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<h1>REPORT TO EXECUTIVE</h1>			
<b>PORTFOLIO AREA: ENVIRONMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORT</b>			
Date of Meeting:		7 JULY 2003	
Public			
Key Decision:	Yes	Recorded in Forward Plan:	Yes
Inside Policy Framework			

**Title:** HEALTH AND AFFORDABLE WARMTH STRATEGY

**Report of:** HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

**Report reference:** EPS.39/03

### Summary:

To provide Members with proposals for the adoption of an Affordable Warmth Strategy.

### Recommendations:

That Members agree to consider this report, and forward it to Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consultation

**Contact Officer:** Allan Dickson

**Ext:** 7339

1.

## 2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND OPTIONS

1.1 Fuel poverty is a major problem for people who live in houses that are energy inefficient, and who are on low incomes. This problem is not restricted to any particular section of society, and a multi-agency

strategic approach is therefore required in order to deal effectively with causes of fuel poverty.

## 1.2 Affordable Warmth Strategies are being developed throughout the

North Cumbrian Local Authorities, and to assist in this process, Carlisle City Council were successful in bidding for funding from the Health Action Zone, to create a post of Affordable Warmth Strategic Development Officer. It has, however, proved difficult to retain the services of a suitable post holder, and the work of this officer is now being carried out by the Authority's Home Energy Conservation Act Officer.

3. This report introduces the Carlisle City Council's Affordable Warmth Strategy document which will endeavour to take forward the aims and objectives with which to address the problems associated with fuel poverty.
4. In its simplest sense, fuel poverty can be described as where a household cannot afford to keep warm, taking into account such matter as income, heating provision, energy efficiency of the property, and property condition (dampness/cold/condensation).
5. The official definition of fuel poverty is: - 'a household where fuels costs exceed 10% of the household income'.

## **AFFORDABLE WARMTH STRATEGY**

6. Appendix A of this report gives details of how the City Council intends to address fuel poverty within the District by working with partners. It is not possible on our own to reach the Governments targets of eradicating fuel poverty in vulnerable people by 2010. It is therefore imperative that we work with Health professionals, Public Utilities, Primary Care Trusts, Landlords and others to ensure that we take an holistic approach to dealing with the problem.
7. Not only do we require to meet the above target, but the overall objective is to provide a strategy that significantly improves energy efficiency over the next 10-15 years. An indicative figure is quoted as being 30%.
8. The connection between poor, energy inefficient, damp and cold housing, and the rates of morbidity and mortality is very well documented. The scale of excess winter mortality in the United Kingdom, especially among the elderly is directly related to cold conditions and poor housing conditions.
9. It is therefore imperative that the Affordable Warmth Strategy is taken forward quickly and effectively to ensure that vulnerable people are not left at risk through poorly insulated and poorly heated housing, and that the health of the population in Carlisle is safeguarded initially by the adoption of the

Strategy, and subsequently by the implementation of measure to eradicate fuel poverty.

## **1. CONSULTATION**

1. Consultation to Date. Registered Social Landlords; Primary Care Trusts; Voluntary and Charitable Organisations.

2.2 Consultation proposed. - None

## **1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Members are requested to consider this report on the Affordable Warmth Strategy, and agree to forward same to Overview and Scrutiny as part of the consultation process.

## **1. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. To secure an improvement of the current housing stock, and to provide information, advice and insulation measures to remove all vulnerable people from fuel poverty.

## **1. IMPLICATIONS**

- Staffing/Resources – Affordable Warmth Strategic Development Officer funding received from the Health Action Zone
- Financial – To assist in the generation of funding for implementation of energy efficiency measures.
- Legal – N/A
- Corporate – N/A
- Risk Management – N/A
- Equality Issues – Will ensure that elderly, disabled and vulnerable people will have access to decent, warm housing, linked into existing Council priority areas.
- Environmental – To reduce Carbon Dioxide emissions and reduce energy consumption.

- Crime and Disorder –

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Affordable Warmth Strategy 2003 - 6**

#### **Background Information**

The amendment to the Home Energy Conservation Act 2000 required each Local Authority to submit an affordable warmth strategy with the fourth annual progress report in August 2000. The strategy should aim to meet government targets of alleviating fuel poverty in the homes of the most vulnerable by 2010 and elimination of all fuel poverty by 2016.

