


<b>Commissioner Decision Report</b> 17 <sup>th</sup> January 2017	 <b>TOWER HAMLETS</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Aman Dalvi Corporate Director, Development and Renewal	<b>Classification:</b> Unrestricted
<b>WARMTH Project Funding</b>	

<b>Originating Officer(s)</b>	Jonathan Taylor
<b>Wards affected</b>	All
<b>Key Decision?</b>	No
<b>Community Plan Theme</b>	A Great Place to Live

### Executive Summary

The LBTH Sustainable Development team is working with Groundwork London (GWL) to deliver the 'Warm Homes Agency Referral Method to deliver Health outcomes' (WARMTH) programme that tackles fuel poverty.

GWL has been awarded money by the British Gas Energy Trust (BGET) to deliver a health/housing programme across London boroughs. The referrals network and home energy efficiency visits are a unique service offered by GWL. GWL has allocated £25,000 to deliver the WARMTH programme in Tower Hamlets throughout 2016.

Home visits commenced in August 2016 and are due to be completed at the end of December 2016 and to date 135 visits have been delivered.

The project is facilitating the delivery of the LBTH adopted Fuel Poverty Strategy and the sustainable development team has committed to extend the programme to March 2017 by match funding the £25,000.

Proposed funding for the project extension is to come from held in reserves for the development of an energy co-operative to help council tenants and residents in fuel poverty.

The WARMTH programme is being delivered through a Green Doctor Service to residents of Tower Hamlets and will deliver 346 (173 from GWL budget and 173 and from LBTH budget) home visits to some of the borough's most vulnerable residents.

## **Recommendations:**

The Commissioners are recommended to:

Approve the grant funding of £25,000 to continue the delivery of the WARMTH programme through Q4 2016/2017.

### **1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS**

- 1.1 The WARMTH programme will be delivered through a Green Doctor Service to residents of Tower Hamlets. The programme will deliver 346 home visits to some of the borough's most vulnerable residents and also set up a single point of contact for a health and housing referral service for people living in cold homes.
- 1.2 It is important for households to receive energy efficiency advice and training to ensure they are getting the most out of their home energy systems. Through the Green Doctors, the residents receive free home energy efficiency advice, which could save households between 10-15% on their energy bills. Benefits of the project include:
  - Creation of a referral system to enable vulnerable residents to access support
  - Providing access to cheaper energy through energy switching options
  - Home energy efficiency improvements undertaken to properties
  - Identification of additional grants and services that the residents can access
  - Financial and home income maximisation advice
  - Improvements to home environment and reducing financial pressures on heating their homes

### **2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 2.1 Groundwork London has been awarded money directly by the British Gas Energy Trust (BGET) to deliver this Programme across several boroughs. Therefore, this is a unique opportunity with no alternative option.

### **3. DETAILS OF REPORT**

- 3.1 The WARMTH programme will be delivered through a Green Doctor Service to residents of Tower Hamlets. The programme will deliver 346 home visits to some of the borough's most vulnerable residents and also set up a single point of contact for a health and housing referral service for people living in cold homes.
- 3.2 The visits are a holistic approach to tackling fuel poverty as they combat the 3 main causes;

- Low income
- Cold homes
- High expenditure

3.3 These three areas will be tackled by a number of interventions including;

- Offering financial and debt advice
- Fitting small energy efficiency measures during the visit and referring back to LBTH for larger measures such as boiler replacements and insulation
- Lowering outgoings via our fuel switching service and behavioural advice.

3.4 The single point of contact referral service will be facilitated through GWL's database that is both a referral pathway and a method to join up services on offer in the borough.

#### *PROJECT REFERRALS ANALYSIS*

3.5 The LBTH Sustainable Development team are facilitating a co-ordinated approach to developing a project referral system with the colleagues from the Public Health, GP surgeries, NHS (Royal London Hospital) and Bromley by Bow centre.

3.6 The desire is for the visits to be exclusively for residents of Tower Hamlets who live in vulnerable households with multiple health issues, exacerbated by cold and damp environments.

