

Report to: Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change

Date of meeting: 13 December 2022

By: Assistant Chief Executive

Title: Partnerships for People and Place project: award of grant

Purpose: To seek the agreement of the Lead Member to enter into a series of grant agreements in relation to the delivery of the Partnerships for People and Place project

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change is recommended to:

- 1) **Agree the Stage 3 delivery plan for the Partnerships for People and Place Project as set out in the report;**
- 2) **Approve the Council procuring a contract for delivery of stage three of the Partnerships for People and Place project (as detailed in paragraphs 2.3 to 2.6 of this report);**
- 3) **Agree to use funding from the Partnership for People and Place Project to award one or more grants to organisations that are already supporting vulnerable people through the winter months as set out in paragraph 2.8 of this report;**
- 4) **Delegate authority to the Assistant Chief Executive to:**
 - a) **approve the award of the contract following the procurement process;**
 - b) **agree the terms of any grant agreements to be entered into as well as approving, in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer, the value of the grant to be awarded and to who it is awarded; and**
 - c) **take all other actions necessary to give effect to the recommendations in this report.**

1 Background

- 1.1 In July 2021, East Sussex County Council was one of 34 local authorities invited by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) to fund a place-based project in their area as part of the Partnerships for People and Place (PfPP) programme. To be considered, the project needed to demonstrate joined-up working between the local community and local and central government departments.
- 1.2 The overarching aim of the PfPP programme is to test a new, collaborative approach to policy design and delivery through better co-ordination within and between central government and local places, and to determine whether this approach improves efficiency and outcomes of place-based policy.
- 1.3 East Sussex County Council was one of 13 local authorities shortlisted for the programme in November 2021. Our selected proposal was to undertake a project with partners from the voluntary and community sectors focusing on tackling fuel poverty and energy efficiency within the private rented sector in Hastings and St Leonards. This proposal was co-designed by officers from our environment and Public Health teams and officers from Hastings Borough Council's climate change and housing renewal teams, in association with partners from the voluntary and community sector. The interventions identified through this process

should secure improvements to health and environmental outcomes and generate and retain value locally.

- 1.4 The focus on improving energy efficiency and fuel poverty in the private rented sector was selected as it meets the key criteria for PfPP and supports our corporate work on climate change. The project can build on existing interventions, has links to central government priorities, and provides opportunities to overcome some of the barriers caused by a lack of joined up working. These barriers include siloed working, the stop-go nature of many programmes, including those funded by central government, and that levers to drive change are held by different organisations at different levels (national vs local). Unblocking these barriers could lead to a more sustained programme of activity which achieves long-term benefits to households living in fuel poverty and for the environment.
- 1.5 The PfPP project requires a focus on a 'hyper-local' area, such as a small number of wards. Castle, Central St. Leonards, and Gensing wards were selected as the target areas for our proposal because data shows that these wards have a large proportion of privately rented accommodation compared to national and local averages, high levels of households living in fuel poverty, a high proportion of homes with poor energy efficiency (with an Energy Performance Certificate score of either F or G), and a higher than average proportion of residents who have a limiting long-term illness or disability. It is anticipated that learning from this project will be applicable to other areas across East Sussex.

2 Supporting information

Progress Update

- 2.1 Stage One: Following the Lead Member decision in June 2022, Citizens Advice 1066 were awarded a grant to deliver the Stage One research and engagement exercise with tenants, landlords and housing specialists across the three target wards. The aim was to better understand barriers to making energy efficiency improvements in properties, and explore the impact that housing standard has on health and wellbeing. The research consisted of a series of focus groups, interviews and surveys, with a range of different types of landlords, housing specialists and tenants. The findings were analysed by an academic partner from Canterbury Christchurch University and grouped into themes. This was compiled into a report, to be presented at the Stage Two co-design workshops by Citizens Advice 1066.
Stage Two Co-design workstream: Four, half-day, workshops with 15-20 participants from central government, local government and the voluntary sector were held. Participants were asked to analyse the responses gathered during Stage One and work collaboratively to explore which barriers to energy efficiency could be tackled through the PfPP project. A long list of potential solutions was developed to tackle the barriers, which was refined to include those that could be targeted within the PfPP project.
Stage Two Behaviour Change workstream: Dr Paul Chadwick from UCL Centre for Behaviour Change has led the behaviour change workstream with colleagues from Public Health. Partners from central government, local government and the voluntary sector have undertaken three workshops to design interventions to tackle these target behaviours that we aim to change through the PfPP project:
 - Tenant independently makes contact with Affordable Warmth Scheme to explore options to improve energy efficiency of their rented property; and
 - Private landlord acts to respond positively to a request from a council-supported Affordable Warmth Scheme requesting a financial contribution for home energy efficiency upgrades for a fuel poor tenant – and provides permission to proceed.

The proposed interventions will be tested with tenants and landlords that were involved in the Stage One research and will then be operationalised from January 2023, using Behaviour Change techniques. They will run in tandem with the pilot interventions from the co-design workstream.

From April 2023, the impact of the operationalised interventions will be monitored and evaluated, to see if there has been a change in tenants' and landlords' interactions with the Warm Home Check service. The changes that are implemented from the Behaviour Change

workstream will continue beyond the lifetime of the Partnerships for People and Place project. A further update and any necessary request for approval for the implementation will be taken to the Local Place Board in January 2023.

