

Fuel & Water Poverty Action Plan

April 2015 - March 2017

Executive Summary

The Fuel and Water Poverty Action Plan has been developed in response to the 'Anti-Poverty Strategy' which acknowledges the problem of increasing energy and water costs on lower income residents contributing to poverty in the district. Those on low incomes are most vulnerable as rising energy and water costs mean that the percentage of income being used to cover these utilities bills is increasing; this further reduces wages in 'real terms' on already stretched household incomes.

Research and consultation has been conducted to understand the issues facing low income families across the district in relation to fuel and water costs. What support is already in place (both nationally and locally); where gaps in this support exist and what further support could be offered.

One of the key issues raised by the consultees at this time was that of engagement, and the difficulties associated with engaging with the audience that the action plan is aiming to assist. By targeting activities to key sectors of the community the hope is to maximise engagement. The target areas are:

- Council owned properties
- Rented accommodation
- Those on benefits (in particular Housing Benefit which can be paid to those in low paid work, as well as those not in work)
- Elderly residents irrelevant of property tenure
- Low income areas of the city identified through the Anti-Poverty Strategy

The action plan has been developed in response to these findings with activities being delivered through a variety of mechanisms from practical projects, dissemination of information, ensuring linkages between organisations and groups already working in this area and local policy. Priority activities for 2015-2016 will include:

- Water meter pilot study – targeting 1 or 2 bedroom council owned properties this will compare water costs both before and after having a meter installed.
- Continuing to promote the 'Collective Switching Scheme' with the next round is October 2015
- Investigating the viability of a targeted energy and water scheme specific to landlords with tenants receiving Housing Benefit
- Investigate the viability of holding a series of 'Drop in Centre' events within low income areas of the city to distribute water and energy saving measures and provide advice on water meters, switching energy providers and general

efficiency measures. These would be practical hands on sessions providing face to face advice

- Promotion and dissemination of information- utilising a wide range of mechanism from the council website, literature, social media, articles in relevant magazines including Cambridge Matters and relevant community newsletters, attendance at relevant events and through frontline staff
- Develop a water conservation information leaflet similar to the energy leaflets already in place for inclusion in welcome packs for all council tenants and at City Homes offices

The aim of the action plan is to support low income households across the district reduce their energy and water bills. This will be achieved by delivering the activities in the action plan. Progress will be monitored against key targets namely:

- Number of resident in low income target areas taking up either energy or water saving measures
- Number of residents switching to cheaper energy deals as a result of the collective switching schemes.
- Number of residents who have switched to water meters

In addition to this a more general record will be kept on number of households receiving information, attending events for example. Although this information will have a key role to play in raising awareness it is not possible to quantify the direct impact of this promotional work. An update on progress against agreed activities will be reported back in March 2016.

1. Action Plan

1.1. Aim of Action Plan

This Action Plan has been developed in response to the 'Anti Poverty Strategy' under Objective 1 'Helping people on low incomes to maximise their income and minimise their costs'. It acknowledges the problem of increasing energy and water costs on lower income residents contributing to poverty in the district. This has led to an increasing number of households living in fuel and/or water poverty. Through research and consultation a series of actions have been identified to support those living in fuel and/or water poverty which will be delivered through a variety of mechanisms from practical projects, dissemination of information, ensuring linkages between organisations and groups already working in this area and local policy. Activities will target specific groups and sectors within the city focussing predominantly on the low income areas of the city identified through the Anti-Poverty Strategy. The council recognises that much can be achieved by working in partnership with other local organisations from the public, voluntary and private sectors with significant activity already being undertaken by these organisations. The aim of the action plan is to ensure co-ordinated support and to deliver real

savings to reduce the number of households in fuel and/or water poverty across the district.

1.2 Key Objectives

The key role of the council (taking into account the current economic climate and the resources available) is as an enabler predominantly through dissemination of information and engagement. The key objectives of the plan are:

Objective 1: Help residents reduce energy & water costs through practical projects and the dissemination of information

This objective focuses on practical projects which can demonstrate real savings. Alongside this is the wider dissemination on the findings of this work plus reaffirming the message of 'using less' to make savings. In parallel to this is 'financial management'; ensuring households are accessing the best deals, where eligible receiving financial support and for those households that have fallen into debt ensuring they are aware of the wide ranging professional support in place to assist. Projects will include:

- Installation of water meters - targeting areas identified by Cambridge Water with low take up
- Promotion and provision of water saving devices alongside reaffirming the message of 'using less'
- Promotion and support in the provision of basic energy efficiency measures alongside reaffirming the message of 'using less'
- Installation of energy efficiency measures linking in with Action on Energy and other funding mechanisms as and when they come in.
- Practical drop in sessions geographically targeted which help those attending through practical support in reducing costs and provision of information
- Continuation of the ongoing commitment by Cambridge City Council to improve the energy and water efficiency of council owned properties
- Promotion and dissemination of information utilising a wide range of mechanism from the council website, literature, social media, articles in relevant magazines including Cambridge Matters and relevant community newsletters, attendance at relevant events plus use of frontline staff working within the community.

