

Report to: Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change

Date of meeting: 24 July 2023

By: Assistant Chief Executive

Title: Partnerships for People and Place – Update

Purpose: To update on the progress with Stage 3 of the Partnerships for People and Place Project and to seek approval to accept additional grant funding

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- 1) Note the progress of Stage 3 of the Partnerships for People and Place Programme;
- 2) Approve the acceptance by the Council of an additional £100,000 of grant funding from central government; and
- 3) Agree to use the additional funding to provide a grant to Citizen’s Advice 1066.

1 Background

1.1 East Sussex County Council (the ‘Council’) was one of 13 local authorities shortlisted to take part in the Partnerships for People and Place (‘PfPP’) Programme.

1.2 The Council’s PfPP project sought to design and pilot ways of more effectively tackling fuel poverty and poor energy efficiency. The PfPP programme has a ‘hyper-local’ focus, and so our project has focussed primarily on three wards in Hastings and St. Leonards: Castle, Central St. Leonards, and Gensing. The focus on these wards was due to clear statistics that there is a large proportion of privately rented accommodation, high levels of households living in fuel poverty, a high proportion of homes with poor energy efficiency and a higher than average proportion of residents who have a limiting long-term illness or disability.

1.3 The Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change agreed the Stage 3 Delivery Plan for the Council’s PfPP project at his decision making meeting on 13 December 2022. This included procurement of a third party provider to deliver an energy efficiency home assessment and engagement service, as well as behaviour change work with landlords and tenants in the target wards and the provision of one or more grants to existing organisations within the voluntary and community sector that are already delivering fuel or energy efficiency work in the targeted wards.

2 Supporting information – Progress Update

Energy Efficiency Home Assessment and Engagement Contract

2.1 The Council ran a Request for Quotation procurement exercise between December 2022 and January 2023 to seek a third party provider for the energy efficiency home assessment and engagement contract. The contract was ultimately awarded to RetrofitWorks (the ‘Service Provider’) and the services commenced on 27 February 2023. The contract provided for 150 home assessments and Whole House Plans, together with up

to £200 worth of small measures per property (funded by the PfPP project). In addition, the contract included the provision of advice and guidance to residents about how they can make their home more energy efficient and also support to help them access any available government funding to cover or contribute to the cost of any larger scale improvement works that may be required for their home.

2.2 Since then, 3481 properties within the three target wards have received letters notifying them of the Council's PfPP project, and informing them that the Service Provider will be visiting properties within their area on the Council's behalf. The letter invited residents to take part in an online attitudinal survey and offered (subject to income-based eligibility criteria) a free home assessment worth £500 and the possibility of small energy efficiency improvements being carried out within their home. Paper copies of the survey were also made available to residents upon request. By the time the survey closed on 2 July 2023, 100 survey responses were received by the Council (87 online and 13 paper responses).

2.3 The door-knocking phase of the PfPP Project completed at the end of June 2023. 150 Home Assessments and Whole House Plans were completed by the Service Provider. Minor measures were carried out at 67 properties, which accounts for all those where minor measures were needed and the resident gave consent for the works to be completed.

Behaviour Change Focus Groups

2.4 In March, the PfPP Project Team delivered two focus groups alongside Public Health colleagues. The workshops were held with tenants and landlords to gather feedback on proposed changes to the Warm Home Check Service's communications. This involved tenants and landlords who were engaged with the Stage 1 research as well as some additional participants that were recruited specifically for these groups (nine tenants and six landlords). In addition, both focus groups had attendees from local government.

2.5 The aim of the tenant focus group was to test nine different versions of a new flyer for the Warm Home Check service. Participants were also asked to feedback on a series of images and logos, the use of QR codes and some different styles of wording. The purpose of the landlord focus group was to test the existing Warm Home Check letter compared to a new letter prepared by the PfPP Project Team which incorporates behaviour change theory and techniques. The new letter was inarguably more popular with both landlords and local government colleagues.

2.6 Feedback from tenants and landlords from the Stage 1 and Stage 3 research and from the Stage 2 workshops has been used to create new leaflets to raise awareness of our Warm Home Check service among residents. A new letter encouraging landlords to take part and to provide the landlord contribution for improvement work is being finalised. These will be used as part of our Autumn campaign.

Grants to the voluntary and community sector

2.7 Following the Lead Member's decision on 13 December 2022 to agree to use funding from the PfPP project to award one or more grants to organisations that are already supporting vulnerable people through the winter months, the Council identified Citizens Advice 1066 ('CA1066') as a suitable organisation to deliver this aspect of the project. CA1066 were already delivering measures through the Council's Household Support Fund and elements of that work were closely aligned with the aims of PfPP.

2.8 The Council entered into a grant agreement with CA1066 on 14 April 2023 for £40,000. With this grant, CA1066 are able to deliver targeted measures, such as the

provision of fuel vouchers and winter warmth packs, as well as support with utility bills and emergency grants to residents within the target wards.

2.9 Through the close liaison with colleagues at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero as part of the PfPP Programme, the Council has been offered the opportunity to receive an additional £100,000 worth of grant funding for delivery of the PfPP project, with agreement for the funding period to be extended to the end of the financial year 2023/24 to ensure that funding is available during the winter months when residents in the target ward are most likely to experience the impact of fuel poverty.

2.10 The Council has liaised with CA1066 who have confirmed that they could use this funding to deliver more of the measures identified within the grant agreement as well as holistic support, such as energy and financial capability support to help people build longer-term financial resilience and reduce dependence on vouchers and grants. In addition, the extra funding will enable CA1066 to undertake home visits to vulnerable residents who may otherwise not have been able to access support due to a lack of transport, physical disability, digital exclusion or language or other barriers.

3 Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 The Council has made significant progress in delivering the Stage 3 Delivery Plan since it was agreed by the Lead Member in December 2022. The Lead Member is therefore recommended to note the progress made against the Stage 3 Delivery Plan to date.

3.2 The target wards were selected due to the high levels of households living in fuel poverty, a high proportion of homes with poor energy efficiency and a higher than average proportion of residents who have a limiting long-term illness or disability. The additional grant funding available from central government will enable CA1066 to continue the positive work that they are currently delivering through the PfPP project to tackle fuel poverty in these target wards as well as provide more holistic support to vulnerable residents. The Lead Member is therefore recommended to approve the Council accepting the additional £100,000 funding from central government and agree that this be used to top-up the existing grant with CA1066.

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Local Members: Councillor Daniel and Councillor Webb

Background Documents: None