

Retrofit support for self-funding households

1. Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to update members on the Council's role as the 'Retrofit lead' within Climate Leadership Gloucestershire and, specifically, to brief on the approach being taken across the County to promote action on domestic retrofit for self-funding households (sometimes referred to as 'able to pay').

'Retrofit' in the context of this paper is the modification of buildings to make them more energy efficient, low carbon and comfortable.

2. About Climate Leadership Gloucestershire (CLG)

Climate Leadership Gloucestershire is a partnership of all Gloucestershire local authorities, working together to tackle the climate and ecological emergency.

Further details about CLG can be found via the following link:

[Climate Leadership Gloucestershire \(CLG\) | Gloucestershire County Council](#)

The work of CLG is broken down into ten themes, each with an assigned local authority/organisational lead. The themes and lead agencies are as follows:

- **Adaptation** – Gloucester City Council
- **Behaviour Change** – Internal: Gloucestershire Police and NHS; External: Gloucestershire County Council
- **Biodiversity** – Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership
- **Economy, Business and Skills** – GFirst LEP
- **Energy** – Forest of Dean District Council
- **Food and Farming** – Cotswold District Council
- **Planning** – Cheltenham Borough Council
- **Retrofit** – Stroud District Council
- **Transport** – Gloucestershire County Council
- **Waste** – Gloucestershire Resources and Waste Partnership

SDC's representatives on CLG are Cllr Chloe Turner and Brendan Cleere (Strategic Director of Place) and regular information updates on are provided at meetings of Environment Committee.

3. The Retrofit Theme

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SDC is the assigned lead for retrofit within CLG and this involves action in the following areas, which all CLG partners have also signed up to:

- **Development of the Retrofit Centre Website** – giving householders the advice and signposting to appropriate support to retrofit their home.
- **Green Skills Development** – stimulating the supply of installers with skills in green and low carbon technology.
- **Expert Support** – seeking further funding for third party expert support to engage those households that are able to finance retrofit work and to further develop the Retrofit Centre platform.
- **Market Support** – sharing best practice on retrofit across Gloucestershire, including learnings from retrofit projects in progress.

4. Advancing Retrofit for Self-Financing Households

SDC officers have been working with CLG colleagues to advance the retrofit area of work in respect of those people who are able to self-finance works to their own property.

We are pursuing a cost-effective approach that will involve the procurement of an expert contractor. The expert contractor would provide an online advice platform, along with pathways to home assessments and retrofit installation, with additional support to residents considering self-funded investment in retrofit. This could potentially be feasible utilising a modest budget aggregated across districts. This would be a highly visible and proven method to encourage the retrofit market in Gloucestershire at relatively low cost. It would also help to make residents' homes warmer, more comfortable, and cheaper to run; as well as tackling the quarter of the county's emissions that come from domestic housing. It should be remembered that the 'self-financing' market is still small and will need a lot of promotion. Consequently, there is also a recommendation to commit further officer support and time to this work, to assist in developing the in-depth community engagement needed. This will include co-ordinating messages with other partners such as the NHS, to present and promote a unified Gloucestershire retrofit support offer. If delivered successfully this would represent a nationally leading approach to homeowner retrofit support.

The rationale for the above approach is as follows:

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- There is evidence that homeowners want to improve their homes' energy efficiency, but often don't know where to start and are concerned about doing the wrong thing. This support will help them take needed steps.
- This would be a valuable offer to residents, allowing them to make their homes greener, warmer, and more comfortable.
- This action is needed to tackle the 25% of county Greenhouse Gas Emissions that come from domestic properties.
- It's a pioneering approach in a two-tier area to this issue- where Combined Authorities and unitary authorities are often viewed as the trailblazers.
- This is a clear opportunity to demonstrate Gloucestershire authorities' leadership and coordination on retrofit; and could attract further funding and prospects for future net zero homes innovation.

Progressing to the next stage of commissioning an expert contractor will involve the development of a brief to include several service elements:

- An online one-stop advice site for residents, such as the Retrofit Centre
- Further support for residents to access house assessments and unbiased retrofit advice with confidence
- A recommended network of retrofit installers and suppliers
- Effective marketing of the service- with a focus on direct community engagement
- Work to stimulate in-county installation supply and address Glos skills gaps
- Solutions for residents on how to finance the changes to their homes
- Sufficient reporting on customer satisfaction, uptake, and demographics

5. Next Steps

CLG will develop the brief with input from all Gloucestershire local authorities and proceed with a procurement exercise in line with relevant legislation. Any subsequent engagement of a commercial delivery partner would need to ensure that the commissioning councils enjoyed continuous insight into performance of the service such as resident satisfaction; emissions reduction; bills reduction; the business process; GVA in the county; rate of uptake; and resolution of any complaints. Such active oversight would be required a) to satisfy council decision makers that risk is mitigated through the 'control' of the delivery partner, and b) to provide assurance to residents that the continuous council oversight helps ensure good outcomes and leverages the trust that residents have in councils to be objective in service delivery.

SDC is now working with CLG colleagues on the following actions, all of which are within current Council Plan and budget commitments:

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- Supporting a procurement exercise to find a suitable expert contractor, noting that approval will be sought before an Invitation to Tender is issued and that the local authorities are not bound to take the services and may choose to vary its requirements following completion of the Procurement exercise.
- Providing an estimated maximum budget of £3,750 per annum, to finance an agreement to include all service elements, and provide further retrofit communications and marketing.
- Committing a portion of our climate and communications team resource to the procurement process (estimated as 5 days total per Council) and to the subsequent promotion of retrofit service and assisting in organising and delivering retrofit community events (estimated as 14 days per annum).

The above steps will be taken in the coming months, with updates to be provided at future CLG meetings and decisions taken at individual authority level as appropriate.