Objective 2: Ensuring that those living on low incomes across the city have access to information and support to benefit from opportunities to reduce their energy and water costs.

Those on low incomes are most vulnerable as rising energy and water costs mean that the percentage of income being used to cover these utilities bills is increasing. This further reduces wages in 'real terms' on already stretched household incomes.

By targeting activities to key sectors of the community the aim is to maximise this engagement. The target areas are:

- Council owned properties
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These have been identified through engagements with key council departments, external organisations and general background research on the topics of fuel and water poverty. On having met key people working within these sectors of the population it is apparent that engagement is difficult. However key methods of engagement identified include:

- Attendance at grass root community led meetings
- Use of existing mechanisms for engagement e.g. community newsletters, networking lunches as opposed to establishing new ones
- Link in with work of the foodbank
- Targeted mailouts within geographical areas highlighted within the 'Anti-Poverty Strategy' and targeting those on low income
- Promotion through partner organisations e.g. CAB, Age UK

Objective 3: Ensuring that vulnerable older people have access to information to benefit from opportunities to reduce energy and water costs

There are a significant number of older people living across the city who are classified as living in poverty. Nearly one pensioner household in five (18%) in Cambridge is claiming housing benefit¹. Common issues relating to fuel and water include not heating homes properly to save money, limited access to the internet to secure the best prices, ensuring getting all additional support they are entitled to and isolation due to poor accessibility. Having consulted with those already working alongside older people across the city including Age UK and Independent living the best way to engage with this sector and ensure they have access to up to date information and support in making changes is to:

- Link in to existing community groups
- Attend meeting where this sector goes e.g. coffee mornings
- In partnership with Independent Living and Age UK look at mechanisms for targeting those that would benefit from handholding

¹ Taken from Draft Anti-Poverty Strategy 2014-2017

Objective 4: Ensure that Cambridge City Council responds to changing and evolving policy relating to fuel and water poverty

One of the key objectives is the way that Cambridge City Council can respond in helping reduce fuel and water poverty within the city. These actions consist of a series of mechanisms that pull information together, share to enable engagement and ensure that local council policy is in line with these objectives.

Objective 5: Investigate the opportunities for activities relating to fuel and water poverty that address the link between poor health and poverty

There is a recognised link between lower incomes and poorer health. Available evidence suggests this can be seen in Cambridge. There are currently limited examples of partnerships between health care professionals and wider organisations that look at addressing the wider issues of poor health and their relationship with poverty. The Regional Health Partnerships offer a platform for nurturing partnerships and investigating opportunities for joint working. This action plan seeks to continue to build on this.

2. Monitoring & Evaluation

The Action Plan will be reviewed at the end of the 2015-2016 financial year against targets and a report submitted to committee on the progress to date and future plans.

Monitoring will be done biannually and a progress report submitted to Executive Councillor for S&R in September 2015 outlining progress against targets to date and review and changes if required.

DECC releases fuel poverty statistics annually which are 2 years in arrears. For example 2013 statistics will be released in June 2015. This means that it is not possible to use this statistical release to report on the success of this action plan due to the delay in the release of statistics. However this data will still be recorded but not reported to support work beyond the current length of this action plan.

There are no official statistics for water poverty.

To monitor the effectiveness of this action plan we will report on the following datasets:

a. Number of residents in low income target areas taking up either energy or water saving measures

Through our activity we will be able to identify and count measures that have been installed in the low income areas. This data is reliant on the co-operation of our partners however it is information they are able to share with us.

b. Number of residents switching to cheaper energy deals as a result of the collective switching schemes.

Cambridgeshire County Council is able to provide a breakdown on the number of residents in each district who benefitted from the collective switching scheme. We will monitor uptake and tailor our activity to increase uptake. This data is likely to be available from around 8 weeks after the close of the relevant switching campaign.

c. Number of residents who have switched to water meters

Through our partnership with Cambridge Water we will be provided details on the progress of residents switching to water meters from rates.

