Purpose of the Report
To provide an update to Board of progress made on the Affordable Warmth Strategy and Action Plan during 2015/16.

Recommendations
Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board are requested to consider:

- How members can help to promote the Warm Homes Oldham Scheme to residents within Oldham and make referrals when necessary
- If members can identify any households in their area without central heating that may be able to benefit from the current central heating fund
- How referrals can be increased from front line services (Internally & from partner organisations)
- Any other key stakeholders that should be supporting activity or delivery of the Affordable Warmth Strategy (current key partners are – FCHO, OHIP, Age UK, Fire Service, Council Housing, Council Environmental policy)
Affordable Warmth Progress Update

1  Background

1.1  Over the last 4 years, work through Oldham’s Affordable Warmth Strategy has helped to deliver significant improvements including:

- £23,824,553 investment in Affordable Warmth schemes (majority external funding)
- 25,651 energy efficiency measures installed in Oldham homes

Latest figures from Government estimate that Oldham continues to have areas with high levels of fuel poverty, with approximately 15% of households in Oldham having to pay more than 10% of their income to heat their homes (13,557 households); this is 1.7% less than the England average of 17%. Fuel Poverty levels have decreased gradually as shown by table below, this is in line with National trends.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage of fuel poverty (using 10% definition)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The current Affordable Warmth Strategy has an annual delivery plan which has clear actions, objectives and targets for all partners involved to work towards.

An Affordable Warmth Core Steering Group meets on a quarterly basis to monitor delivery of the Plan. Annual review reports are done at the end of each financial year to collate achievements and a quarterly newsletter is developed and circulated to a wide network of partners and members. Although coordinated by Oldham Council (within Housing), the Strategy has a partnership approach, with key partners providing support and even funding (e.g. OHIP and the CCG).

The Oldham Partners joint investment agreement to tackle fuel poverty has funded the ‘Warm Homes Oldham’ scheme which has been a great success and has already lifted over 3000 people out of fuel poverty during the first 3 years. However, with continued energy price rises the problem of fuel poverty is only likely to get worse. We are now well into year 3 of the Warm Homes Oldham scheme and delivery against the Affordable Warmth Action Plan.
2 - Key achievements since January 2015

The last O&S update (January 2015) detailed what was achieved in the previous year of the strategy, so highlighted below are some of the main achievements since the start of this year’s plan (2015/16) under each of the key objectives:

2.1 Increase uptake of energy efficiency measures and raise awareness of the benefits of being energy efficient

- Oldham won a ‘Community Action Award’ from National Energy Action Charity (£1,500). Funding was used to put on an annual Winter Health Event in December in partnership with Age UK to deliver practical advice and support to over 250 residents attending
- Quarterly newsletters are produced and distributed widely and a strong brand has been created for affordable warmth messaging
- FCHO have signed up with ‘Community Switch’ to help their tenants switch energy providers. In the first year they completed 497 switches, saving tenants over £30,000.
- The bi-annual Home Energy Conservation Act Report (HECA) which is a statutory duty was completed in March 2015 & published online here.
- Environmental Health Selective Licensing team have all been trained on the effects of Fuel Poverty on health & what support there is available for tenants & landlords
- Oldham Community Power Ltd set up – a Community Benefit Society led by local members of the community which will deliver the Generation Oldham programme
- £17K secured from Department of Energy & Climate Change for Generation Oldham project development
- New Community Energy Apprenticeship standard developed working with BIS – next step is to develop the Assessment Plan

