



Subject:	Affordable Warmth Scheme
Date:	13 th June 2023
Reporting Officer:	Kate Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control
Contact Officer:	Ian Harper, Building Control Manager Mattelle McCartan

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	Belfast City Council has been engaged in a partnership with the Department for Communities (DfC) and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) in the delivery of the Affordable Warmth Scheme (AWS) since 2014.
1.2	The scheme aims to address fuel poverty for the most vulnerable households in the city by targeting those households that meet certain criteria, as identified by Ulster University to provide home improvement measures such as loft and cavity wall insulation, replacement boilers and new double-glazed windows.
1.3	The purpose of this report is to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">bring forward a request from the DfC to members regarding signing of the interim Service Level Agreement (SLA) from the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2024 (Appendix 1).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> inform members of a communication received from DfC on 1 June 2023 giving Council's 3 months' notice, ending the Council's role in the administration of the Affordable Warmth Scheme on 31 August 2023 (Appendix 2).
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the request from DFC to sign the interim SLA provided for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2024, acknowledging that the DfC have put the Council on notice terminating the arrangement on 31 August 2023.
3.0	Main report
	<u>Key Issues & current position</u>
3.1	DfC have provided Councils with an interim SLA for period from 1 April 2022 until 31 March 2024 (Appendix 1), which will bring the Affordable Warmth Scheme to an end with the intention that it will be replaced with another scheme.
3.2	On 1 st June 2023 the Council received a letter from the DfC giving 3 months' notice of the termination of the Council's administration role within the Affordable Warmth Scheme. The 3 months' notice period will be from 1 June 2023 until 31 August 2023, during which time BCC will continue to provide 20 referrals per month (Appendix 2).
3.3	The Affordable Warmth Scheme will continue to run until 31 March 2024 but will be administrated by NIHE. It will no longer be a targeted scheme but will be managed through an application process.
3.4	The DfC and NIHE are developing comms and processes to inform Council's, existing applicants and interested applicants how the scheme will continue beyond 31 August 2023.
3.5	Building Control have 3 employees who carry out the administration of the Affordable Warmth Scheme, they will return to their substantive posts from 1 September 2023.
	Current position for the 2023-2024 year
3.6	To date this financial year 40 referrals have been sent to NIHE, with a further 60 allowed from June-August.
3.7	At present we are transferring the highest priority cases based on the matrix, but also have 540 residents who are eligible for the scheme but have not been submitted to date, given the number of referrals permitted. In addition, there are a significant number of residents who may be eligible

	for replacement windows but are unlikely to be considered given the higher priority cases in Belfast.
3.8	During the notice period work will also be undertaken to transfer this information to NIHE who are still to confirm how these will be taken forward in the new application process.
3.9	We have also referred 405 residents to other providers such as National Energy Action.
Financial & Resource Implications	
3.10	Councils will continue to be paid for 20 referrals per month for June, July and August and are due to receive payment for referrals submitted in April and May. The impact of this decision will be a reduction in income of £30,000. However, the Council have been subsidising the Affordable Warmth scheme through staff resources and with the scheme transferring to NIHE there will be an overall saving of £50,000 to Belfast City Council.
3.11	There may be a requirement to retain 1 employee for a short period of time to ensure the transfer of applicant details which are held on an expression of interest list and to finalise the close of the BCC role in the scheme.
Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment	
3.12	There are no equality, good relations, or rural needs issues.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Affordable Warmth Scheme - Service Level Agreement for period of 1 April 2022 until 31 March 2024. Appendix 2 - Letter of confirmation from DfC confirming 3 months' notice ending councils' administrative role in the scheme.