3. Action Plan

Actions which are shaded and in bold are primary activities for 2015-2016 and are supported by current resources

Action	Lead Officer & Service	Completion Date	Mechanism	Target in 2015-2016
Objective 1: Help residents reduce energy & water costs through practical projects and the dissemination of information				
1.1 Water meter Pilot – pilot installation of water meters in some smaller (1 or 2 bedroom properties) council owned properties	Sam Griggs Estates & Facilities Elizabeth Bruce Refuse and Environment	March 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working in partnership with Cambridge Water • Identify cluster of suitable council owned properties to pilot (i.e. small 1 and 2 bedroom properties with either single person or couple living in them) • Ideally located within one of the targeted area of the city. • Installation of meters • After 6 months compare costs of rates versus meter looking at pros and cons of each • Discuss options for wider savings through financial management and water efficiency • Write up pilot • Disseminate and promote findings widely • Target active community groups in areas of city identified through the poverty strategy to promote findings and encourage wider 	<p>Initially 6 households will be helped directly through the pilot project.</p> <p>The findings will be promoted through at least 4 target community groups with an expectation it will be disseminated to 80 people.</p> <p>The outcomes from this pilot project will inform a potential roll out across all council properties and will be promoted to private households.</p>

			uptake of meters where appropriate alongside wider water saving measures	
1.2 Promote 'Collective Switching- (February 2015 and October 2015 rounds)	Elizabeth Bruce Refuse and Environment	October 2015	<p>Two tenders are planned in 2015. It is unknown at this time if it will continue into 2016. This scheme is operated by Cambridgeshire County council. The scheme will be promoted via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mailout via Revenue & Benefits - Social media/website - Press Release - Any other methods identified - Utilising frontline staff working within the community <p>Additional support will be provided through the CSC to assist those without access to the internet</p>	Target is for 200 households to benefit from cheaper energy bills available through both February and October collective switching campaigns.
1.3 Investigate the viability of a targeted energy and water scheme specific to landlords with tenants receiving housing benefit	Elizabeth Bruce Refuse & Environment Dominic Lamch Strategic Housing	April 2016	<p>This scheme would target those living in rented accommodation who also receives housing benefit.</p> <p>The scheme would offer a small grant for basic low cost energy or water efficiency measures to improve the property.</p> <p>Potential to investigate the use of the HIA grant. A separate action (Action 5.8) has identified to investigate changing the parameters of the grant offered through the HIA.</p>	<p>Target is for 30 households to benefit from cheaper energy or water bills</p> <p>The effectiveness of the scheme will be monitored and used to influence the delivery of future schemes.</p>

1.4 Investigate the most effective method for delivering a series of 'Drop in Centre' events within low income areas of the city to distribute water and energy saving measures and provide advice on water meters, switching energy providers and general efficiency measures	Elizabeth Bruce Refuse & Environment	April 2016	Ideally these would be integrated into planned community events and be delivered in partnership with these groups and wider project partners. Information and support would be provided on water and energy efficiency, financial management, practical saving measures.	The target is to provide 4 drop in sessions and to help 80 households. The effectiveness of the events will be monitored and used to influence the delivery of future events.
1.5 Promotion and dissemination of information	Elizabeth Bruce Refuse & Environment	April 2016	This will be carried out via a wide range of mechanisms which may include but is not exhaustive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated area on the City Council website • Social Media • Written literature • Articles in relevant magazines • Attendance at events • Utilising existing Council frontline staff • Revenue & Benefits - mailout 	Mailout to 7,000 residents on benefits via the Revenue and Benefits Department
1.6 Based on findings of report investigate viability of installing water meters and establish a programme of installation in all 1 and 2 bedroom council properties without meters as properties become vacant	Sam Griggs Estates & Facilities	ongoing	To be considered once further information is available	Investigation to commence in 2016 upon completion of pilot scheme.
1.7 Continue with refurbishment programme of	Sam Griggs Estates &	ongoing	The council has a rolling refurbishment programme which is already committed	Rolling programme

