

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Cabinet Member for Prosperity

Date of Meeting: 15th April 2013
Report of: Private Sector Housing Manager
Subject/Title: Home Energy Conservation Act Further Report
Portfolio Holder: Councillor J Macrae

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 This report outlines the requirement placed on local authorities to prepare a further report under the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995, setting out the measures that the authority considers practicable, cost-effective and likely to result in significant improvement in the energy efficiency of residential accommodation in its area.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That endorsement be given to the Home Energy Conservation Act Further Report for publication.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendation(s)

- 3.1 The further report for Cheshire East is a statement of the Council's existing plans to improve energy efficiency as approved in the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Housing Strategy, as well as the opportunities to address energy efficiency through the emerging Local Plan.
- 3.2 Fuel poverty is a significant issue faced by our communities identified in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment; the Further Report provides a strong focus for measuring activities to improve domestic properties in order to eliminate fuel poverty in Cheshire East.

4 Wards Affected

- 4.1 All Wards are affected.

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 All local Ward Members.

6.0 Policy Implications (including carbon reduction and health)

6.1 Cold, damp homes have a negative impact on people's health and in its most extreme form contributes to excess winter deaths. Improving domestic energy efficiency across the social gradient was cited in the Marmot Review as an important measure to reduce health inequalities. Tackling cold homes forms part of the approach to reducing excess winter deaths and fuel poverty outlined in the Cheshire East Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA).

6.2 The landscape for domestic energy efficiency is in transition, moving from an era of subsidy to one of Green Deal loans, and energy efficiency activity is forecast to drop significantly as subsidised schemes come to an end. Housing is the most significant contributor to carbon emissions, with Cheshire East's per capita CO₂ emissions higher than the national and regional pictures.

7.0 Financial Implications (authorised by Director of Finance and Business Services)

7.1 There are no financial implications for the publication of a report. The plan contains actions which are carried out within approved budgets set as part of the Council's annual business planning process.

8.0 Legal Implications (authorised by Borough Solicitor)

8.1 Section 2 of the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 places a duty on local authorities to prepare, publish, and send to the Secretary of State, a report on the measures that the authority considers practicable, cost-effective and likely to result in significant improvement in the energy efficiency of residential accommodation in its area. Reports must include an assessment of the cost of the energy conservation measures set out in it, an assessment of the extent to which carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere would be decreased as a result of those measures, and a statement of any policy of the authority for taking into account, in deciding whether to exercise any power in connection with those measures, the personal circumstances of any person. However, the duty does not extend to requiring the authority to set out in the report the energy conservation measures to be taken in relation to any particular dwelling or building.

8.2 Using powers under section 5(1)(b) of the Act the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change has required all English authorities to prepare further reports by 31 March 2013.

8.3 For the purposes of the further report and pursuant to section 4(2) of the Act, the Secretary of State regards significant improvements to result from measures that take advantage of financial assistance and other benefits offered from central Government initiatives, such as the Green Deal, ECO and Renewable Heat Incentive or other initiatives, to help result in significant energy efficiency improvements of residential accommodation, and particularly when installed by using area based / street by street roll out involving local communities and partnerships.

- 8.4 Using its powers under section 3(2)(a) of the Act the Secretary of State, having received a further report duly prepared in accordance with the Act, expects to request that English authorities provide progress reports on progress made in implementing the measures set out in the further report at 2 yearly intervals after submission of the further report up to and including 31 March 2027.
- 8.5 Authorities are required by section 4(3) of the Act to have regard to guidance issued to English energy conservation authorities pursuant to the Act by the Department of Energy and Climate Change.

9.0 Risk Management Implications

- 9.1 Failure to make significant improvements to the energy efficiency of residential accommodation will inhibit our plans to tackle fuel poverty and prevent excess winter deaths, which will impact on health and social care services in Cheshire East. It is estimated that cold and damp private sector housing costs local health services in excess of £1.6million per year.

10.0 Background and Options

- 10.1 Reports pursuant to the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 were prepared annually by Macclesfield Borough Council, Congleton Borough Council and Crewe & Nantwich Borough Council, with the last report required by the Secretary of State being for the period 1st April 2007 to 31st March 2008.
- 10.2 In July 2012 the Secretary of State issued new guidance renewing the duty on local authorities, requiring them to publish a further report setting out the measures it intends to take to make significant improvements to the energy efficiency of residential accommodation in its area.
- 10.2 The Act recognises local authorities' ability to use their position to improve the energy efficiency of all residential accommodation in their area. The Government is committed to local authorities setting their own priorities, ambitions and related targets as they are best placed to assess their local needs and judge what will achieve significant improvements based on their particular local circumstances and to support their wider strategic priorities. In particular local authorities:
- have unique knowledge of their local area's needs and circumstances;
 - are able to link wider strategic priorities and funding streams, e.g. through health, education and regeneration agendas;
 - are able to draw on established local networks, partnerships, services and delivery partners;
 - can draw on existing links with business and social enterprises and provide gateways through local advice agencies and services; and
 - are directly accountable to their local residents.

10.3 The further report for Cheshire East is a statement of the Council's existing plans to improve energy efficiency as approved in the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Housing Strategy, as well as the opportunities to address energy efficiency through the emerging Local Plan.

10.4 The further report sets out eight commitments (outlined below), together with actions to deliver the commitments:

1. We will eliminate Fuel Poverty as far as possible in Cheshire East
2. We will target practical and financial support for vulnerable home owners to tackle the effects of energy inefficient homes
3. We will utilise housing legislation to effect thermal improvements in the private rented sector
4. We will encourage uptake of Green Deal and ECO in Cheshire East
5. We will improve the quality and scope of data to support delivery of energy efficiency programmes
6. We will demonstrate our commitment to tackle climate change
7. We will encourage growth of the Low Carbon Economy in Cheshire East
8. We will establish our policies on low carbon energy, energy efficient development and our approach to Allowable Solutions.

10.5 Key outcomes from the plan include:

- Improving the health of low income and vulnerable households living in cold, damp housing
- Generating demand for the Green Deal and acting as a catalyst for attracting investment into Cheshire East, creating jobs and economic growth
- Utilising
- Reducing household expenditure across the social gradient by reducing lower energy bills
- Reducing carbon dioxide emissions.

11.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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