helped almost 2,000 households improve their homes.

Fuel poverty: is when a household needs to spend more than 10% of its income on total fuel use to heat its home to an adequate standard of warmth (under Central Government review – Hills Report).

- Fuel poverty frequently affects people from vulnerable groups that already experience a disproportionately higher level of general poverty and deprivation.
- These groups include older people, households containing children (including lone parents), households with large adult populations, vulnerable groups (including disabled people), and single person households.

Low Super Output area (LSOAs) – Government defined geographic boundaries where CESP can be offered.