3.7 Whilst the LBTH Sustainable Development Team holds considerable data on the energy performance of dwellings to identify those at risk of fuel poverty, the project is aiming to filter this data to be relevant for vulnerable households with multiple health issues.

3.8 The Sustainable Development Team is working to obtain the relevant data on residents with multiple health impacts to ensure the most relevant residents are included within the proposed 346 home visits.

#### *HOME VISITS*

3.9 GWL has a group of Energy Doctors who are City and Guilds - Domestic Energy Assessor or City and Guilds Energy Awareness qualified. The Green Doctors are also Disclosure of Scotland checked.

3.10 The home visits are up to two hours long and include time spent assessing the property and providing advice on home energy management to the resident, installing small energy efficiency measures and addressing energy related issues. The Green Doctors will carry out a low level health check and

assess levels of fuel poverty.

- 3.11 There is a comprehensive list of areas that are investigated during the visit in addition to the initial checks about the resident and the property, such as the fabric and insulation levels as well as appliances and services. The Green Doctors will look at appliances, controls and fittings etc. and also record where there is a potential for improvement works and advise on relevant aspects accordingly.
- 3.12 The Green Doctors collect information about fuel poverty, fuel debt, fire safety and health & wellbeing, and also provide information, where appropriate, about services that may be available like befriending services, digital inclusion and help with fuel debt.
- 3.13 The information is used to make relevant referrals where appropriate and progress is recorded and fed back to the Sustainable Development Team where measurable outcomes can be recorded. An example of the benefits of the delivered measures (£ savings and CO2 reduction) is presented in tables 3.2 and 3.3.

#### *BENEFITS TO THE BOROUGH'S RESIDENTS*

- 3.14 It is important for households to receive energy efficiency advice and training to ensure they are getting the most out of their home energy systems. Through the Green Doctors, the residents will receive free home energy efficiency advice, which is anticipated to save households between 10-15% on their energy bills. Benefits of the project will include:
- Creation of a referral system to enable vulnerable residents to access support
  - Providing access to cheaper energy through energy switching options
  - Home energy efficiency improvements undertaken to properties
  - Identification of additional grants and services that the residents can access
  - Financial and home income maximisation advice
  - Improvements to home environment and reducing financial pressures on heating their homes

#### *PROJECT PROGRAMME*

- 3.15 GWL has been awarded money by the British Gas Energy Trust (BGET) to deliver the programme across London boroughs. The referrals network and home energy efficiency visits are a unique service offered by GWL.

- 3.16 GWL is working in partnership with multiple local referring agencies to deliver an in-home energy and wellbeing visit, giving financial and health advice to some of the Borough's most vulnerable households. Currently they are working in partnership with eleven London boroughs. Groundwork has allocated £25,000 to deliver the WARMTH programme in Tower Hamlets throughout 2016.
- 3.17 The GWL proposal for LBTH was received in May 2016 and we have undertaken the process of making links with council departments and local organisations, data gathering, analysis and establishing the referral network to deliver the project.
- 3.18 The project is facilitating the delivery of the LBTH adopted Fuel Poverty Strategy and the Energy and Sustainability Service aims to extend the programme from December 2016 until March 2017 by match funding the £25,000. This will ensure that residents who are in need of assistance will have continued access to the service over the winter months.
- 3.19 Proposed funding for the project extension is to come from held in reserves for the development of an energy co-operative to help council tenants and residents in fuel poverty.

