

<b>AFFORDABLE WARMTH SCHEME UPDATE</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> March 2016</b>
<b>To: ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE</b>	
<b>For Information</b>	

<b>Linkage to Council Strategy (2015-19)</b>	
<b>Strategic Theme</b>	Resilient Health Engaged Communities
<b>Outcome</b>	Home reducing fuel poverty
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Bryan Edgar
<b>Cost: (If applicable)</b>	Funded by DSD

As part of the implementation arrangements agreed with the DSD a list of 10,706 targeted addresses were forwarded to Council with the aim of identifying a minimum of 1,000 eligible properties during the 2015-2016 period that met the agreed criteria (total household income under £20,000 per annum including all benefits).

By the end of October 2016 Council Officers had met and exceeded this SLA target with 1,536 referrals being exported to the NIHE for processing. DSD and NIHE subsequently raised concerns with Councils in relation to the high volume of referrals being made to the NIHE by Councils and the ability to maintain reasonable processing times.

The available budget in 2015-2016 was also a concern for the DSD and NIHE as the cost of improvements within households was significantly higher than predicted and that the average grants being awarded in the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council was higher than across the rest of the province.

The Number of referrals being made to the NIHE by Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council Officers was of particular concern to the DSD and NIHE. At a DSD monitoring meeting held on the 22 October 2015 Councils were requested to participate in the piloting of a new enhanced role, where Councils would take on the responsibility completing the second stage of the application process and gather evidence of income, occupancy and ownership on behalf of the NIHE, thereby improving processing times for applicants. It was stated at this meeting that no new referrals would be accepted into the scheme unless they met the original criteria and the following:

- No existing heating system in the property
- A leak is present in the heating system
- The heating system is broken beyond repair.

On the 17 November 2015 the NIHE returned 242 referrals Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council to be processed under the 'enhanced role'. Officers began processing these referrals under this 'enhanced role' on the 14 December 2015 following training on the process.

On the 15 February 2016 Council had completed 71 referrals under the enhanced role and returned them to the NIHE for processing (55 referrals had either already been contacted by the NIHE, had an income over £20,000 pa or did not wish to proceed).

According to information provided by the NIHE as of the 11 December 2015 the Affordable warmth Scheme has assisted 241 households within the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area (15.7% of the 1,536 properties referred to the NIHE by Council). The attached table at Appendix II is indicative of the NIHE position at this date across Northern Ireland.

A meeting was held with officers from Derry City and Strabane District Council and Causeway Coast & Glens Council, DSD and NIHE on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2016 during which DSD expressed uncertainty in relation to the available budget for the 2 Councils concerned in 2016-17, although it was felt that the Affordable Warmth Scheme would continue into 2016-17 in some form. However given the high number of referrals made into the Scheme and the backlog of applications awaiting approval by NIHE in the Western Area Grants Office, DSD advised that both the available finance and the number of referrals into the scheme is likely to be re-profiled. This could inevitably have substantial consequences for Council.

Council received £153,000 in 2015-16 to administer the Affordable Warmth Scheme, however as referred to above there is no certainty at this stage as to what, if any, funding will be awarded to Council for 2016-17 and DSD was unable to provide any clarity as to when such information would be made available. In addition there are 290 self-referral properties within the Council area that are awaiting visits from the Affordable Warmth Team but due to the embargo on referring new cases to NIHE (except on an urgent basis) Council officers cannot give any certainty to these applicants as to when they can reasonably expect a visit to take place.

DSD intend to undertake a review of the first year of the Affordable Warmth Scheme commencing in April 2016. The five main areas of the review will be:-

- Examine scheme performance in 2015-16;
- Review the scheme qualifying conditions;
- Consider process effectiveness and efficiency;
- Assess effectiveness of delivery arrangements, including the potential for single installation provision; and
- Explore the effectiveness of the targeting model. Planning for this review has now commenced and DSD will be engaging with key stakeholders.

NB. Please note not all referrals were eligible for the Affordable Warmth Scheme with some household incomes over £20,000 per annum and others had all measures already in place.

Appendix II

Affordable Warmth Scheme DSD Update 14 September 2014 to 11 December 2015

Annex 1

Council Area	Referrals to NIHE	Ineligible or declined to proceed	Schedules of Work Completed	Approvals to proceed with works	Value of Approvals	Measures Installed	Homes Helped
<b>AWS Activity 2014/2015</b>	<b>3,606</b>	<b>501</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>£554,225</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1 April 2015 to 11 December 2015</b>							
Antrim and Newtownabbey	696	328	168	161	£562,683	107	72
Ards and North Down	773	333	321	317	£1,057,777	183	117
Armagh Banbridge and Craigavon	954	260	373	356	£1,498,407	292	214
Belfast	846	532	532	516	£1,541,354	411	201
Causeway Coast and Glens	1,034	327	287	266	£1,164,984	383	241
Derry and Strabane	1,164	238	250	238	£877,280	309	167
Fermanagh and Omagh	591	322	334	300	£1,242,458	206	141
Lisburn and Castlereagh	644	160	306	291	£1,102,009	192	69
Mid and East Antrim	465	167	182	179	£638,843	147	124
Mid Ulster	560	280	349	329	£1,335,284	321	138
Newry Mourne and Down	939	204	395	364	£1,657,576	335	245
<b>Total 2015/2016</b>	<b>8,666</b>	<b>3,151</b>	<b>3,497</b>	<b>3,317</b>	<b>£12,678,655</b>	<b>2,886</b>	<b>1,729</b>
<b>AWS Activity Total to Date</b>	<b>12,272</b>	<b>3,652</b>	<b>3,740</b>	<b>3,474</b>	<b>£13,232,880</b>	<b>2,895</b>	<b>1,737</b>