Carlisle City Council submitted a draft strategy in 2000 and in 2001 a bid to the Health Action Zone for funding for a fuel poverty officer to create and deliver an Affordable Warmth Strategy in line with government requirements.

Funding was eventually approved in 2002 but not as originally requested for Carlisle. The Health Action Zone approved the funding for a fuel poverty officer for the four district authorities in the HAZ area.

Although there has been significant difficulties recruiting a suitable person to fill the post of fuel poverty officer there has been extensive consultation through conferences, workshops and working groups in each local authority area.

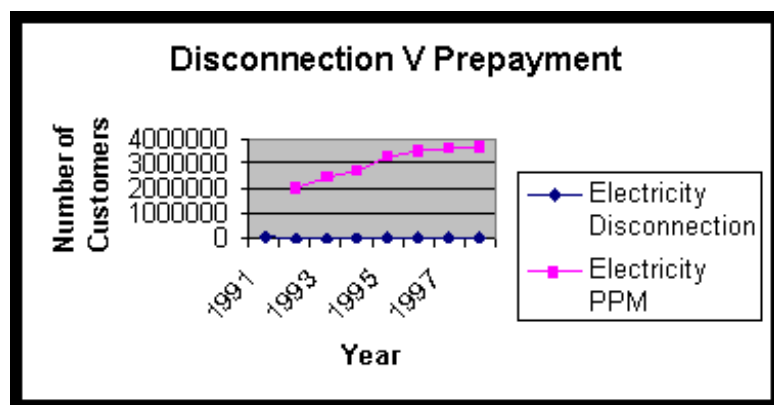
The following strategy is a result of this consultation process, carried out since November 2002 by the Energy Efficiency Advice Centre.

#### **What is Fuel Poverty?**

The most commonly accepted definition of affordable warmth is considered to be where a household can achieve temperatures needed to maintain health and comfort for expenditure of 10% or less of income. The World Health Organisation recommends that those temperatures are 21°C in the living area and 18°C in all other areas.

## Key Causes

- Inadequate income – increasing take up of benefits would increase the income available for payment towards fuel costs. It would also provide access to other grants and discounts for energy efficiency measures.
- Inadequate insulation – many householders in fuel poverty cannot afford to make the necessary improvements to their home to improve the energy efficiency and therefore reduce fuel costs to an affordable level.
- No central heating – many homes still do not have central heating. This often means a significant proportion of the residents' income is spent on heating a single room. Moving from this one heated room to a cold room increases the risk of accidents in the home.
- Energy supply – many householders are reluctant to change supplier and miss out on reduced energy prices as a result. Prepayment meters are more expensive than other forms of payment but householders find it difficult to transfer to other payment methods when they have a limited understanding of the system and limited income.



## Key Effects

Excess winter mortality - The graph below clearly identifies the number of excess winter deaths in comparison to other European countries. Although only a tiny proportion of these deaths are attributed to hypothermia the link between fuel poverty and ill-health has been well documented.

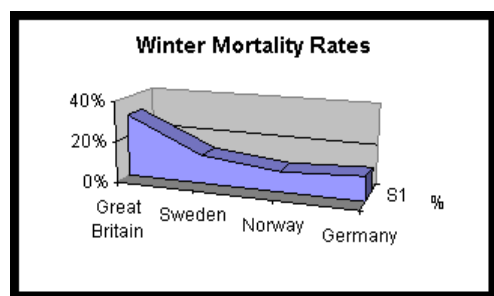
Cold damp homes increase the occurrence of respiratory illness. Dampness often results in mould growth and dust mites, both of which are associated with a range of respiratory and allergic conditions. In colder temperatures blood pressure increases

and the risk of heart attacks and strokes increases dramatically.

The inability to pay for an adequately heated home forces householders to make difficult decisions about how to spend their money. Food and clothing rival for attention with fuel payments and luxuries such as socialising within the local community rarely win the competition for funding. The lack of social opportunity for those in fuel poverty provides little prospect of improvement when their access to information to take them out of fuel poverty is limited.

## Key Solutions

- Increase income levels – to make fuel more affordable
- Improve the energy efficiency of all homes in fuel poverty – their home becomes warmer and free from dampness
- Provide easy access to grants – many householders don't know where to find out about existing grants and advice.
- Provide easy access to advice about energy suppliers – those most at risk of fuel poverty are often reluctant to change energy supplier.
- Raise awareness of fuel poverty issues to a much wider audience. There are many synergies to be achieved from multi-agency partnerships.