#### *AREAS IDENTIFIED AND PUBLICITY*

- 3.20 Initially the Sustainable Development Team analysed a list of the worst performing domestic dwellings from a Tower Hamlets Energy Performance Certificate database to identify the properties that are owned by Tower Hamlets Homes.
- 3.21 This information was then cross referenced with data from Northgate, a Tower Hamlets Homes housing management software, which identified residents who have a disability, impairment or health issue and selected those blocks for GWL to visit.
- 3.22 The eligibility criteria for receiving a home visit from GWL is based on:
- Physical disability
  - Long term illness
  - Mental health issues
  - Pregnant
  - Child under 5 and on low income
  - Low income
  - Over 65
  - Aged 16-25 on low income

- 3.23 In addition to the data analysis the project has actively targeted residents with existing health issues and in receipt of the flu jab. This has been undertaken through close working with the Mission Practice on Cambridge Heath Road who gave the opportunity to put a WARMTH leaflet in with all the flu letters that were sent out to over 65's (approx. 400 letters in the E1 and E2 postcode area). In addition to boost referrals, a presence was made at the walk-in clinic on Saturday 24th and 25th October at that Practice to sign up people directly and give them the chance to ask any questions.
- 3.24 Other avenues for referrals are also being explored through increased publicity of the project. It is intended that a similar approach is taken to identifying the worst performing homes under housing association management and offer visits.
- 3.25 The programme has been advertised in the September issue of Our EastEnd using a quarter page advert and a link into referrals is on the LBTH website.
- 3.26 We are also working with colleagues in the Environmental Health Team and at the NHS to obtain further referrals. The GWL have created good links with local GP's and advice on the project is to be circulated with the flu vaccination programme.
- 3.27 GWL is also actively networking in the borough with different organisations through resident panels and various events including Tower Hamlets Public Health workshops. They are also working with the social prescribing service run by the Bromley by Bow Centre to create a link with doctors to refer patients to the programme.

### *PROGRESS*

- 3.28 A summary of the category of people who have received visits, as well as an example of interventions and potential savings is set out in Tables 3.1 to 3.3 below.

*Table 3.1 – Residents Visited*

Older person (over 65)	<b>47</b>
Low income	<b>90</b>
Have one or more children under 5 and on low income	<b>23</b>
Disability or health issue	<b>49</b>
Private resident	<b>17</b>
Social tenant	<b>109</b>
Long term illness, health problem or disability which limits daily activities	<b>50</b>

Table 3.2 – Interventions Installed Financial and CO2 Savings per annum

MEASURES	No.	Annual Savings	
		Savings (£)	Savings (kg CO2e)
Hot water cylinder jackets installed	1	135	594
Light bulbs installed	161	483	1,771
Power-down devices installed	25	150	500
Radiator panels installed	89.5	90	448
Draught proofing strips - doors installed	29	77	309
Draught proofing strips - windows installed	0	0	0
Door brushes installed	21	56	224
Letterbox brushes installed	7	19	75
Energy monitors	72		
Shower heads installed	50	850	3,600
Save-a-flush bags installed	20		
Shower timers installed	21	105	420
Swivel taps installed	32		
Tap aerators installed	10		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>538.5</b>	<b>1,965</b>	<b>7,941</b>

Table 3.3 – Behavioural Change Financial and CO2 Savings per annum

Actions	N.	Annual Savings	
		Savings (£)	Savings (kg CO2e)
Setting Washing Machine at 30 degrees rather than Higher Temperatures	22	132	440
Only Boiling as much as you need	46	322	1,104
Turning off your Lights	64	576	1,984
Line Dry in Summer, rather than using the Tumble Dryer	16	288	1,024
Reducing Washing Machine Cycles per week by 1	18	90	288
Reducing Dishwasher Cycles per week by 1	1	9	33
Avoid Standby from Computer Equipment	71	426	1,420
Replace a Traditional Bulb with an Energy Saving Bulb	93	279	1,023
Taking 1min off your Shower	33	165	660
Replacing 1 Bath a week with a Shower	7	28	133
Washing up in a Bowl rather than a Flowing Tap	37	1,147	4,958
Turn my thermostat down	13	1,118	4,602
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>421</b>	<b>4,580</b>	<b>17,669</b>

Client signed up to Warm Homes Discount	23
Client signed up to Priority Service Register	31

#### **4. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**

- 4.1 This report seeks the approval of the Commissioners to release funding of £25,000, payable as a grant, to Groundwork London (GWL) to extend the 'Warm Homes Agency Referral Method to deliver Health Outcomes' (WARMTH) programme that tackles fuel poverty. The initial project was undertaken by GWL with funding secured from the British Gas Energy Trust.
- 4.2 The proposed programme extension will utilise £25,000 of the resources of £30,000 that were previously allocated for the development of an energy co-operative to help council tenants and residents in fuel poverty. These funds are currently held in an earmarked reserve.

