

## **Delegated Item for Approval**

# **Emergency Heating Scheme**

## **Report of Assistant Executive Director of Housing**

**Portfolio Responsibility: Cllr McCann, Cabinet Member for  
Regeneration and Environment**

**17<sup>th</sup> January 2011**

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### **Purpose of Report**

To agree expenditure from the allocated 'Affordable Warmth' budget from the Housing Capital Programme, on an emergency heating scheme for vulnerable residents.

### **Recommendations**

That the Council approves to give funding to a partner organisation to enable an emergency heating scheme to be available for residents, who may have otherwise been eligible for Warm Front which is no longer taking applications.

## **Emergency Heating Scheme**

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#### **Portfolio Responsibility: Cllr McCann, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Environment**

##### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To agree expenditure from the allocated 'Affordable Warmth' budget from the Housing Capital Programme, for an emergency heating scheme to be made available for vulnerable residents.

##### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 That the Council approves to give funding to a partner organisation to enable an emergency heating scheme to be available for residents, who may have otherwise been eligible for Warm Front which is now not taking applications.

##### **3. Background**

- 3.1 £60,000 (£40,000 'Affordable Warmth' and £20,000 from 'yet to be allocated') has been allocated from the Housing Capital Programme to spend on affordable warmth measures. This was approved by Cabinet on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2010 (ERDS 10050041). Most of this funding is already committed and goes towards paying for the AWARM referral scheme and the Warmth for Health scheme.
- 3.2 £2,100 is left from this budget which was being reserved for monitoring of NI187. Now that National Indicators have been scrapped this funding is no longer needed for this purpose.
- 3.3 On the 15<sup>th</sup> of December Government announced that Warm Front was no longer accepting applications this financial year and from 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2011 the eligibility would change as the funding has been slashed by 70% in the CSR.
- 3.4 Warm Front's main purpose was to offer a grant of up to £3,500 to residents in certain 'vulnerable' categories to pay for an upgraded heating system or a totally new system where there is not one in place. They were also able to offer insulation upgrades, although insulation is not now available through Warm

Front, residents can still access this through other funding pots which we advertise through the Energy Savings Trust, however there is no alternative funding for heating systems.

3.5 This means that there is now a situation where vulnerable residents may be found (and referred through to AWARM) with no heating in their homes and no help available.

#### 4.0 Current Position

4.1 Residents could fall into a number of categories:

Type of householder	Problem	Who would help
RSL tenant	Broken or no heating	RSL's responsibility
Private rented tenants	Broken or no heating	Housing enforcement team can ensure Landlord sorts this out
Owner Occupiers	* Current boiler breaks down, not covered by guarantees/warranties etc; or, * No heating system in place at all	Able to pay residents – we would refer them to either Age Concern handyman scheme or a gas safe engineer  'Vulnerable' residents with low income – Propose to provide emergency heating

For owner occupiers it would then need to be determined whether they were 'able to pay' or whether they are in need of further assistance. It is proposed to use the Warm Front eligibility criteria and also 'common sense' by the AWARM professionals. The funding is only likely to cover around 20-25 households, so discretion will be needed and the scheme will not be 'advertised', but only offered to those who are found in need.

4.2 Looking at best practice around the region Bolton and Wigan already offer residents assistance in these circumstances, as even when available Warm Front often took around 6 months to complete their works. This assistance is in the form of 2 oil filled radiators (one for living room & one for the bedroom), which are given to the resident (to avoid liability and maintenance issues) to provide them with an adequate level of heating. The most energy efficient oil filled radiators will be purchased to ensure residents do not have to deal with unmanageable heating bills.

4.3 Living in a cold home is not just an unpleasant experience; inadequately heated houses can have serious health implications, particularly for the old and very young and for people with a disability, and can even be a factor in premature death. In fact in Winter of 2008/9 Oldham had 235 excess winter deaths, 80% of which can be directly attributed to the cold conditions.

## **5. Proposal**

5.1 It is proposed to spend the remaining affordable warmth budget (£2,100) on purchasing energy efficient oil filled radiators for residents whom are found to be in need, with no heating provision at all.

5.2 These residents would mainly be identified through AWARM referrals that are made by various professionals in Oldham who come in contact with vulnerable residents.

5.3 The Warm Front criteria will be applied to ensure the support doesn't go to 'able to pay' residents.

5.4 It is anticipated that the scheme would be administered through one of our partner organisations such as Age Concern Oldham. These details will be determined once the budget is approved.

## **6 Options/Alternatives**

6.1 The £2,100 could be given back to the budget as a saving for this financial year, however there would then be no scheme in place to help the most vulnerable residents in their time of need, this could have serious health implications for the residents concerned.

6.2 The demand for this scheme is unpredictable however the budget could be allocated & radiators bought in bulk to achieve the best price. This could mean they continue to be available into next financial year as well.

## **7 Preferred Option**

7.1 The preferred option would be to take forward the scheme with partners to help residents whom are most in need.

## **8 Consultation**

8.1 The scheme supports Oldham Affordable Warmth Strategy which was adopted on the 14 July. This has been widely consulted upon with the stakeholder group, members and also the Affordable Warmth Core Steering Group.

## **9 Financial Implications**

9.1 The proposed scheme represents capital expenditure and will be a charge against the Economy, Place and Skills – Housing – Private Sector housing capital programme.

9.2 A general provision of £2,100 exists within the Council's capital programme to support this project.

9.3 The scheme will be phased and financed as follows:

	2010/11
	<u>£'000</u>
RHCP Funds	2.1

9.4 Officers must ensure that total expenditure is kept within available resources, any spend in excess of the approved resources will need to be from form within the services existing budgets. (J Kara 10/1/11)

## 10 Legal Services Comments

10.1 An authority may rely on the well-being powers within the Local Government Act 2000 to use this money as recommended, if it considers that to do so is likely to result in the promotion or improvement of the social well-being of their area. (Bill Balmer)

## 11 Human Resources Comments

11.1 N/A

## 12 Risk Implications

12.1 No comment required (Mark Stenson).

## 13 IT Implications

13.1 N/A

## 14 Property Implications

14.1 None

## 15 Procurement Implications

15.1 There are no procurement implications. Karen Lowes

## 16 Environmental and Health & Safety Implications

16.1 One of the main objectives of the Affordable Warmth Strategy is to minimise the impact of housing on the environment, through reduced emissions. Also

by reducing fuel poverty through a variety of initiatives we hope to improve the health of those whom currently live in cold damp homes. Any efforts to reduce fuel poverty; reduce Oldham's carbon emissions and improve residents' health and wellbeing should be encouraged. (Angela Carr)

**17 Community Cohesion Implications [including Crime & Disorder Implications in accordance with Section 17 of the Act] and Equalities Implications**

17.1 By improving our targeting of vulnerable residents and increasing our referrals to AWARM we will be improving access to our services for our most vulnerable residents and reducing inequalities. By 'fuel-proofing' Oldham homes, we will also be helping to tackle future health inequalities that can be expected when living in fuel poverty. (Angela Carr)

**18 Forward Plan Reference**

18.1 N/A

**19 Key Decision**

19.1 No

Signed _____ Cabinet Member [specify whom]	Dated _____
Signed _____ Executive Director	Dated _____