council owned properties incorporating energy and water efficiency mechanisms	Facilities		to improving the energy and water efficiency of the housing stock	
1.8 continue with external wall insulation programme of solid wall council owned properties and where appropriate seek external funding to increase outputs	Sam Griggs Estates & Facilities	ongoing	This work is subject to external funding	Varies but approximately 20 households per year
1.9 Delivery of energy efficiency measures and support through Action on Energy	Justin Smith Refuse & Environment	Ongoing	Action on Energy will remain the main delivery mechanism for advice and installations to private households funded through the Green Deal and Energy Company Obligation (ECO). The Countywide scheme provides tailored advice, engagement activity and delivery through its network of assessors and installers. The scheme also provides a strong structure to bid and deliver further funding opportunities as they become available.	Green Deal Communities Funding for solid wall insulation and the private rented sector should continue until September 2015. Poverty related ECO funding (HHCRO) could be available from March onwards and the Action on Energy scheme will identify demand to secure local take up upon this funding being available.
1.10 Look to secure funding to provide energy saving measures in low income areas of city	Justin Smith Refuse & Environment	ongoing	The formulation of a fuel and water poverty action plan, coupled with needs assessment undertake through the anti-poverty strategy means we are in a strong position in terms of evidence and needs if any funding opportunities	Maintain awareness of all funding opportunities that become available, investigate feasibility, and prepare bids with

			should arise. We have a number of different delivery mechanism's available to us, including established partnerships which would ensure we can deliver a strong bid.	Councillor approval where opportunities arise.
1.11 As the Social Tariff through Cambridge Water becomes available promote this in partnership with other key organisation to low income households	Elizabeth Bruce Refuse & Environment	Timeline to be confirmed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Liaise with Cambridge Water to as and when it comes online - The proposed scheme needs to go out to consultation with all Cambridge Water customers before it can be adopted. This is proposed for 2015. - When and if this is adopted will depend on the results. 	-
Objective 2. Ensuring that those living on low incomes across the city have access to information and support to benefit from opportunities to reduce their energy and water costs.				
2.1 Develop a water conservation information leaflet similar to the energy leaflets already in place for inclusion in welcome packs and at City Homes offices	Sam Griggs Estates & Facilities	April 2016	Information on energy efficiency is already available for all tenants moving into council owned properties. A similar leaflet for water will be developed	Completion and distribution of leaflet to City Homes offices and for inclusion in Welcome Pack
2.2 Targeted promotion of energy and water efficiency options to low income households	Elizabeth Bruce Refuse and Environment	ongoing	This will be done where possible in partnership with existing groups and organisations operating at a grass root level to maximise engagement or through established mechanisms. Establishing and maintaining dialogue with external groups will be key in ensuring inclusion at all relevant events etc. Key mechanisms for promotion may include:	Mailout to 7,000 recipients of benefits through Revenue & Benefits Face to face contact with 100 residents at varying events or via frontline staff

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mailouts or relevant information via Revenue & Benefits Department - Through frontline staff working in target areas - Provision of information to key organisations working in this area e.g. CAB, Foodbank, community groups - Attendance at community meetings/ networking lunches in targeted geographical areas e.g. King Hedges, Abbey, East Chesterton and Arbury - Articles in community newsletters - Social media (through council) - Other (working with Community Team) 	
2.3 Promote initiatives implemented by partner organisations that relate to energy and water poverty via website, social media, mailouts and emails as and when appropriate	Elizabeth Bruce Refuse & Environment	ongoing	<p>For example</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Big Energy Saving Week (CAB) - Energy Best Deals (CAB) - World Water Day - Arbury Carnival 	-
2.4 Targeted promotion to landlords on the benefits of installing energy and water saving measures	Robin Ray Refuse & Environment	ongoing	<p>This will utilise established mechanisms through the Residential Team of Environmental Health. Methods of engagement will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provision of information and/or talk at landlord training programme and other relevant 	<p>Promotion to a minimum of 500 landlords via varying methods of communication</p> <p>A minimum of 100</p>

			<p>training courses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Energy & Water Newsletter special – edition dedicated to fuel and water efficiency – Energy and water saving note at base of emails – Provision of information/talk at Landlord forum – Enforcement of EPC's – this is currently being investigated but the potential exists for fuel and water to be on this agenda. 	<p>landlords targeted through the forum event</p> <p>Training events – this is still being organised but the plan is to hold them quarterly. Attendance numbers are still unknown</p>
2.5 Support those already working alongside low income families in ensuring current and relevant information is available to enable informed decisions to be made relating to reducing energy and water bills and financial management	Elizabeth Bruce Refuse & Environment	April 2016	There is a lot of expertise already offered across the district from organisations such as CAB, Age UK, and Cambridge Water. It is important that the council helps support these organisations by ensuring they are aware of any up and coming initiatives, promoting their work and sign posting as appropriate	-
Objective 3. Ensuring that vulnerable older people have access to information to benefit from opportunities to reduce energy and water costs				
3.1 Promote energy and water saving opportunities to reduce costs via local community organisations which support elderly Cambridge Residents	Elizabeth Bruce Refuse & Environment	ongoing	<p>This will be done where possible in partnership with existing groups in particular Age UK and Independent Living. Key mechanisms for promotion may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Engagement with Sheltered schemes; for example coffee mornings 	

