

Meeting	Decision Session - Executive Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods
Date	17 March 2022
Present	Councillor Smalley, Executive Member for Culture, Leisure and Communities (Substitute for Councillor Craghill)
Apologies	Councillor Craghill (Executive Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods)

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#### **14. Declarations of Interest**

The Executive Member was asked to declare, at this point in the meeting, any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests or any prejudicial or discloseable pecuniary interests that he might have in respect of the business on the agenda. None were declared.

#### **15. Minutes**

Resolved: That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 17 February 2022 be deferred until the next meeting, to allow the Executive Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods to approve them.

#### **16. Public Participation**

It was reported that there had been one registration to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

Cllr Pavlovic spoke on Agenda Item 4, Retrofit Programme – Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) and Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) funding and an update on the development of a Retrofit Action Plan.

He thanked officers for preparing a clear and informative report and although he welcomed the grant funding that had been made available to support a programme of retrofitting for a small number of homes, he raised some concerns. He addressed the unprecedented increases in fuel bills, the inflationary pressures and the higher food costs that would leave some residents facing significant financial strain and

increased levels of ill health. He felt that the cost of living crisis needed to be addressed quickly, to avoid poor outcomes particularly for those on low wages or unwaged, including pensioners, who could be left making a choice between “heat or eat”. He highlighted that 2500 council houses were below an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) band C rating and noted that these households required help. He felt that the retrofit plans and funding available needed to be significantly increased to make more homes energy efficient.

## **17. Retrofit Programme – Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) and Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) funding and an update on the development of a Retrofit Action Plan**

The Executive Member considered a report that provided an update on the successful outcome of the BEIS Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) and Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) grant submissions and the development of a Housing Retrofit Action Plan.

The Head of Housing Delivery and Asset Management, the Housing Standards and Adaptations Manager and the Director of Housing, Economy and Regeneration confirmed:

- Since the launch of the retrofit programme there had been significant progress in developing plans to reduce carbon emissions within the housing sector in York and the sub-region.
- Over £5.5m government grant funding had been secured to target energy inefficient homes and support low income households, across all tenures, with upgrades to Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) band C or above.
- The significant retrofit works and funding opportunities outlined within the report were being delivered alongside the development of a Housing Retrofit Action Plan. This would build on the Climate Change Strategy, by developing a number of housing initiatives to support the city’s ambition of being carbon neutral by 2030.
- The Housing Retrofit Action Plan included stock model exercises to provide energy bill and carbon savings analysis and mapping, which would provide more information about retrofit interventions within social housing and homeowners across the city.

- Further work was proposed to explore the possibility of a “comfort charge” to resource higher cost and/or a greater number of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) retrofit interventions. This approach would ensure that tenants retained a proportion of their expected energy bill saving, with the remainder paid as a service charge to provide the council with a revenue stream to repay the capital works investment.
- Heat pumps worked well to decarbonise homes, however, many homes required further insulation works to ensure the heat pump could work effectively and efficiently whilst not significantly increasing heating costs. A study would be commissioned to analyse whether a property was heat pump ready or to identify the required works to improve the thermal efficiency of the home so that a heat pump could be installed.
- Referral routes for council tenants at risk of fuel poverty would be explored alongside the integration of retrofit measures into ‘business as usual’.
- Local Authority Delivery (LAD) 1B and LAD2 had been delivered since July 2021 and due to supply chain capacity issues, the delivery deadline had been extended to 30 June 2022.
- Due to the timescales involved in delivering the grant funded works, it was proposed that a procurement exercise be undertaken in order to secure a delivery partner by May 2022 for the LAD3, SHDF and HUG programmes.
- It was proposed that the current ‘Standards and Adaptations’ Team be re-named as the Healthy and Sustainable Homes Service.

In response to matters raised under Public Participation, officers agreed that the number of residents at risk of severe financial stress and ill health from an inability to sufficiently heat their home would increase significantly due to the global fuel and cost of living rises. It was acknowledged that the HRA did not have the capacity to solve the retrofit problem for the whole city and diverting funding from other revenue streams could have a negative impact on other health and social issues. It was noted that the Housing and Community Safety Policy and Scrutiny Committee would be reviewing the impact of the cost of living crisis both on fuel poverty and the HRA income streams.

Officers were thanked for their report and the Executive Member commended the funding achieved and the progress made so far. He acknowledged the importance of maximising the use of available budgets to ensure that the retrofit works not only resulted in reduced carbon emissions but also sought to reduce energy bills for residents. He noted the challenges faced and welcomed the creation of the Healthy and Sustainable Homes Service. He agreed it better reflected the intentions of the team to support residents to live in healthier homes.

Resolved: That the following be noted and approved:

- i. The offer of grant funding of £343k under the BEIS's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, which alongside Housing Revenue Account (HRA) funding will deliver retrofit works to 28 council homes.
- ii. The further offer of grant funding under the BEIS's Home Upgrade Grant ("HUG") scheme. The grant of £497k will enable the council and its consortia partners of Harrogate Borough Council, Selby District Council and Craven District Council to support homeowners living in homes not connected to the mains gas network, to benefit from the installation of much needed energy efficiency measures.
- iii. The current Energy Company Obligation statement will be amended in order to maximise the benefits of the funding streams when the new scheme launches in the new financial year.
- iv. The procurement of a new retrofit delivery partner to undertake improvement works in accordance with the grant offers under the HUG programme with delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Place (in consultation with the Director of Governance and S151 Officer) to take such steps as are necessary to procure, award and enter into the resulting final contract(s). This programme of works will be added to the existing procurement of a partner to deliver works under LAD3 and SHDF in line with previous Executive approvals.
- v. The progress be noted and the proposed timetable of the Housing Retrofit Action Plan, including the commissioning of two key pieces of research which will form the evidence base for the council's approach to retrofit in the city.

- vi. The proposal to undertake further due diligence around “comfort charges” in order to improve the energy efficiency of our residents homes alongside generating a revenue stream to support further investment in retrofit works within council homes.
- vii. The proposal to undertake further heat pump programme feasibility analysis, including consideration of the key deployment issues highlighted.

Reason: To tackle fuel poverty and to support our ambition of York being carbon neutral by 2030 by improving the energy performance of some of our poorer performing council homes to both reduce residents’ energy bills and to reduce energy demand as well as switching to greener forms of energy across all tenures.

- viii. The changes to the Housing Standards and Adaptations Team, including the change of service name to Healthy and Sustainable Homes Service.

Reason: To reflect the focus of the council to provide a range of services aimed at helping residents remain healthy, safe and warm in their own homes.

Cllr Smalley, Executive Member

[The meeting started at 10.00am and finished at 10.22am].

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