#### **5. LEGAL COMMENTS**

- 5.1 Whilst there is no strict legal definition of grant, a grant is in the nature of a gift and is based in trust law. However, grants are often given for a purpose so it is sometimes unclear whether a grant has been made or the arrangement is a contract for services. A contract for services is not a grant and therefore, an arrangement which is classified as a contract for services would be outside the remit of the power conferred upon the commissioners to approve.
- 5.2 There will be many grants which are made by the Council for the purpose of discharging one of its statutory duties. However, as a grant is in the nature of a gift, it is considered there must be some element of discretion on the part of the Council as grantor as to whom a grant is made to and whether this is made. If the Council is under a legal duty to provide a payment to a specific individual or organisation, and cannot lawfully elect not to make such a payment, then that should not amount to a grant.
- 5.3 In this case, the Council is not under a legal duty to provide this payment. The payment of £25,000 is discretionary and therefore considered to be a grant.
- 5.4 The power of the commissioners to make decisions in relation to grants arises from directions made by the Secretary of State on 17 December 2014 pursuant to powers under sections 15(5) and 15(6) of the Local Government Act 1999 (the Directions). Paragraph 4(ii) and Annex B of the Directions together provide that, until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, the Council's functions in relation to grants will be exercised by appointed Commissioners, acting jointly or severally. This is subject to an exception in relation to grants made under section 24 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, for the purposes of section 23 of that Act (disabled facilities grant).
- 5.5 To the extent that the Commissioners are exercising powers which would otherwise have been the Council's, there is a need to ensure that the Council has the power to make the grant in question. In that regard, the proposed grants are supported by the Council's general power of competence. Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 gives the Council a general power of competence



to do anything that individuals generally may do, subject to specified restrictions and limitations imposed by other statutes.

- 5.6 The Council has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. This is referred to as the Council's best value duty. Best Value considerations have also been addressed in paragraph 7 of the report.
- 5.7 When making decisions, the Council must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful conduct under the Equality Act 2010, the need to advance equality of opportunity and the need to foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not (the public sector equality duty). A proportionate level of equality analysis is required to discharge the duty and information relevant to this is contained in the One Tower Hamlets section of the report.

## **6. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS**

- 6.1. The proposals will help contribute to the community plan objective of creating a 'healthy and supportive community' through providing improvements to residents' health through improving their circumstances and surroundings. The project will provide eligible residents in Tower Hamlets energy efficiency improvements enabling cheaper fuel bills and an increased comfort of living.

## **7. BEST VALUE (BV) IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The proposals are to match fund the finances allocated from the British Gas Energy Trust (BGET) to deliver the WARMTH programme in Tower Hamlets. The measures installed and advice provided will have a long term benefit in reducing residents fuel bills and improving comfort of the dwelling.

## **8. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT**

- 8.1 Tower Hamlets produces the third highest level of total carbon emissions of the 33 Local Authorities in Greater London. The proposals will contribute to delivering CO2 emission reductions in the Borough as well as reducing fuel bills for residents.

## **9. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 All Groundwork London Green Doctors are Disclosure of Scotland certified and carry identification. The service was initially advertised by flyer dropping, following this exercise, residents called to make appointments. Residents also have the ability to verify the service with LBTH.

## **10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 There are no crime and disorder implications.

## **11. SAFEGUARDING IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 There are no safeguarding implications.

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### **Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents**

#### **Linked Report**

- NONE

#### **Appendices**

- NONE

#### **Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012**

- NONE

#### **Officer contact details for documents:**

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