

17 January 2022 at 5.30 pm

Council Chamber, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks



Housing & Health Advisory Committee

At the above stated meeting the attached document was tabled for the following item

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4. Update from Portfolio Holder	(Pages 1 - 4)	

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GREEN HOMES GRANT

Housing and Health Advisory Committee - 17 January 2022

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive, Chief Officer, People and Places

Status: For information

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary: Phase 1a of the Green Homes Grant was offered to local authorities in September 2020. The scheme was designed to allow individual authorities to deliver funding to improve the energy efficiency of residential properties in a way that best suited the needs of their residents and the type of housing stock prevalent in each area. This report details the process, achievements and success of this phase of the Green Homes Grant

This report supports the Key Aim of: delivering a sustainable economy where people can live, work and travel more easily and are empowered to shape their communities.

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Kevin Maskell

Contact Officer: Sharon Donald, Housing Strategy Manager, Ext. 7131

Recommendation to Housing & Health Advisory Committee

- (a) To note the success of Phase 1A of the Green Homes Grant and the benefits the project has provided to a number of residents across Sevenoaks District.

Introduction and Background

- 1 As part of its work programme, the Housing & Health Advisory Committee (HHAC) has requested an update on the Council's Green Homes Grant project.
- 2 The Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery scheme was launched by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy in 2020.
- 3 Phase 1A of the Green Homes Grant was offered to local authorities in September 2020 to help upgrade the energy efficiency of around 10,000 low-income households across all areas in England, with all bids to be assessed on merit and funding allocated accordingly. The Private Sector Housing (PSH) Team deliberated on what measures would deliver maximum benefit to residents and provide value for money.

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- 4 As a non-stock holding authority, the PSH Team reflected on where the funding would be best spent and in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health, resolved to attempt to assist some of the lowest income owner-occupiers living within park homes sites across the district.
- 5 Various measures were considered including ground source heat pumps and PV (Photovoltaic) solar electricity installations. Heat pumps were ruled out due to the limited numbers of potential installs combined with issues around material supply, whilst PV solar installations were not considered suitable as these were considered a secondary measure under the terms of the grant and a bid entirely composed of these would not be considered robust.
- 6 The favoured option was external wall insulation, which had been tried and tested previously and which had offered a good improvement in EPC (Energy Performance Certificate) banding, environmental benefits and financial savings to some of the lowest income owner occupier residents in the district. An added benefit of external wall insulation is that it can effectively extend the life of older park homes.
- 7 It was also recognised at this stage that contact with many elderly residents (three of four parks offered measures have an over 55 policy) would allow PSH to offer other grant funding and services to an often vulnerable group.
- 8 Having made the decision to deliver external wall insulation to park homes the PSH team looked at number of suitable homes and potential uptake to establish the level of funding required.
- 9 Based on the level of uptake from an earlier project undertaken by the PSH Team in 2018/2019 where 20 homes received external wall insulation, funded via s.106 and identifying four park home sites that fell within the scope of Phase 1A (sites that are off the gas network) it was felt that a bid in the region of £700,000 should be submitted.
- 10 The PSH Team were successful in their bid and the Council was awarded £688,190. Eligibility for the scheme would be via low household income (under £30,000 annually) or if the applicant was in receipt of a qualifying benefit.
- 11 The first residents to be contacted were residents of Hedge Barton Park near Penshurst, a rural site, off gas grid and mostly occupied by residents over 60. This site had been the focus of the previous project where some residents made late applications and missed the window of opportunity for funding.
- 12 Application packs were posted to each home that had not received measures from previous funding with 26 applications being returned and 20 of those proving eligible and their homes deemed suitable following survey.
- 13 As work began on Hedge Barton application packs were sent to the next two parks - Pasadena and East Hill Farm Park and then to Wickens Meadow Park, all off gas grid, in rural locations and mostly occupied by residents over 60.

- 14 As anticipated through the process of administering this grant, opportunities to offer other grant funding became possible - in two cases, window or door replacements were offered and a further case meant that additional works were able to be provided that were vital for a resident to access government funding which enabled him to insulate the underfloor area of his home. A fourth resident was helped with hoarding and repair issues in his home whilst another resident was helped with a referral to the Kent Association for the Blind.

Outcome and Success

- 15 As a result, the housing conditions of 48 homes in the Sevenoaks District have been vastly improved, not only offering a benefit in carbon saving (almost a thousand tonnes of CO₂ over the predicted lifespan of the measures) and financial terms (approximately £200,000 saved on heating bills) but also offering a significant improvement in the quality of life and well-being of some of our most vulnerable residents.
- 16 In October this year, the Council's park home insulation project was recognised at the South East Energy Efficiency Awards with two members of the PSH team picking up a 'Highly Commended Award' for their work to help residents and the environment.
- 17 Positive feedback from one resident included the following comments:-
- "I'm so grateful for the improvements. Like most people on my site, my home is heated with bottled gas and right now, the prices are going through the roof. These works will make a big difference to my heating bills this winter. I'm very aware of the environment and greatly concerned about global warming so I am over the moon that I am reducing my carbon footprint too. What's more, the improvements have extended the life of my park home."* These comments and more details of the scheme were included in a recent Inshape article entitled 'Insulate the District'.

Other Options Considered and/or Rejected

- 18 Various measures were considered including ground source heat pumps and PV solar electricity installations. See section 4 for more details. The favoured option was external wall insulation.

Key Implications

Resource (Non-Financial)

The project was managed throughout by existing members of the Private Sector Housing Team.

Financial

None - all works were grant funded

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Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

Due to the limited time available to complete this project (initially 6 months) and the need for specialist contractor a waiver from usual contract procedure rules was sought. Also a factor in this decision was the limited availability of contractors with the appropriate experience, who were enrolled in the certification scheme which was a condition of the Green Homes Grant. A problem exacerbated by the fact local authorities across the country were carrying out similar schemes

A risk assessment matrix supplied by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy was completed by Cornerstone Ltd (the chosen contractor). In addition to the usual areas covered by a document of this type risks associated to the Covid 19 pandemic were comprehensively addressed, processes were introduced to limit contact with residents and as far as possible to mitigate issues with supply of materials.

Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Net Zero Implications

The project has delivered a carbon saving of almost a thousand tonnes of CO2 over the predicted lifespan of the measures.

Conclusions

As a result of the Green Homes Grant project, the housing conditions of 48 homes in the Sevenoaks District have been vastly improved, not only offering a benefit in carbon saving (almost a thousand tonnes of CO2 over the predicted lifespan of the measures) and financial terms (approximately £200,000 saved on heating bills) but also offering a significant improvement in the quality of life and well-being of some of our most vulnerable residents.

Appendices

None.

Background Papers

None

Sarah Robson

Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - People & Places