

<b>Report on</b>	Affordable Warmth Scheme approval for 2019-2024
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	12 <sup>th</sup> November 2019
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	Fiona McClements, Head of Environmental Health

<b>Is this report restricted for confidential business?</b>	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	X

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	To advise Members of the approval that the Department for Communities has received for the Affordable Warmth Scheme to continue up until 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2024. In addition, the price for visit has been increased as well as an increase in numbers in year between January and March 2020. An updated Service Level Agreement has been requested to be signed to carry out this work.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	The Affordable Warmth Scheme aims to mitigate the effects of fuel poverty in targeted households living in severe or extreme fuel poverty. It is expected to reduce energy consumption in eligible private housing through home energy efficiency interventions.
2.2	The Affordable Warmth Scheme tackles fuel poverty in the private sector. The Housing Executive and local Councils deliver the Scheme throughout Northern Ireland. A person may qualify if they own their own home or rent it from a private landlord, and have a total annual income of less than £20,000. The Scheme is a strictly targeted scheme, aimed within geographical areas where levels of fuel poverty are worst.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	The Department for Communities (DfC) have written to Mid Ulster Council Chief Executive to advise that they have received approval for the Affordable Warmth Scheme for 1 <sup>st</sup> June 2019 to 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2024 (Appendix 1).
3.2	<p>They have also advised that in order to adhere to the conditions on which approval was granted they are required to provide assurance that the following requirements are met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service Level Agreements (attached at Appendix 2) must be signed off and returned following Council ratification;</li> <li>• As a targeted Scheme the ratio of targeted addresses/self-referrals of 80/20 must be strictly adhered to. The Housing Executive has been instructed that only 20% of referrals received can be via self-referral and any additional self-referrals should be returned to councils;</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All non-targeted referrals should be processed using the agreed triage matrix;</li> <li>• The Council return template should be provided monthly, with attention drawn to the provision of data on signposting; and</li> <li>• Quarterly meetings between Council Senior Officials, Housing Executive representatives and Department for Communities officials will be reinstated.</li> </ul>
3.3	<p>The Department for Communities will monitor the progress of above going forward and should any issues arise they can be discussed at the quarterly meetings.</p> <p><b><u>Service Level Agreement</u></b></p>
3.4	<p>The Service Level agreement sets out the roles of the Department of Communities, the local Council and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.</p> <p><b>The Council's Role</b></p>
3.5	<p>Each local Council will be provided with details of households considered to potentially meet the conditions of the scheme. Each local Council will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• with the consent of the targeted householder, conduct a survey to collate and verify financial information to confirm eligibility for the scheme;</li> <li>• have discretion regarding accepting self-referrals (as defined by DfC). Local Councils <b>must</b> bear in mind that Affordable Warmth is primarily a targeted scheme;</li> <li>• refer a set number of completed surveys to their local NIHE Grant Office from April 2019 to March 2020, following the profile which will be set by NIHE. The number of self-referrals included in the total should not exceed 20%. Any change will be formally notified by the Department. Additional referrals will not be accepted without prior agreement with DfC and NIHE;</li> <li>• the number of referrals may be adjusted in year due to budget change or scheme performance, however, numbers will be small;</li> <li>• highlight urgent cases to the NIHE Grants Manager at the time of referral. An urgent case is defined as a household with no heating system, or central heating which is broken down beyond repair;</li> <li>• ensure that when an application is received by Building Control that officials arrange for measures to be inspected. Building Control officials will confirm to the NIHE whether the installation is in compliance with the building regulations;</li> <li>• provide householders participating in the scheme with information regarding energy advice;</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• manage and respond to complaints concerning local council staff regarding the Affordable Warmth Scheme;</li> <li>• meet with the NIHE and DfC at least quarterly to discuss the progress of the scheme and discuss any areas of concern;</li> <li>• participate in both the established Senior Officer group and other ad hoc meetings as and when required;</li> <li>• where the householder agrees, refer their details (name, address, contact number) to the Social Welfare Group for the purposes of conducting a Benefit Entitlement Check with them.</li> <li>• Carry out additional duties such as handholding of householders and qualitative case studies of homes which have received assistance through the Scheme.</li> </ul>
3.6	The correspondence received from DfC on 23 <sup>rd</sup> October 2019 (Appendix 3) outlines the increase in funding per unit visit and the amended number of visits required in year.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Other Considerations</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Financial, Human Resources &amp; Risk Implications</b>
	Financial: Funding for 2019/2020 was set at £41,256. As per the letter received on 23 <sup>rd</sup> October 2019 this has now been increased by approximately £16,500.
	Human: Additional staff will be required to reach the additional targets between January and March 2020. These will be fully funded.
	Risk Management: Level of actual funding for remaining 4 years has not been confirmed.
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Screening &amp; Impact Assessments</b>
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: N/a
	Rural Needs Implications: N/a
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
5.1	It is recommended that Council note the changes to the scheme and approve the Service Level Agreement between Mid Ulster District Council and the Department for Communities in respect of the Affordable Warmth Scheme.

<b>6.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
6.1	Correspondence from Department for Communities to Chief Executive Mid Ulster Council dated 22 <sup>nd</sup> August 2019.
6.2	Service Level Agreement between Mid Ulster District Council and Department for Communities in respect of the Affordable Warmth Scheme.
6.3	Correspondence from Department for Communities to Chief Executive Mid Ulster Council dated 23 <sup>rd</sup> October 2019.