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| AFFORDABLE WARMTH PROCESS | 1st November 2016 |
| TO: ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE | |
| FOR INFORMATION | |

| Linkage to Council Strategy (2015-19) | |
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| Strategic Theme | Resilient Healthy & Engaged Communities |
| Outcome | Improved Home Delivery Energy Efficiency |
| Lead Officer | Head of Health & Built Environment |
| Cost: (If applicable) | Funded by DfC |

Background

In recent report items members have been advised that there have been changes to the Affordable Warmth Scheme and that Council has now taken on an 'Enhanced Role' that previously would have been completed by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Taking on this additional role has meant that the time taken to complete an affordable warmth application has increased and this has been reflected in Council's referral target for the year. The budget Council receive from the Department of Communities to fund staff for the scheme has also been reduced for 2016/2017 by £45,750. A breakdown of referrals made this current financial year by District Electoral Area and ward may be found at Appendix I to this report. Copies of Ministers questions on Affordable Warmth for 7th & 14th October have also been provided for information and may be found at Appendix II and Appendix III to this report.

To offer further clarity on the current procedure please see brief process guide below:

1. Clients/representative contacts the Affordable Warmth Office to express an interest in the scheme. Affordable Warmth staff will ask the client/representative a series of questions relating to clients income, tenure, health and house condition. From this short conversation we are able to determine if the client is eligible and what needs they have. This is important as it is our aim to visit those most in need first. If eligible, the client will be added to our holding list.

2. Surveyors will make contact with targeted clients who have a high need or non-targeted clients who have an urgent need first. An urgent need is typically characterised as a boiler that is broken down. Surveyors will arrange an appointment with these clients to discuss what paperwork will be required for inspection at the time of the visit to act as proof of income, occupancy and ownership/tenancy. If the case involves a private rented tenant the surveyor will also contact the landlord to discuss providing documentation proving ownership of the property and completing consent forms. The surveyor will photograph each document and include that as evidence with the application. The following documents are typical of what would be requested from a client:

Ownership

- Mortgage Statement
- Buildings Insurance
- Mortgage Redemption Certificate

Income

- Payslips
- Profit/Loss account
- Letters detailing benefit entitlement
- Occupational pension statements

Occupancy

- Rates Bill
- Recent Utility Bill

Proof of Age

- Birth Certificate
- Passport
- Driving Licence
- Electoral Identity Card
- Bus Pass

Private rented clients will also need to provide a copy of their tenancy agreement with the Landlord.

Many of these clients are extremely vulnerable and so it is not uncommon for a surveyor to visit the property up to three times before an application is complete. In most cases this is because the householder has not been able to provide all the necessary paperwork e.g. current buildings insurance, current pension letter, tenancy agreement etc. Where possible, the surveyor will aid the client in requesting new documentation from various agencies at the time of the first visit.

3. Surveyors will print out all documents and will check all necessary paperwork is present and then give each case to the coordinator.
4. The Co-ordinator then checks each case and if satisfied all documentation is included, these will be hand delivered to the Ballymena Grants Office on a weekly basis.

NIHE have advised that the average waiting time for a client to receive an approval is 4-8 weeks. Urgent cases generally receive an approval within a week. The Grants Office has advised that they are awaiting the appointment of additional technical staff, this will enable NIHE to reduce waiting times.

Clients who express that their heating system is broken beyond repair must provide a letter from a heating engineer as confirmation.

There are a number of clients who have been on Council's holding list for a considerable period of time. In many cases these clients only require lower priority works e.g. replacement of window seals, replacement of a few single glazed windows etc. At present these clients are not deemed a priority.

Council currently have approximately 465 people who have expressed an interest and are on our holding list. From 1st May – 30th September Council have referred 200 cases to Northern Ireland Housing Executive. The Department of Communities have advised that we are to make 506 referrals for 2016/2017. This means that Council can only refer a further 306 cases until 31st March 2017. It is an unfortunate reality that all clients on our holding list will not be visited this financial year.

In order to manage the scheme going forward, it is recommended that only urgent cases are added to the holding list until all targeted addresses and all non-targeted urgent addresses have been visited and that this be reviewed in January 2017.

Where possible other clients will be referred to Council's Energy Efficiency Advice Service where Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme grants are available for owner occupiers and those that privately rent..

Appendix I

| DEA | Ward | Total |
|------------|------------------|------------|
| Ballymoney | Ballymoney East | 3 |
| | Ballymoney North | 2 |
| | Ballymoney South | 4 |
| | Clogh Mills | 1 |
| | Dunloy | 5 |
| | Rasharkin | 5 |
| | Route | 4 |
| | | Total = 24 |

| DEA | Ward | Total |
|------|------------|-------|
| Bann | Aghadowey | 5 |
| | Castlerock | 4 |
| | Garvagh | 6 |
| | Kilrea | 8 |
| | Macosquin | 2 |
| | Total = 25 | |

| DEA | Ward | Total |
|------------|-------------|-------|
| Benbradagh | Altahullion | 3 |
| | Ballykelly | 1 |
| | Dungiven | 7 |
| | Feeny | 10 |
| | Greysteel | 4 |
| | Total = 25 | |