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attendance at associated organisations meetings e.g. SSRA, HAART <p>From consultation with groups working alongside the elderly additional issues have been raised over and above those typical through low income. These are more specific to the elderly and include issues such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The need to encourage readings of meters as opposed to estimates - Heating the home properly - Ensuring they have accessed all available support - Lack of access to the internet - Isolation 	
3.2 Investigate the provision of hands on support to elderly residents with reducing energy and water costs.	<p>Elizabeth Bruce Refuse & Environment</p> <p>Clara Gomez-Serrano City Homes</p>	December 2015	<p>To investigate the viability of offering more hands on support to elderly residents targeting in particular less mobile residents and those without access to the internet. Ideas may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Drop in centre for example at a coffee morning - Appointments set up through independent living for someone to visit residents to discuss options - Incorporating energy and water within wider surveys and visits carried out by independent - Support available at Customer Service Centre at fixed time and day 	-

			One or more method may be implemented depending on practicality	
Objective 4. Ensure that Cambridge City Council responds to changing and evolving national policy relating to fuel and water poverty				
4.1 Develop an 'Energy and Water Action Plan'	Elizabeth Bruce Refuse and Environment	Completed	Being submitted for approval at March Strategy and Resources Committee	-
4.2 Maintain knowledge of national and local policy changes	All	ongoing	Maintain communication with relevant national and local bodies to ensure knowledge is kept up to date. Attend all relevant forums, seminars and training where applicable.	Appropriate action to be taken to ensure this action is delivered effectively.
4.3 Complete Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) report	Justin Smith Refuse & Environment	ongoing	Report to be completed every two years to provide a progress update on activity to deliver significant improvement in the energy efficiency of residential accommodation in local authority area.	
4.4 Carry out an annual review of the Action Plan to ensure it remains relevant and up to date	Elizabeth Bruce Refuse and Environment	March 2016	It is important that the Action Plan evolves as national and local policy evolves, and that actions change to respond to changing opportunities and issues.	
4.5 Ensure that any relevant City Council policies and strategies support and meet the objectives of the Fuel and Water Poverty Action Plan ²	All	Ongoing	As policies change and evolve it is important that the commitment to reduce fuel and water poverty is built into any relevant policy documents.	
4.6 Investigate benefits of quarterly meeting/establish group between key teams who	All	June 2015	The issues of fuel and water poverty straddle several different departments; each may have activities relating to this	

have role to play in fuel and water poverty in City.			area although each will have a differing agenda or priority. By ensuring that teams are aware of other complimentary work; a more joined up approach in delivering the Action Plan may be achieved. Key teams could include, housing, strategic housing, independent living, EQG, Estates & Facilities, Health Partnership Representative for example	
4.7 Ensure both energy and water efficiency measures are built in to any strategic planning policy documents and these evolve as national policy changes	Emma Davies Planning Services	Ongoing	These will be reviewed once the Local Plan is adopted.	
4.8 Review the criteria for the Home Improvement Agency grants relating to energy and investigate incorporating water efficiency measures alongside Energy	Yvonne O'Donnell/Justin Smith Refuse & Environment	May 2015	Evidence based proposal needs to be prepared to justify any changes. Any changes to the grant will require Councillor approval.	Grant funding to be reviewed early to middle 2015 and will be informed by the House Condition Survey.
Objective 5. Investigate the opportunities for activities relating to fuel and water poverty that address the link between poor health and poverty				
5.1 Develop and maintain links with health care professionals on link between cold homes and poor health	Robin Ray Refuse & Environment	April 2016	The Residential Team of Environmental Health is involved with CAB on a pilot project for a GP Referral System at East Barnwell GP Practice. It is early days but this partnership will help forge links with wider health care partners and begin	-

			to inform and shape where future opportunities exist.	
5.2 When appropriate look at opportunities to bid for funding	Robin Ray Refuse and Environment Justin Smith Refuse & Environment	ongoing	Work with partners to develop bids to suit needs identified through house condition survey and other relevant data.	Maintain awareness of all funding opportunities as they become available.
5.3 Continue to Maintain council priorities at Health & Wellbeing board – feed fuel and water poverty issues into this	Jo Dicks Refuse and Environment	ongoing	Ensuring that the council and wider partners are aware of the work being undertaken in this area.	-
5.4 Investigate opportunities for establishing referral clinic through GP Surgeries	Robin Ray Refuse & Environment	ongoing	As Above	-

