



Subject:	All Party Deputation on Fuel Poverty with Head of Fuel Poverty & Private Sector Grants Team, DfC
Date:	7 th June 2016
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Director of City and Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Siobhan Toland, Lead Operations Officer Ian Harper, Building Control Manager

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

1.0	Purpose of report
1.1	To provide the Committee with an update on issues arising from the all Party Deputation, 24 th May 2016 with Martin McDermott, Head of Fuel Poverty & Private Sector Grants Team in the Department for Communities (DfC).
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Note the contents of the report.• Consider writing to the Department for Communities requesting a meeting with the new Minister to discuss fuel poverty.• Consider making a request to the Department of Finance & Personnel to meet with the Minister to discuss funding including a mechanism for reallocation of under spends for fuel poverty schemes.
3.0	Main report
3.1	As previously agreed by Council a cross party deputation met with Martin McDermott on 24 th May to discuss fuel poverty issues. Members expressed their desire to meet with the incoming Minister for the Department for Communities to further discuss fuel poverty issues. The key areas discussed are reported below.

3.2	<p>The Department continue to target the most vulnerable households where 25% of income is used on heating a home. 33,000 homes have been identified and these are targeted in the Affordable Warmth Scheme. The budget last year was £16.5 M. The boiler replacement scheme, administered by the NIHE, with a budget of £3m, also covers households in fuel poverty where 10% of household income is spent on heating.</p> <p>There were a number of key issues that were discussed at the meeting and are outlined below.</p>
3.3	<p>Cavity Wall insulation installer’s scheme</p> <p>It was suggested that the Assembly need to introduce an accredited scheme to control and regulate all cavity wall installation companies. The scheme should include a rigorous process of accreditation and monitoring of all certified installers who must meet agreed standards in relation to, for example, workmanship, materials and technical knowledge. This scheme must also be backed up with a robust failsafe guarantee for anyone who has cavity wall insulation installed and that protects them even if the installer is no longer trading. During discussion it was suggested this scheme should not be at the cost to the ratepayer and could be administered via a bond or application fee paid by the installers that self finances the regulation of it.</p>
3.4	<p>NIHE bi-annual housing condition surveys</p> <p>It is important that all future General House Condition surveys include cavity wall insulation inspections and / or thermal imaging testing to ensure adequate levels of insulation for all homes tested. It was confirmed by DSD that the NIHE have given an assurance that during forthcoming surveys to be carried out these assessments will be carried out on sample basis.</p>
3.5	<p>Dealing with defective cavity wall insulation</p> <p>Whilst the Affordable Warmth Scheme contains funding provision for removal and retrofitting of cavity wall insulation further provision should be made to widen the scale of funding to address this issue.</p>
3.6	<p>Affordable Warmth Scheme (AWS)</p> <p>Given the importance of tackling fuel poverty, the reduction in funding for individual local Councils is disappointing. The funding has been reduced from £153,000 in 2015/16 to a</p>

	<p>new annual figure of £92,000. Quarter 1 of 2016/17 will be at the same rate as quarter 1 of 2015/16 (i.e. £38,250) to allow transition and subsequently £23,000 per quarter for the remainder of the year. Council's will receive a total of £107,250 for 2016/17.</p>
3.7	<p>The target for completed surveys has also been reduced from 1000 to approx. 500 per Council area, therefore significantly less vulnerable households will be helped.</p>
3.8	<p>The current model of equal funding for each council and a pre-determined, equal number of completed surveys per council area should be reviewed given the population density and higher level of fuel poverty in Belfast compared to many other Council areas.</p>
3.9	<p>There are a large number of self-referrals in Belfast (currently 230 households on our waiting list) and all are vulnerable in some way and are eligible for the scheme. It has been confirmed that 80% of surveys provided must be from a targeted source, which will limit the number of these self referrals that can be included.</p>
3.10	<p>It was acknowledged that any under spend in the AWS is not ring fenced for further use within the scheme. Where there are such under spends or additional funding becomes available the DfC should work with DFP to create a mechanism to ensure it can be reinvested within the AWS.</p>
3.11	<p>Clarification is required on plans to continue the AWS beyond March 2017 and, if so, if local Councils will continue to be involved in delivering the scheme.</p>
	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p>
3.12	<p>There are no Financial, Human Resources, Assets and other implications in this report. However it is noted that the reduced funding in 2016/17 will require a review of resource.</p>
	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p>
3.13	<p>There are no direct Equality implications.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Document attached
4.1	None