

Overview and Scrutiny, 31st October 2022

Matters referred to committee – referral from 17th October Council

At the Council meeting on Monday 17th October, Members passed an motion requesting that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee review the issues raised within it and prepare a report on potential next steps for Cabinet’s consideration, taking the council’s budgetary position into account.

The full motion agreed by Council is as follows:

Motion B Amended	Proposed by: Councillor Peter Jeffries	Seconded by: Councillor Alisha Lewis
	<p>Council notes that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Severn Wye Energy Agency estimates around 14,000 Cheltenham households could experience fuel poverty this year.• Cold homes and fuel poverty contribute to the phenomenon of excess winter deaths. England saw an estimated 63,000 excess winter deaths in 2020-21, 10% of which have been directly attributed to fuel poverty. (Institute of Health Equity).• CBC is working with organisations including Vision 21, Severn Wye Energy Agency, Planet Cheltenham and Cheltenham Zero to alleviate fuel poverty, but acknowledges that the work currently planned will not be enough to prevent serious hardship and exacerbate health inequalities, especially in the immediate future.• According to FOfE, 57% of homes in Cheltenham are rated EPC D to G, and as such are not sufficiently energy-efficient. Around 9,300 homes across Cheltenham would benefit significantly from free loft insulation, and around 9,800 would benefit from free cavity wall insulation. The government recommends that all homes be EPC C or above by 2035. To achieve that target, at least 3,621 homes need to be insulated per year to avoid unnecessary cold and financial hardship.• A great deal of housing stock is heritage and privately rented, with property managers failing to upgrade them to prevent damp, mould, heat loss and electrical faults.• This Council declared a ‘Cost of Living Emergency’ in July 2022, and following from the declaration of a ‘Climate Emergency’ in 2019, must aim to end fuel poverty in the area by 2030, in a way that also reduces domestic energy use and helps meet climate commitments. <p>Council recognises the hard work and dedication of its Councillors, officers, and partner organisations in their ongoing work to tackle poverty of all kinds across Cheltenham.</p> <p>This work includes, but is not limited to:</p>	

- The Warm & Well Scheme in partnership with Severn Wye, which provides access to advice and grants to tackle fuel poverty.
- The Award Winning No Child Left Behind scheme, which is supporting the #FeedCheltenham and #WarmCheltenham schemes.
- Cheltenham Borough Council's recent foodbank grants
- Cheltenham Borough Council's super-fast rollout of recent support grants from the Government.
- CBH's tenant support packages, which cover housing rights, benefits access, and debt advice.
- CBH's focus on improving the energy efficiency of poorer performing homes.
- Investment in improving energy efficiency in council homes via the Decarbonisation Fund.
- Homelessness prevention work via the Housing Options Service.
- Partnership working with Citizens Advice providing housing rights advice, which includes private renters.
- The Private Sector Housing team inspecting and raising housing standards in homes across Cheltenham.
- The Council tax support scheme that provides maximum support to our most vulnerable residents.

In acknowledging this work, Council remains ever dedicated to finding new ways to help the people of Cheltenham at this time of crisis. A crisis created, first and foremost, by the negligence of this Westminster Government.

As such, Council resolves that the O&S Committee be requested to review the issues raised in relation to fuel poverty, alongside its ongoing work reviewing our support for deprived areas and prepare a report on potential next steps for Cabinet's consideration. This report should be considered within the bounds of our budgetary position and the powers this authority and our partners hold.