- 2.2 Stage Three Delivery Plan: Following the co-design workshops, a proposed delivery plan has been prepared and is recommended by the Local Place Board. The proposed delivery plan includes several different workstreams which aim to tackle multiple barriers to making energy efficiency improvements, as identified in the Stage One research. The plan aims to combine policy focussed benefits with immediate practical support. Data and insight will be gathered for Central Government to help inform future work, policy setting and funding allocation around fuel poverty and energy efficiency, whilst support will be given to provide immediate and practical benefit to residents' living conditions and warmth this winter. The proposed workstreams are set out below. It is proposed that we procure an external provider to deliver the workstreams in paragraphs 2.3 to 2.6. The estimated value of the contract is below the applicable threshold [under the Light Touch Regime] and therefore a fully regulated procurement is not required; however, it is proposed that a competitive process is conducted in accordance with the Council's procurement and contract standing orders.
- 2.3 Engagement and home assessment: The first workstream will require the chosen provider to conduct an engagement exercise in the 'target area' (a cluster of areas within the three wards made up of a small number of neighbouring streets that contain a mix of property and tenure types). All residents in the target area will be asked to complete an attitudinal survey, and low-income households will be offered an energy-efficiency home assessment, funded through the contract (i.e. at no cost to the resident). Each household that participates in the home assessment will receive a report highlighting where home improvements could be made to improve the energy efficiency, warmth and EPC rating of their home. It will also demonstrate how improvements could impact on bills and carbon emissions and benefit living conditions and health. A target of 100 to 150 home assessments, covering a mix of property types and tenures has been set by the funders.
- 2.4 Support to apply for funding post-assessment: The same provider will work with residents after their home assessments to explain what the report shows, and will assist them to find out about and apply for available funding to cover the cost of some of the work. It is intended that the residents will be shown which improvements would be necessary to bring their property up to future regulation standard. It is anticipated that there will be suggested home improvements that are not supported by any funding streams, the information identifying these gaps will be fed back to Central Government partners to help inform their policy formulations and funding allocations. This will become particularly important if patterns emerge that show recurring suggested home improvements where there is no funding. Quick wins will be identified, so that residents can make inexpensive home improvements themselves.
- 2.5 Immediate home improvements: It is also proposed that up to £200 be provided to each property that has a home assessment, so that the chosen provider can immediately make some of the smaller and quicker energy efficiency improvements for the occupier of the property. The interventions will vary depending on individual need, but may include radiator reflectors, boiler servicing, pipe lagging and draught-proofing among other things. As part of the procurement, we will ask our delivery partner to indicate the cost to install these measures.
- 2.6 Signposting to available support: We propose that all residents that the provider has contact with are signposted to local support services and information that will help them to keep warm and well this winter, whilst also improving their energy efficiency. We are working with Public Health and local partners to ensure that the information the provider signposts to is valuable, current and easily accessible. The information will suggest simple behaviour changes that residents can make to increase their energy efficiency and warmth, and will direct them to local services such as food banks, warm spaces and grants and support that they may be eligible for. Referrals to statutory services will be made if there are safeguarding concerns or the property is in a state of disrepair.
- 2.7 Local grant top-up: We are working with the Council's Policy Manager for the Third Sector to explore the best ways to provide a more immediate benefit to residents this winter. It is proposed that funding be allocated via one or more grants to existing organisations within the

voluntary and community sector that are already delivering fuel or energy efficiency works and with whom we are already engaged with through the Household Support Fund. This would be entirely separate from the contract that is to be procured for the other workstreams set out above.

The Household Support Fund is provided by the Department for Work and Pensions to East Sussex County Council, to support vulnerable individuals over the winter months. This support is being delivered by District and Borough Councils, voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations.

Residents who qualify can get vouchers to help buy food and financial payments to help with essential bills. The fund is also providing extra resources for the Warm Home Check service, for foodbanks, voluntary organisations and for Citizens Advice.

In the Hastings and St Leonards areas, the Household Support Fund is currently being used to deliver a range of interventions to vulnerable residents. Examples of what the money is spent on include paying for energy bills, providing food vouchers, supplying warmth packs and purchasing essential household items.

This element of the project would address concerns raised by local partners at the co-design workshops about the immediate needs of residents in the area.

- 2.8 Continued benefit beyond the end of the project: ESCC's Policy Manager for the Third Sector is advising on the best way to provide lasting benefits for individuals and the community beyond the end of the project in March 2023.

By working with voluntary organisations and internal ESCC departments, we will maximise benefits to residents, as voluntary organisations, Adult Social Care, Public Health and Children's Services may continue to support people identified during this project beyond March 2023.

Findings from this project will also be used to inform ongoing work within ESCC and the voluntary sector. For example, the behaviour change workstream of the PfPP project will inform the way that the Warm Home Check service operates and is promoted.

3 Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

- 3.1 The Local Place Board and Local Place Working Group have approved our suggested delivery plan for stage three of the Partnerships for People and Place project.
- 3.2 The Lead Member is asked to note the stage 3 Delivery Plan set out in section 2 and to approve the Council procuring a contract to deliver the workstreams identified in paragraphs 2.3 to 2.6 above. To ensure that the measures can be delivered within the timescales for the PfPP Project, the Lead Member is recommended to delegate authority to the Assistant Chief Executive to approve the award of the contract following the procurement exercise.
- 3.3 The Lead Member is also recommended to approve the Council entering into a series of grant agreements with local partners as set out in paragraph 2.7 to enable the project to address the concerns raised by local partners at the co-design workshops about the immediate needs of residents in the area, and with a view to providing continued support to residents beyond the end of the project.
- 3.4 To ensure effective administration of the grants, it is also recommended that the Lead Member delegate authority to the Assistant Chief Executive to (a) agree the recipients of the grants and, in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer, the amount to be awarded to each and to which organisations the grant be paid; (b) approve the terms of the grant agreement to be entered into, and (c) to take all other actions necessary to give effect to the recommendations in this report.

Assistant Chief Executive

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LOCAL MEMBERS:

Councillor Godfrey Daniel and Councillor Trevor Webb

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None