



Subject:	Affordable Warmth Scheme
Date:	9 May 2017
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Director City & Neighbourhood Services Department
Contact Officer:	Ian Harper, Building Control Manager

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	Members will be aware that Belfast City Council is engaged in a partnership with the Department for Communities (DfC) and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) in the delivery of the Affordable Warmth Scheme. The scheme aims to address fuel poverty for the most vulnerable households in the city.
1.2	This report provides an update on the scheme and details the impact of the reduction in the monthly referral target and associated funding for Councils.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the contents of the report and consider writing to the Department regarding the current funding arrangements for the scheme and seeking clarification on future funding.
3.0	Main report
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	<p>During 2016-2017 the Service completed 534 referrals to the NIHE. The total value of approvals granted for the scheme was £2,096,984.34. In total 1372 measures were installed and 646 homes improved within Belfast.</p>
3.2	<p>A large number of vulnerable households are currently in fuel poverty in Belfast and the scheme continues to receive a high volume of enquiries. The scheme is primarily targeted, however there are 600 vulnerable households currently on the self-referral holding list. The team continue to triage the cases to ensure that the most vulnerable are helped.</p>
3.3	<p>Correspondence issued from DfC to Councils on 29th March 2017, contained in Appendix 1, states that the number of referrals which will be accepted by the NIHE has reduced from 46 per month to 25 for each council area. The reduction in referrals will have a large impact on the number of vulnerable households being able to avail of the scheme.</p>
3.4	<p>The funding to Council to deliver their part of the scheme has also been reduced from an average of £26,812 per quarter in 2016-2017 to £13,575 for the first quarter in 2017-2018. While the exceptional difficulties presented in the current political crisis are recognised, the ongoing uncertainty on funding for the remainder of the year leaves councils in a position where they are having to review staffing levels.</p>
3.5	<p>In an attempt to ensure continuity of service for the scheme, the service has been working with our financial team and have agreed to retain staff during Q1 to allow time for clarification to be provided from DfC. However, failure to get any formal confirmation could result in resources having to be reviewed.</p> <p>Reducing the resources to this program of work will make it more difficult to refer citizens to</p>

<p>3.6</p> <p>3.7</p> <p>3.8</p> <p>3.9</p>	<p>other agencies and to provide important added value activities such as referrals for home safety checks, delivering winter warmth packs, giving energy efficiency advice and hand holding vulnerable householders through the scheme. Visiting targeted addresses can be very time consuming and requires multiple visits. Without adequate funding, time dedicated to this task would be significantly reduced.</p> <p>The DfC has written to Building Control management requesting attendance at a full day workshop with Senior managers from each Council area at the end of May to discuss the budget position and unit costs.</p> <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The proposed £13,575 per quarter is insufficient funding to cover resources required to deliver this program on behalf of DfC. This could impact on staffing levels in the near future.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>There are no equality or good relations issues.</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 - DfC Note to Councils AWS funding 2017/2018</p>