| DEA | Ward | Total | |
|----------|----------------------|-------|------------|
| Causeway | Atlantic | 6 | |
| | Dervock | 8 | |
| | Dundooan | 6 | |
| | Giant's Causeway | 4 | |
| | Hopefield | 2 | |
| | Portrush and Dunluce | 4 | |
| | Portstewart | 3 | |
| | | | Total = 33 |

| DEA | Ward | Total |
|-----------|-------------|-------|
| Coleraine | Churchland | 2 |
| | Mountsandel | 7 |
| | Quarry | 5 |
| | University | 6 |
| | Waterside | 5 |
| | Windyhall | 7 |
| | | |

| DEA | Ward | Total |
|----------|------------|-------|
| Limavady | Coolessan | 4 |
| | Drumsum | 5 |
| | Greystone | 2 |
| | Magilligan | 2 |
| | Roeside | 1 |
| | | |

| DEA | Ward | Total |
|-----------|---------------------------|------------|
| The Glens | Ballycastle | 7 |
| | Kinbane | 16 |
| | Loughguille and Stranocum | 10 |
| | Lurigethan | 1 |
| | Torr Head and Raithlin | 13 |
| | | Total = 47 |

| DEA | Ward | Total |
|------------|------------------|------------|
| Ballymoney | Ballymoney East | 3 |
| | Ballymoney North | 2 |
| | Ballymoney South | 4 |
| | Clogh Mills | 1 |
| | Dunloy | 5 |
| | Rasharkin | 5 |
| | Route | 4 |
| | | Total = 24 |

| DEA | Ward | Total |
|------|------------|------------|
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| | Garvagh | 6 |
| | Kilrea | 8 |
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| DEA | Ward | Total |
|----------|----------------------|------------|
| Causeway | Atlantic | 6 |
| | Dervock | 8 |
| | Dundooan | 6 |
| | Giant's Causeway | 4 |
| | Hopefield | 2 |
| | Portrush and Dunluce | 4 |
| | Portstewart | 3 |
| | | Total = 33 |

| DEA | Ward | Total |
|-----------|-------------|-----------|
| Coleraine | Churchland | 2 |
| | Mountsandel | 7 |
| | Quarry | 5 |
| | University | 6 |
| | Waterside | 5 |
| | Windyhall | 7 |
| | | Total= 32 |

| DEA | Ward | Total |
|----------|------------|------------|
| Limavady | Coolessan | 4 |
| | Drumsumn | 5 |
| | Greystone | 2 |
| | Magilligan | 2 |
| | Roeside | 1 |
| | | Total = 14 |

| DEA | Ward | Total |
|-----------|---------------------------|------------|
| The Glens | Ballycastle | 7 |
| | Kinbane | 16 |
| | Loughguille and Stranocum | 10 |
| | Lurigethan | 1 |
| | Torr Head and Raithlin | 13 |
| | | Total = 47 |



Northern Ireland
Assembly

AQW 3283/16-21

Mrs Rosemary Barton
Ulster Unionist Party
Fermanagh and South Tyrone

Tabled Date: 16/09/2016
Answered On Date: 04/10/2016
Priority Written: No

Question:

To ask the Minister for Communities to detail (i) the target number of low income households assisted by the Affordable Warmth Scheme for the 2015-16 year in Fermanagh and South Tyrone; and (ii) how many homes were actually assisted.

Answer:

The Affordable Warmth Scheme uses a targeted and area based approach to identify low income owner occupiers and those who rent from a private sector landlord who are most at risk of fuel poverty.

In 2015/2016 each council was invited to refer 1,000 households to the Housing Executive for an assessment of their eligibility for the Affordable Warmth Scheme. This was based on the performance of the previous Warm Homes Scheme which aimed to assist 9,000 homes each year. Under the former Warm Homes Scheme the average grant per household was £1,440 and by November 2015 the average grant per household under the Affordable Warmth Scheme had risen to £3,800 as the scheme provides an enhanced range of measures to the households assisted. This means that with the same budget fewer homes can be assisted but will receive an enhanced range of energy efficiency improvement measures including cavity and loft insulation, new heating systems, replacement windows and solid wall insulation where appropriate.

The Housing Executive does not analyse Affordable Warmth Scheme performance by parliamentary constituency. Fermanagh South Tyrone comprises parts of the council areas of Fermanagh and Omagh and Mid Ulster, both of these council areas are covered by a single Grants Office. In 2015/16, the Housing Executive issued 1,058 Approvals to householders in those two council areas (Fermanagh and Omagh 467 and Mid Ulster 591). Once an approval is issued, householders are asked to have the work completed within 3 months.

In 2015/2016, 634 homes received 1,054 energy efficiency improvement measures in those two council areas (263 homes (430 measures) in Fermanagh and Omagh and 371 homes (624 measures) in Mid Ulster.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

AQW 3728/16-21

Ms Catherine Seeley
Sinn Féin
Upper Bann

Tabled Date: 22/09/2016
Answered On Date: 07/10/2016
Priority Written: No

Question:

To ask the Minister for Communities , pursuant to AQW 2548/16-21, to detail the timescales set by his Department for application, approval and delivery of the Affordable Warmth Scheme.