2.2 Improve the energy efficiency of housing stock

- The FCHO B-Green project (St Mary’s) has been completed, which includes over 600 homes receiving external wall insulation and also conversion of the district heating plant to biomass. A ‘BWarm’ Energy apprentice has been recruited and a neighbourhood agreement developed in partnership with the community.
- We have installed Solar PV panels to 30 bungalows and 1 group scheme on our PFI2 stock. These panels performance and financial gain are being evaluated before decision is made on future roll out (following cuts to FIT rates)
- We have secured over £700,000 from the AGMA Green Deal Communities funding pot to complete Solid Wall insulation to fuel poverty homes. This has included full estate upgrade works to Holts estate, Failsworth, Limeside and Crossley estate – with residents now benefitting from Warmer, healthier homes and the estates having much improved aesthetics
- In October we won £110,000 new funding from DECC to provide full central heating systems for low income households; we were the only LA in GM to secure funding. So far we have found around 25 households who qualify, all of which have been very needy cases
- Figures released from DECC show that nationally Oldham has had the 2nd highest number of ECO installations (per 1,000 households) in the Country (only beaten by Blackpool) since the scheme was launched in January 2013. There have been a total of 15,416 ECO installations in our area since the launch – these installs will include free boilers, loft, cavity wall insulation & some solid wall insulation too.

2.3 Help tackle fuel poverty and improve health and wellbeing amongst the most vulnerable groups
• Fuel poverty/affordable warmth messages have been integrated into delivery of any new Age UK projects that have been introduced during the year
• Age UK secured further funding from EON to deliver 200 home energy checks in homes, we have linked these into Warm Homes Oldham (see below)
• Funding has been secured to run 2 accredited Fuel debt/Energy Efficiency courses for professionals in Oldham. Over 40 professionals received the accreditation this year.
• We have continued to provide emergency heating for those in need through the Warm Homes Scheme & Age UK
• The second evaluation report on Warm Homes Oldham health impacts has been developed & published: www.warmhomesoldham.org
• Funding has been secured from CCG & Public Health to continue the Warm Homes scheme for a fourth year (see below for further detail).
• We have worked with the Fire Service on their pilot ‘Winter Warmth Project’ to increase referrals to our schemes

2.4 Warm Homes Oldham

2.4.1 Background

In 2012 Oldham Council, the Oldham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and the Oldham Housing Investment Partnership (OHIP) signed the UK’s first ‘Joint Investment Agreement’ to help tackle fuel poverty in Oldham. By reducing fuel poverty, the partners therefore hope to reduce demand, and therefore make significant savings, in other areas like health care and social services. The funding pays for our Warm Homes Oldham scheme, which is now in its third year of delivery.

This year the scheme is being delivered by a number of partners (Keepmoat, JNR insulation, Auriga & Age UK Oldham) and offers a variety of help to households who are struggling to heat their homes by:

- Giving energy efficiency and bill advice
- Accessing grants for heating upgrades and insulation
- Accessing grants for gas supplies
- Helping people clear their fuel debt through applications to trust fund grants
- Helping residents off prepayment meters to cheaper, more convenient standard credit meters
- Helping residents switch energy providers and access warm homes discounts (£140 rebate on winter energy bills)
- Benefits checks to ensure residents are claiming everything they are entitled to
- Providing emergency heating & emergency credit for those on prepay meters

This year households over 50 also get a follow up visit from Age UK Oldham, who are fully trained to undertake a holistic assessment of the resident’s situation and fit small energy measures where possible (e.g. radiator foils, foam draft excluders, door brushes, letter box seals, low energy light bulbs, chimney balloons, remote plug sockets, cold alarms & night lights).

The first 2 years of the project saw some great outcomes including:

- 2321 people brought out of fuel poverty (against target of 2200)
- Over £2.1 million of utility grant funding brought in through the scheme
- 671 boilers installed, 151 external wall insulation, 152 cavities & lofts installed
- Average saving per household helped is £953
- £133,857 worth of extra benefits secured
- £72,327 worth of trust fund grants secured for homes not on benefits with poor heating or in debt
The project has been recognised nationally with a number of accolades including:
- Won ‘Best Partnering Project’ – Housing Excellence Awards 2015
- Won ‘Most Sustainable Housing Project of the Year’ - Inside Housing Sustainability Awards 2014
- Shortlisted at the Housing Excellence Awards in 2013

