

# STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

## HOUSING COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 19 MARCH 2024

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>GLOUCESTERSHIRE AND SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE WARM AND WELL SCHEME</b>
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To update Members on the Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire Warm and Well Scheme and to recommend renewal of the partnership and the tender for a new delivery partner from the 1 <sup>st</sup> of April 2025 for a period of up to 5 years.
<b>Decision(s)</b>	<b>The Committee RESOLVES to:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Continue to provide advice and support to those in fuel poverty in the district by renewing the Council's membership of the Warm &amp; Well Partnership up to 31st March 2030; and</li><li>b. To provide Core funding to support the partnership of £25,000 per annum from the Better Care Fund Disabled Facilities Grant wider social care budget; and</li><li>c. To approve the tendering of the Warm &amp; Well delivery contract so as to appoint a delivery partner for a maximum period of 5 years from 1st April 2025; and</li><li>d. Approve as the lead authority the submission and acceptance of a bid to the DESNZ HUG3 (Home Upgrade Grant) fund (or any other funds made available by DESNZ during the period of this partnership) for energy efficiency improvements to the homes of those in fuel poverty across Gloucestershire &amp; South Gloucestershire under the Warm &amp; Well Scheme; and</li><li>e. To authorise the Chief Executive to undertake all action as necessary to ensure the appropriate delivery of such funds, including in consultation with the Director of One Legal, the entering into any legal arrangements or other documentation.</li><li>f. If bids are successful, recommend to council the addition of such funds to Stroud District Council's capital programme.</li></ul>
<b>Consultation and Feedback</b>	Consultation has taken place with all Gloucestershire District Councils, South Gloucestershire Council and Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board

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<b>Options</b>	Not to renew membership of the Warm & Well Partnership which would mean; either, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No longer providing support and advice to those in fuel poverty, at a time when household income is diminishing, fuel prices are rising and we are facing a climate challenge, or</li> <li>• Establishing an alternative system of support for those in fuel poverty, this is likely to be resource intensive and it is unlikely that a single district is going to be able to achieve as much as the partnership has been able to achieve especially when bidding for external funding</li> </ul>			
<b>Background Papers</b>	None.			
<b>Appendices</b>	None.			
<b>Implications (further details at the end of the report)</b>	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

## 1. Introduction / Background

- 1.1 Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire have benefitted in having a successful locally managed and controlled, non-profit delivery partnership for energy advice and support for home energy improvements known as Warm and Well since 2001.
- 1.2 SDC are the lead partner in the partnership between the six Gloucestershire district councils and South Gloucestershire Council which has been delivered since 2001 by local sustainable energy agency, Severn Wye, a registered charity. Whilst not formal partners the scheme works closely with Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board and Gloucestershire County Council.
- 1.3 The Warm and Well Scheme promotes the health benefits of energy efficiency in the home and delivers a programme of energy efficiency improvements which offers the benefits of personalised support from a dedicated local team, with the flexibility to offer tailored support for vulnerable households.
- 1.4 The Warm & Well Scheme annual reports can be viewed here [www.stroud.gov.uk/environment/energy-efficiency/affordable-warmth-strategy](http://www.stroud.gov.uk/environment/energy-efficiency/affordable-warmth-strategy)
- 1.5 Stroud District Council contributes £20,000 per annum towards the core costs of the scheme which enables advice and support to be offered to households. It is proposed to increase this to £25,000 per year from 1.4.24. This funding currently comes from the Disabled Facilities Grant allocation received from the Better Care Fund.
- 1.6 During the last four years the Warm & Well partnership has offered advice and support to 16,200 households (2,286 in Stroud District) and enabled the installation of 3,919 energy efficiency measures (437 in Stroud District).
- 1.7 The partnership has brought in a total £9.6million in funding for those measures from Energy Company Obligations (ECO), Public Health and Better Care Fund, Warm Homes Fund and Central Government Green Homes fund (LADS and HUG).

## **2. Main Points**

- 2.1** For every £1 invested by the local authorities in the core Warm & Well Scheme in the last 4 years Stroud residents benefited from support and funding worth an average of £6.58 per year.
- 2.2** The current partnership agreement between the councils will end on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025.
- 2.3** If the councils are to continue to work together to support those in fuel poverty through the successful Warm & Well Scheme, then a new formal partnership agreement will need to be entered into. It is the existence of a successful partnership that has enabled the access to external funding which in the last 4 years has meant that £9.5 million was spent on installing measures, £1.1million of which was in the stroud district.
- 2.4** Central Government have already announced that a new round of Home Upgrade Grant funding (HUG3) will open up later this financial year for projects to start in April 2025.
- 2.5** The current delivery contract undertaken by Severn Wye Energy Agency will also end on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2025. In order to be able to effectively deliver the programme in future years a procurement exercise must be undertaken to ensure value for money from the delivery partner.
- 2.6** The current partnership contribution has not been increased since 2017 when the contract was first offered to the market. With rising costs and demands an increase to up to £25,000 per annum is now warranted.

## **3. Conclusion**

- 3.1** That at a time of rising fuel prices and increasing pressure on household income, in order to continue to effectively support those in the district living in fuel poverty, the appropriate action for the Council to take is to renew its membership and lead role of the Warm & Well Partnership for up to a further five years.
- 3.2** That a contribution of £25,000 per annum to support the core activities of the scheme be provided from the Better Care Fund Disabled Facilities Grant wider social care budget
- 3.3** That as the lead partner, the Council leads the procurement of a delivery partner for a period of 5 years commencing on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 and enters into a delivery contract with the successful tenderer.

## **4. Implications**

### **4.1 Financial Implications**

This report sets out the request to continue the partnership between the six Gloucestershire district councils and South Gloucestershire Council, promoting the health benefits of energy efficiency within homes through the warm and well scheme.

The anticipated SDC contribution increase to £25,00 per annum supporting the core activities of the scheme, is requested to be provided from the Better Care Fund Disabled Facilities Grant wider social care budget.

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#### **4.2 Legal Implications**

The Council will need to comply with its Contract and Procurement Procedure Rules and procurement legislation when undertaking the procurement of the new provider. One Legal can assist with the preparation and completion of contract with the provider, renewing the partnership agreement with the other councils and advising on the funding agreement should bids for external funding be successful.

One Legal

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#### **4.3 Equality Implications**

There are not any specific changes to service delivery proposed within this decision. However, it should be noted that the provision of advice and assistance to those in fuel poverty has benefits which will work towards a more equitable standard of living.

#### **4.4 Environmental Implications**

The Warm & Well Scheme has actively encouraged the installation of renewable technologies through the provision of bespoke energy advice and surveys and the development of the installer network. The use of such technologies is particularly important not only in the reduction of carbon but in rural areas they are often the most cost-effective means of achieving affordable warmth.

In the last four years of the current Warm & Well delivery cycle an average of 837 tonnes of Co<sub>2</sub> has been saved per annum, 61.5 of which in the Stroud District.