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| Subject: | Draft response to Department for Communities Fuel Poverty Strategy |
| Date: | 21 February 2025 |
| Reporting Officer: | John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy |
| Contact Officer: | Kevin Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty Brian Carr, Portfolio Manager Chris Tubridy Hardship Programme Manager |

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted? Yes No

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

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| After Committee Decision | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| After Council Decision | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sometime in the future | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Never | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in? Yes No

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| 1.0 | Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues |
| 1.1 | The purpose of this paper is to submit for the consideration of Committee a draft corporate response to the Department for Communities (DfC) draft Fuel Poverty Strategy consultation. |

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| 2.0 | Recommendations |
| 2.1 | <p>The Committee are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. note the draft Fuel Poverty Strategy being consulted upon – CLICK LINK ii. consider the draft Council response attached at Appendix 1; iii. agree that the draft Council response is submitted to the Department for Communities |
| 3.0 | Main report |
| 3.1 | The Department for Communities recently launched a consultation on a draft Fuel Poverty Strategy for Northern Ireland which sets out a proposed framework for addressing fuel poverty and its impacts. |
| 3.2 | DfC defines fuel poverty as the inability of a household to heat and power their home adequately. It is affected by the cost of energy, the energy efficiency of the home and energy needs of those living in it, and household income. When people cannot heat their homes adequately it can lead to poor mental and physical health. |
| 3.3 | <p>This strategy proposes a vision of a Warm, Healthy Home for Everyone, supported by 4 principles. It contains a number of proposed actions that will help us achieve the following objectives to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make homes more energy efficient 2. Collaborate and build capacity 3. Protect consumers |
| 3.4 | The draft Strategy also proposes a new approach to measuring and reporting on fuel poverty and proposals for the Department’s new Fuel Poverty Energy Efficiency scheme. |
| 3.5 | As part of the recent refresh of the Belfast Agenda (City’s Community Plan), a key and immediate area of concern emerging from key stakeholder groups, community and voluntary sector representatives, citizens, communities of interest and elected Members, was the growing fuel poverty crisis facing the city and communities. There was a strong call to action for community planning partners to work with NICS Departments to move quickly to bring forward immediate and integrated measures to support vulnerable people alongside helping inform the development on long-term and sustainable approach and underpinning strategies, policies and programmes. |
| 3.6 | There is little doubt that the scale and complexity of challenges with a dangerous combination of higher energy prices, reduced incomes, and leaky, energy inefficient housing could create the perfect storm and push many households further into fuel poverty. These increases come at a time when many household budgets are already stretched thin. |

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| 3.7 | Living in fuel poverty can severely affect a person's life in a wide range of ways, on physical and mental health, household finances, the economy and ultimately on people's quality of life. |
| 3.8 | Members will be aware of the significant investment made by the Council over recent years in helping to alleviate the impact of fuel poverty and the cost-of-living crisis. The Council would highlight the collaboration which has taken place with DfC, and the role of Council working closely with community partners to get significant funding and support to those impacted by fuel poverty across the city. There is no doubt of the effectiveness and impact of central and local government working together with communities in responding together in times of emergency. |
| 3.9 | While we understand and embrace the fact that its causes are complex and its consequences are multiple, there is an opportunity through community planning to create the environment and bring the key stakeholders together to develop achievable actions. Whilst immediate and practical interventions and support can be brought forward to help mitigate the effects of fuel poverty; we would commend that a broader and integrated programme and longer-term strategy and associated resources are required to seek to eradicate fuel poverty within Belfast and wider region. |
| | Financial & Resource Implications |
| 3.10 | There are no financial or human resource implications arising directly from this report. |
| | Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment |
| 3.11 | There are no equality/ good relations or rural needs implications arising directly from this report. |
| 4.0 | Appendices – Documents Attached |
| | Appendix 1: Draft Council response to DfC Fuel Poverty Strategy |