



Subject:	Affordable Warmth Scheme
Date:	22 nd June 2018
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Ian Harper, Building Control Manager Mattelle McCartan, Business Co-ordinator

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"/>
Never	<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	<p>At SP&R on 23rd March 2018 a report was presented to discuss the proposal tabled at the People and Communities committee around the issue of providing additional resourcing for the scheme. The recommendations were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Members are reminded that the Committee agreed at its meeting on the 16 February 2018, that no further financial re-allocations would be made until the year end position was considered at the June meeting of the Committee, given that the uncommitted forecast represents less than 0.2% of departmental expenditure.Members are also asked to note, that the Department for Communities (DfC) workshop will take place on the 27 March 2018, when it is hoped that the Council will receive the detail of the DfC commitment for 2018/19.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In view of the above, it is recommended that a further report on the additional resource requirements is provided to the Committee in April 2018, following the workshop.
1.2	<p>During the meeting it was agreed that officers would carry out a trawl to see if there is spare capacity within another section to assist in delivering the Affordable Warmth (AW) scheme. The service is currently carrying out a trawl across the organisation for additional business support staff to support the customer contact and administration elements of the scheme.</p>
1.3	<p>The managers meeting of 27th March did not provide any commitment from DfC for 2018-2019. Following a further managers meeting on 25th May 2018 DfC confirmed that the target number of referrals would be reduced to a total of 220 in the year, compared to 405 last year. The budget provided for the year is £68,780 compared to £73,305 last year. This means 17 referrals per month can be sent to Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) from June 2018.</p>
1.4	<p>This new target number of referrals will not meet the number of self-referrals being made to the scheme, with over 950 people currently on an expression of interest list, and will further exacerbate the difficulty in managing the expectations of the public. It is essential that the DfC agree to a message that councils can deliver as the front face of the scheme to help manage this expectation. While during the managers meeting this issue was raised with the DfC, they have suggested that a further workshop is held to look at the prioritisation, public expectations and the wider issues of the scheme.</p>
1.5	<p>Written confirmation of the funding and referral targets was received from the DfC on 11th June (Appendix 2). They also provided an SLA for 2018-2019 (Appendix 3). The changes from the previous SLA are duties for councils and are highlighted in the document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “highlight urgent cases to the NIHE Grants Manager at the time of referral. An urgent case is defined as a household with no heating system, or central heating which is broken down beyond repair.” Note that the service already has this arrangement with the NIHE. • “Carry out additional duties such as handholding of householders and qualitative case studies of homes which have received assistance through the Scheme. (To be agreed following Workshop in June 2018)”.

	<p>The service already does significant handholding and will have no issue in delivering case studies as part of the scheme.</p> <p>Officers will attend the workshops in June to discuss these items further.</p>
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to note the contents of the report and agree to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The signing of the Service Level Agreement for 2018-19 (subject to final clearance of the Data Sharing agreement from Records Management) and 2. Officers working with DfC to agree a uniform method of prioritisation of referrals and an appropriate communication on the current limitations of the scheme in order to manage the expectation of those engaging with it.
3.0	Main report
	<u>Background</u>
3.1	The Affordable Warmth team currently consists of 1 Project Co-ordinator and a Project Officer who is 0.5 FTE. Currently the team are dealing mainly with priority cases i.e. broken boilers, or more vulnerable households
3.2	The number of referrals that the Affordable Warmth team can send is set by the DfC in conjunction with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). In 2017-2018 the annual target number of referrals was 405, and 320 were provided to NIHE. This was due to the issues around resourcing and the number of self-referrals being made to the scheme.
3.3	Following a meeting with the DfC on Friday 25 th May, they confirmed the target number of referrals has reduced to 220 for 2018-2019, 17 per month from June, with allocated funding of £68,780 until March 2019.
3.4	The Service is currently reviewing the best resourcing model based upon the funding allocated and the potential outcome from the trawl for business support staff. The team will be able to meet the target of 17 referrals on a monthly basis but will also have to consider the predicted seasonal influx of phone calls that is expected towards the end of the summer.
3.5	With the reduction in both the funding and monthly referrals, the focus will be managing the expectation of applicants. The Service received over 1700 calls about the scheme between

	July 17 and February 18 and expect the same levels of contact in the forthcoming Autumn and Winter period.
3.6	The majority of applicants are vulnerable and during the colder weather, a high number of calls relate to applicants with no heating who meet the criteria. 17 referrals for Belfast is not enough to address the demand. Earlier this year members raised this issue with the Head of Fuel Poverty but the DfC have confirmed that there can be no changes to the eligibility criteria, measures provided or the scope of the scheme at this stage and that the budgets and therefore the targets have been set.
3.7	The Service also has over 950 applicants on an expression of interest list. This list ranges from home with intermittent heating systems, to those needing insulation and windows. However, given the current levels of funding and referrals BCC will be in a position where we will have households eligible for the scheme who in reality will never be referred through to the NIHE. NIHE have also confirmed that they are currently dealing with the referrals from 17-18 and any referrals received from 1 st April 2018 will not be processed until confirmation is received from DfC.
3.8	DfC have also commissioned a consultant to review the different delivery models for the scheme. This will include the full end to end process, including the NIHE elements. It is likely that this review will not be completed until after the summer.
	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u>
3.9	To deal with the significant number of phone calls the council will still be subsidising the business support elements of the scheme by at least ½ FTE scale 6 business support officer (£16,000)
	<u>Equality and good relations issues</u>
3.10	There are no equality of good relations issues
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Presentation from Affordable Warmth Scheme Senior Managers meeting 25 th May 2018 Appendix 2 – Letter from DfC to confirm levels of funding and referrals for 2018-2019 Appendix 3 – Proposed Service Level Agreement between DfC and BCC for 2018-2019