Answer:

The Affordable Warmth Scheme uses a targeted area based approach to find households considered to be most at risk of fuel poverty. Local council officials make an initial visit to the householder to assess eligibility before passing the case to a Housing Executive Grants Office for a technical inspection to determine what energy efficiency improvement measures are needed for the property.

The Housing Executive has reviewed the Affordable Warmth process to ensure cases are dealt with quickly. However, it is important to note that some aspects of the process are outside the control of the Department and the Housing Executive; for example:

- householders have to provide information confirming eligibility to the councils and to the Housing Executive;
- where the property is in the private rented sector, the landlord has to be identified and contacted;
- contractors have to be contacted and appointed;

Building Control Officers have to certify completed works.

Where all eligibility documents have been received and are satisfactory, it takes the Housing Executive 4 to 5 weeks to issue a formal approval. This process involves:

- checking that the documents are correct;
- assessing eligibility;
- making an appointment and conducting a technical inspection of the property;
- producing a costed schedule of works identifying the approved measures.

When works have been completed, and all payment documents have been received, it takes the Housing Executive 2 to 3 weeks to check the payment documents and process the payment.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

AQW 3805/16-21

Mr Steven Agnew
Green Party
North Down

Tabled Date: 22/09/2016
Answered On Date: 07/10/2016
Priority Written: No

Question:

To ask the Minister for Communities to detail the number of individuals in the last year that, having had work carried out through the Affordable Warmth Scheme, have contacted the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to express concern about sub-standard work.

Answer:

In the financial year 2015/2016, a total of 5,074 energy efficiency measures were installed in 3,057 homes under the Affordable Warmth Scheme. In total four individuals have contacted the Housing Executive to express concern about sub-standard work carried out through the Affordable Warmth Scheme.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

AQW 3803/16-21

Mr Steven Agnew
Green Party
North Down

Tabled Date: 22/09/2016
Answered On Date: 11/10/2016
Priority Written: No

Question:

To ask the Minister for Communities whether individuals availing of the Affordable Warmth Scheme will have access to a legal route of recourse without the input of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive if the work undertaken is substandard.

Answer:

I have been advised by the Housing Executive that all of the grants they process are directed to privately owned properties and that the householder is responsible for identifying and appointing a contractor to carry out the works. As a facilitator to the contract between the applicant and the contractor, not a party, the Executive is careful to ensure that it does not act in such a way as to be seen to be a party to the contract. For example it will therefore never recommend a specific contractor to an applicant.

To assist grants applicants the Housing Executive has compiled lists of contractors who are willing to carry out works under various grants and makes these lists available to applicants. In compiling these lists the Housing Executive fully consulted its internal Legal Department and the lists include very clear information and disclaimers. Applicants are therefore aware that the list is not an "approved" list, that it is a matter for the applicant as to which contractor to engage, and that they do so at entirely their own risk. It is made clear that the Housing Executive cannot verify the competence or otherwise of contractors who wished to be included on the list.

As far as possible the Housing Executive offers some protections to grants applicants. In the case of the larger Renovation and Disabled Facilities Grants where the value of the works exceeds £5,000 the applicant must select a contractor who is a member of a recognised contractor warranty scheme. A Warranty Bond must be provided and is paid for by the Housing Executive. This Bond offers protection to applicants in the event of a contractor going out of business part way through the work or if unsatisfactory work is carried out.

In the case of smaller grants such as the Affordable Warmth Scheme the payment for the grant is usually assigned to the contractor by the applicant. The Housing Executive will not make such payment until a) a Certificate of Satisfactory Completion for the works has been received from Building Control and b) they have been provided with a range of safety certificates such as a Gas Safe Certificate for gas heating and an Oftec Certificate for Oil heating where applicable. In the case of Cavity wall insulation Building Control departments will not issue a Certificate of Satisfactory Completion until they have received a CIGA Certificate for the works. All of this provides reasonable assurance that the works have been carried out to an acceptable standard.

Outside of these assurances if subsequent latent defects do occur the applicant must address them through the most appropriate legal procedure available.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

AQW 4306/16-21

Ms Caoimhe Archibald
Sinn Féin
East Londonderry

Tabled Date: 29/09/2016
Answered On Date: 12/10/2016
Priority Written: No

Question:

To ask the Minister for Communities to detail the (i) number of applications; (ii) number of approvals; and (iii) types of improvements carried out through the Affordable Warmth Scheme in the Causeway Coast and Glens council area for 2015-16.

Answer:

In 2015/16, the Affordable Warmth Scheme first full year of operation, Causeway Coast and Glens council submitted 1,058 referrals. A total of 491 households received formal approval from the Housing Executive to install energy efficiency measures, at a value of £2.2m. Those measures included heating installation or boiler replacement, window replacement or repair, cavity wall insulation including top-up and extraction and refill where appropriate, loft insulation top up and draught proofing. As the scheme has progressed into its second year the income assessment process has improved, resulting in a better ratio of 'approvals issued' to 'referrals made'.