## Development Process

### Raising Awareness

During National Energy Action's Warm Homes Week in 2002 Carlisle City Council's Energy Efficiency Advice Centre hosted a conference to raise awareness of the cause and effect of fuel poverty.

Presentations were made from a variety of organisations including Energywatch, Scottish Power, National Energy Action, East Riding District Council who hold Beacon Status for fuel poverty and Carlisle & County Energy Efficiency Advice Centre.

Almost 100 people attended the conference, which lasted for a full day. Representatives from Carlisle, Eden, Allerdale and Copeland district councils attended along with representatives from the Health Authority, the Health Action Zone, voluntary agencies and housing associations. The breadth of interest was evident from the feedback, which was extremely positive.

## **District Workshops**

Following on from the conference a number of workshops were held in each district to identify local priorities. Once again the workshops were very well attended with a total of 43 people attending. It became evident from the early workshops that there was a genuine desire in each area to develop a strategy that would begin to make a difference to fuel poverty in the North & West of Cumbria.

## **Working Groups**

Working Groups in each area have been established to prioritise the delivery of the strategy according to local needs. This approach is absolutely essential if local people are to receive relevant help and support to alleviate fuel poverty.

## **Partners in Affordable Warmth**

### **Landlords**

Housing stock which allows tenants to sustain a reasonable heating regime not only reduces lengthy voids and but also reduces the need for major repairs to the fabric of the building as a result of dampness and/or condensation.

Allocation of tenancies in difficult areas could be assisted by enhancing the affordability of living in those areas. Where potential tenants have an income so low as to indicate that they could fall into the fuel poverty trap landlords may allocate properties with a higher standard of heating and insulation.

Private landlords will inevitably find warm, damp free homes easier to let and will also undoubtedly be easier to maintain.

### **Health Partners**

The health links to fuel poverty are well documented. Poor levels of heating can lead to increased incidences of respiratory illnesses and difficulty with hospital discharges because of inadequate heating or insulation.

### **Voluntary Agencies**

Many voluntary agencies could make referrals to existing fuel poverty assistance if they knew what was available and how to access the information. Just as importantly they can help to identify needs and trends that may lead to fuel poverty.

## Local Employers

Looking after the welfare of staff has long been the role of an effective Human Resource Department. Lowering the incidence of sickness absence is an obvious payback for ensuring that employees have easy access to advice about improving the energy efficiency of their homes and maximise their income.

## Energy Efficiency Advice Centre

Carlisle & County Energy Efficiency Advice Centre (EEAC) is one of 52 EEACs across the UK funded by the Energy Saving Trust to provide free and impartial energy efficiency advice to domestic householders in Cumbria. The expertise within the EEAC is a crucial part of delivering an affordable warmth strategy.

Energy efficiency is one of the easiest ways of alleviating fuel poverty but there are many problems with access to different grants and discounts, and the EEAC is constantly evaluating

different projects to ensure that householders get the best deal available. Where a gap in the market is identified the EEAC has made funding bids and created Cumbrian projects.

## Carlisle City Council Area Profile

Population 100,739

Households 43,963

Public Sector Housing 8,055

Privately Rented Housing 3,131

Households without central heating 5,372

Households with pensioners 14,112

Households with a person with a limiting disability 15,311

32% of 16 – 74 age ranges have no qualifications

Independent research indicates that up to 87% of pensioners have the potential to fall into the fuel poverty trap. Lone parents account for 43%. It is astonishing to note that according to the 2001 Census over 5000 homes are still without central heating in Carlisle District and the 15% of households with a person with a limiting disability may have greater warmth needs than those without.

## Prioritisation of Actions



The Working group in Carlisle has decided to take a pilot approach to delivering the Health & Affordable Warmth Strategy. Group consultation will agree on a particular geographical area.

- Within this area an action plan will be developed that will encourage all identified partners to work together towards the common aim of delivering the following actions
- Training of front line staff to utilise existing referral mechanisms
- Raising public awareness – including developing a strategy for those with literacy problems
- Funding – identify sources of funding to enhance the existing sources of advice, information, grants and discounts.
- Maximising income to reduce the incidence of fuel poverty related not to property efficiency or energy supplier but just to income.
- Linking with Carlisle and other Housing Associations to ensure that all housing is brought up to a decent standard, within existing Council priority areas.