



Report of:	To:	Date	Item No.
Cllr. Roger Berry, Neighbourhood Services Portfolio Holder	Council	1 December 2011	9(e)

EXECUTIVE REPORT: NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To inform Council of progress on key objectives and the current position on issues within the Neighbourhood Services Portfolio.

2. Current and Future Issues

- 2.1 Summary information is included in Appendix 1 on the following issues:

- Reducing carbon emissions and well prepared for the effects of climate change
- Community Safety
- Helping vulnerable people to live independently in their own homes
- Rossall Coastal Defence Scheme

3. In accordance with Procedure Rule 11.3 any member of Council will be able to ask me a question or make a comment on the contents of my report or on any issue which falls within my area of responsibility. I will respond to any such questions or comments in accordance with procedure Rule 11.5.

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NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER UPDATE – DECEMBER 2011

1. Reducing carbon emissions and well prepared for the effects of climate change

1.1 Wyre Climate Change Strategy 2010-13

The Climate Change Group is currently refreshing the Wyre Climate Change Strategy Action Plan. A workshop was held at the last meeting of the group with discussion focussing particularly upon the delivery of climate change related priorities, projects and measures identified within the Business Plan 2011/12 – 2013/14. Following the workshop contributors across the services have been tasked with the development of key actions for delivery regarding our strategic approach, management of our own estate, communications, climate change adaptation and regarding our role as a service provider.

1.2 Lancashire Insulation Fund

Following on from previous successes in promoting the availability of discounted loft and cavity wall insulation and to deliver against Business Plan targets for tonnes of domestic carbon saved, Wyre Council is working with nine other district councils, Lancashire County Council and the Energy Saving Trust in the promotion of heavily discounted loft and cavity wall insulation for winter 2011/12.

With the Governments Carbon Emission Reduction Target initiative coming to an end in December 2012 this will most likely be the last opportunity for residents to access insulation at such low prices.

Via the Lancashire Insulation Fund residents can get cavity wall insulation installed for as little as £99 and loft insulation installed from £129 for a typical 3 bedroom semi-detached house. The scheme will be promoted Borough-wide and residents should be encouraged to call the Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre on 0800 512 012.

2. Community Safety

2.1 The Community Safety Partnership has been undertaking its Strategic Assessment which aims to set priorities for 2012/13. The Assessment is based on 4 themes:

- Protect and support vulnerable people
- Changing attitudes and behaviours
- Reduce alcohol and drug misuse
- Reduce re-offending

The priorities for 2012/13 have been identified as:

- Substance misuse

- Domestic violence
- Road safety
- Anti-social behaviour
- Violence against the person

Action Plans will now be prepared for each of the priorities.

3. Help vulnerable people to live independently in their own homes

3.1 Affordable Warmth and Seasonal Excess Winter Deaths Event

Working with NHS North Lancashire and Blackpool and Fylde Councils we held a successful event at the Solaris Centre on 13 October 2011. The event was held to coordinate activity to deliver affordable warmth, help prevent the negative health impacts of cold homes and ultimately reduce avoidable seasonal excess winter deaths on the Fylde Coast. The event was very well attended with representatives from Districts, health, Age UK, Ambulance Service, Registered Social Landlords, Home Improvement Agencies, Social Services, Police, Fire and others. A Steering Group has been established to oversee the delivery of a Ten Point Action Plan delivering such actions as:- a pilot project whereby GP practices refer their most vulnerable residents for energy efficiency checks, coordinated marketing and referral processes and income maximisation for vulnerable residents.

3.2 Disabled Facilities Grants

81 Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) have now been completed to a value of £528,000 - our DFG programme is ahead of schedule.

3.3 The Impact of Welfare Reform

Substantial welfare reforms are underway. Less generous Housing Benefit awards including the introduction of Local Housing Allowance caps, a shift to the 30th percentile to calculate local housing benefit rates and single 25 to 34 year olds going from one bed to shared rates will increasingly impact across the country with the result that some tenancies will become unsustainable as tenants fall into debt. Government are predicting increasing pressures upon Housing Options Services as the changes are introduced.

A series of workshop events have recently been hosted by the Department for Communities and Local Government to look at how local authority Housing Options Services can help to mitigate the impact of welfare reform for people at risk of homelessness.

Speakers at the event included representatives from DWP, CLG Specialist Advisors and the National Housing Advisory Service.

Using information provided at the event we are now assessing how best to mitigate against the changes. In particular pro-active joint work will be necessary between the Housing Options and Housing Benefits Services to

understand who will be affected, which tenancies are at most risk of being unsustainable and the tenants at risk of homelessness. This work is now being taken forward.

4. Rossall Coastal Defence Scheme

- 4.1** I am pleased to report that confirmation has recently been received that the Rossall Coastal Defence Improvement Scheme is included within the Environment Agency's indicative programme for 2012/13 to 2016/17. Whilst this in no way guarantees the £60m funding, we are hopeful that the final allocation proposal, which is considered by the Environment Agency Board for approval in February, will allow us to continue to deliver one of our key priorities, namely 'to protect and enhance the coast' as well as reducing the risk of flooding to 7,500 homes.

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