2.4.2 – Year 3

So far this year we have lifted approximately 800 people out of fuel poverty against a target of 1200 for the year (figures up to end of January) and have the following outcomes (up to Q3):
- 193 boilers installed
- 52 cavities insulated & 88 lofts
- 106 solid wall insulations
- £1.2 million of external funding secured
- £23,126 saved on tariff switching
- £26,460 worth of Warm Homes Discount secured
- 24 trust fund grants secured so far (£37,735)
- £119,966 extra benefits identified
- 17 emergency credit payments made (£850)
- 177 referrals to Age UK Oldham for extra support

Whilst progress has been good and our delivery is the second best in the country on ECO measures, there is much to do to meet our challenging target of 1200 by the end of March. Progress is behind because of a number of factors including the mild winter and more complex cases coming to us this year requiring several visits. These factors have been outside the control of the Council and we are doing everything we can to promote the scheme to residents.

2.4.3 - Year 4

Funding has been secured from the partners to fund the scheme next year (2016/17) – arrangements are just being made with procurement to continue with the current partners, which are working well. There is likely to be much less funding available from Government/Utilities next year – ECO rates are very low, Green Deal Communities funding has finished. We are therefore looking at a reduced target of 1000 people.

2.4.4 - Greater Manchester Warm Homes scheme

Following the success of the Oldham scheme, there are now discussions at a Greater Manchester level about the possibility of rolling out the Warm Homes Oldham model out across the sub-region. A group has been set up to look at how this can be done and Oldham Council attends the group to offer advice & lessons learnt from our scheme.

3 - Key Issues for Overview and Scrutiny to Discuss

Continued successful implementation of the strategy should bring in increased levels of funding to Oldham (e.g. through utility partners and funding bids) and better partnership working (especially with the health sector) in improving Oldham’s housing stock. Wider benefits of the Strategy are that more energy efficient homes means lower fuel bills for residents, decreased Co2 emissions and reduced health issues, which can be exacerbated by living in the cold. Challenges going forward include reduced resources in front line services & high staff turnover within agencies as well as reductions from central Government in subsidies and grants available for energy efficiency work.

As highlighted, although Oldham’s performance is the second best in the country for ECO installations, we are behind target this year on the Warm Homes Oldham scheme (currently at 800
towards the 1200 people out of fuel poverty). We are currently undertaking additional marketing and would welcome support from members to ensure the scheme reaches at least 1000 people by the end of March, as this will secure the full amount of funding from partners to reinvest for next year’s project.

4 Key Questions for Overview and Scrutiny to Consider

- How members can help to promote the Warm Homes Oldham Scheme to residents within Oldham and make referrals when necessary.
- If members can identify any households in their area without central heating that may be able to benefit from the current central heating fund
- How referrals can be increased from front line services (Internally & from partner organisations)
- Any other key stakeholders that should be supporting activity or delivery of the Affordable Warmth Strategy (current key partners are – FCHO, OHIP, Age UK, Fire Service, Council Housing, Council Environmental Policy who attend the Quarterly Steering Group)

5. Links to Corporate Outcomes

5.1 Oldham’s Affordable Warmth Strategy (2014-2017) feeds into the overarching ‘Oldham Housing Strategy 2015-2018’ of which ‘Healthy Homes’ is one of its key objectives. As well as directly contributing to a number of other corporate strategies & goals, including:
   - Corporate Plan (objective of ‘Confident Communities’)
   - Home Energy Conservation Act Report (HECA)
   - Oldham’s Climate Change Strategy
   - Health and Wellbeing Strategy
   - Oldham’s Cooperative Housing Offer

The fuel poverty joint investment agreement (see section 2.4), signed by partners and supported by the Health and Wellbeing Board, is a clear example of key agencies collaborating to make a difference to people’s lives, and demonstrates the importance of the connectivity between people’s health and the environment in which they live.

6 Additional Supporting Information

6.1 The latest press release and case study we have done is attached for information:

2nd highest ECO figures press release

7 Consultation

7.1 Consultation with members, partners and residents was done as part of the Strategy development. Consultation on specific initiatives is done as and when required.

8 Appendices

8.1 Latest Affordable Warmth Newsletter: