

**Classification:** Public

**Key Decision:** No

### Gravesham Borough Council

**Report to:** Housing Services Cabinet Committee  
**Date:** 06 June 2022  
**Reporting officer:** Nicole Arthur- Service Manager (Housing Operations)  
**Subject:** Resident Engagement in relation to Net Carbon Zero

#### Purpose and summary of report:

1. To update Housing Services Cabinet Committee on tenant engagement activities within Housing Operations in relation to Net Carbon Zero.
2. To seek comments from Housing Services Cabinet Committee on the content of the Resident Engagement Plan and energy advice leaflet prior to design work being undertaken by the Communications Team and ratified by Cabinet Member for Housing Services.

#### Recommendations:

1. For Housing Services Cabinet Committee to note the contents of the report and provide feedback.

Key Implications:	
Item	Implications
Legal	There are no legal implications
Finance and Value for Money	Energy Saving Champion Training- £15,985 –funded from H927/5113 in 2021/2022 Energy advice leaflet content from Energy Savings Trust- £1,510 funded from H883/34102 in 2021/2022 TPAS proposal- £14,700 to be funded from H997/34102 in 2022/2023
Corporate Plan	<b>People:</b> Protected Environment - enforce high regulatory requirements and carbon neutral borough. Quality Living - safeguard residents and putting our customers first. <b>Place:</b> Connected Community - improve resident well-being Progress: Entrepreneurial Authority - deliver a more resilient, creative and cost effective council
Climate Change	Climate Change Strategy 2022 – Priority 2 – the housing provider The project contributes to the actions outlined in the Council's Climate Change Management Delivery Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>2.1.1</b> Create and implement a resident strategy in relation to energy improvement works to ensure access and buy in.</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>2.1.2</b> Create 'Staff Energy Champions' to assist residents and other staff members with energy saving advice</li> <li>• <b>2.1.3</b> Provide energy saving information at sign-up to new and existing tenants</li> <li>• <b>2.1.4</b> Encourage residents to purchase high rated A+++ energy efficient appliances</li> <li>• <b>2.7.2</b> Continue to deliver sustainable travel behaviour change messaging through online digital content and targeted engagement opportunities</li> </ul>
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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The decarbonisation of homes is essential if Gravesham Borough Council is to reach its net zero carbon targets, which cannot be achieved without retrofitting the majority of its existing council housing stock. However, it is recognised that by doing this, it will have an impact on our tenants who are currently facing numerous challenges such as fuel affordability and other rising living costs.
- 1.2 In the Climate Change Strategy 2022-2030, the council have committed to implementing a resident engagement strategy around Climate Change and to work with partners to promote climate change key messages and activities to all council housing tenants, to support them in adjusting behaviours and deliver their own climate change action agendas.

## 2. Background

- 2.1 In November 2021, Gravesham Borough Council was awarded up to £297,000 from the Local Authority Delivery Scheme Phase Two funding (LAD2) with the focus on helping those most likely to be in fuel poverty. The grant funding has been used to improve the insulation to just over 100 properties and part fund the installation Ground Source Heat Pumps to 16 flats at an independent living scheme, Merston Court in Higham.
- 2.2 In February 2022, Gravesham Borough Council was awarded £823,337 from wave one of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) with the focus on improving the worst performing properties first in terms of energy performance. 364 properties have been identified for insulation upgrades as part of the scheme.
- 2.3 In November 2021, the council processed around 30 poor energy performing properties through the Energy Company Obligation 3 Funding (ECO3) which will receive fully funded insulation installed which will be completed by the end of June 2022.
- 2.4 In February 2022, Management Team were informed of the work that is being undertaken alongside retrofit contractor, The Warm Front team, to identify any properties that are not being tackled under any other funding schemes or programmes, that could be eligible for fully fundable fabric measures through the Energy Company Obligation funding scheme. Surveys to the stock are due to conclude shortly in which The Warm Front team will notify of the findings and any properties that have been identified for fully fundable fabric and heating measures.
- 2.5 In February 2022, the council had been working with Kent-based housing retrofit consultant, RJ Barwick, to submit a consortium bid under the Government's Heat Pump Ready Programme alongside social housing provider West Kent Housing Association to install the Energiesprong whole house retrofit (WHRF) standard to

twenty properties consisting of four different property archetypes. The council will be notified if the bid has been successful in May 2022.

- 2.6 An annual budget of £1.88m has been allocated for Energy Efficiency works which will be partly used for the council's contribution towards the SHDF scheme and to pursue a number of separate energy efficiency projects such as the Ground Source Heat Pump project at Merston Court, Higham.

### **3. Resident Engagement Plan**

- 3.1 The Resident Engagement Plan allows us to recognise how tenants could be affected at an early stage, so that we can proactively engage and plan ahead to provide the necessary support to deliver a positive customer experience, whilst working together on the journey to achieve net zero carbon.
- 3.2 The Resident Engagement Plan found at Appendix 2 outlines how the service will do this and the different stages of the customer journey, from pre-works right the way through to handover and aftercare stage. It also highlights the key resident engagement risks and mitigations with each step and how this will be managed.
- 3.3 Once the content has been finalised, the Communications team will undertake the design work in line with the Tenant Engagement Strategy and the Climate Change Strategy. The website will also be updated with this content.

### **4. Energy Advice Leaflet**

- 4.1 The Climate Change Delivery Plan and the Housing Operations Climate Change Action Plan make a number of commitments in regards to communication with tenants in relation to energy efficiency and sustainable travel behaviour.
- 4.2 To achieve this, the Energy Savings Trust were commissioned to work on the content of an advice leaflet which will be sent out to existing tenants and issued at sign up for new tenants. A copy of the content can be found at Appendix 3.
- 4.3 As per the Resident Engagement Plan, once the content has been confirmed, the Communications team will undertake the design work in line with the Tenant Engagement Strategy and the Climate Change Strategy. The website will also be updated with this content.

### **5. Resident Engagement Activities**

- 5.1 A number of other engagement opportunities have been progressed within Housing in relation to Carbon Zero and Energy Efficiency improvement programmes as follows:
  - Some officers within the Energy & Sustainability team and the wider Housing Operations service have recently completed the City & Guilds Level 2 in Fuel Debt Advice in the Community qualification providing them with an understanding of the causes of fuel debt, issues householders may face with meters, fuel statements, payment and tariff options.
  - The Energy & Sustainability team have been working closely with the Energy Saving Trust to deliver the Endorsed Energy Advice training to a number of officers across all services within the Housing Directorate to create 'Energy Champions'. These Champions will be able to provide our tenants with the necessary home energy advice to assist in preventing fuel poverty and help to identify when fabric improvements are needed to improve the energy performance of a property and referring it back to the Energy & Sustainability

team to progress. The Energy Champions will also be training colleagues within Housing with the ambition to have all teams trained by December 2022.

- The Housing Operations service have recently commissioned Tpas, the tenant engagement experts, to help increase tenant engagement around Net Zero and building safety. The engagement programme will consist of behavioural insight workshops for housing staff, data analysis, qualitative research and trialling using the new engagement methods for tenants within the target clusters (I.e., residents who are due to have energy efficiency improvements carried out to their home). Tpas have confirmed we would be the first housing provider in the country to take this approach to Net Zero and building Safety and believe it will be an award winning scheme. A copy of programme can be found at Appendix 4.

5.2 The activities outlined above along with the Resident Engagement Plan and advice leaflet will allow the Council to successfully deliver the energy retrofit programmes to improve the property performance and tenant comfort of the housing stock.

## **6. Appendices**

6.1 The following documents are to be published with the report:

Appendix 1- Energy Efficiency Retrofit Projects – Resident Engagement Plan

Appendix 2- Energy Advice Leaflet

Appendix 3- TPAS project plan

## **7. Background Documents**

7.1 The following background documents were used- Management Team Reports as outlined in section 2.

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<b>Secondary Implications</b>	
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	<p>Risk of no access provided by tenants resulting in us not being able to complete the required works. BEIS encourages RPs to engage early with tenants, to support successful delivery of projects.</p> <p>Delay in project completion extending past the deadline of 31st January 2023. If the grant is not fully spent by March 2023 then BEIS reserves the right to request return of all or any proportion of the grant.</p> <p>Tenants without the correct support and advice could result in fuel poverty, and not be able to pay bills and their rent to the council.</p>
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	<p><i>A data protection impact assessment (DPIA) should be carried out at the start of any major project involving the use of personal data or if you are making a significant change to an existing process.</i></p> <p>a. Does the project/change being recommended through this paper involve the processing of <a href="#">personal data</a> or <a href="#">special category data</a> or <a href="#">criminal offence data</a>? A definition of each type of data can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office website via the above links. No</p> <p>b. If yes to question a, have you completed and attached a DPIA including Data Protection Officer advice? N/A</p> <p>c. If no to question b, please seek advice from your nominated DPIA assessor or the Information Governance Team at <a href="mailto:gdpr@medway.gov.uk">gdpr@medway.gov.uk</a>. N/A</p>
<b>Equality Impact Assessment</b>	<p>a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community? If yes, please explain answer. No</p> <p>b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? If yes, please explain answer. No</p> <p><i>In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above</i></p>
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	N/A
<b>Digital and website implications</b>	Both documents will be accessible via the website
<b>Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults</b>	The work outlined in this reports helps safeguard children and vulnerable adults