

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

REPORT FOR DELEGATED DECISION

By

**County Councillor Jonathan Wilkinson
Portfolio Holder for Housing & Countryside Services
February 2018**

REPORT AUTHOR: Julian Preece - Private Sector Housing Lead

SUBJECT: Declaration of a Powys ECO Flex 'Statement of Intent' to allow fuel poor private sector households, access to heating upgrades & home energy efficiency improvements

REPORT FOR: Decision

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out Powys County Council's proposal to make a declaration regarding flexible eligibility criteria allowing Powys residents access to funding under the Energy Company Obligation (ECO): Help to Heat programme. It aims to support households living in Powys who are most likely to experience fuel poverty and those vulnerable to the effects of a cold home. The scheme will be subject to available funding and may close at any time.
- 1.2 This report is supported by the following appendices:
- Proposed Powys ECO Flex 'Statement of Intent'
 - Proposed application form allowing clients to access funding
- 1.3 This reports seeks approval to declare and publish a Powys ECO Flex 'Statement of Intent,' (see Appendix A) allowing fuel poor private sector household's access to home energy efficiency improvements, delivered by energy companies and their agents. The scheme will be fully funded via energy suppliers obligated under ECO.

2. Background

- 2.1 Powys County Council welcomes the introduction of ECO Flexible Eligibility and intends to utilise this opportunity for the purposes of reducing fuel poverty within the county. The Council has worked for many years to improve homes across Powys with the aim of increasing energy efficiency and reducing fuel poverty. This fund will be a welcome boost to existing interest free loans available and specifically targets those likely to suffer from fuel poverty and thereby less able/likely to access loans.

- 2.2 Local Authorities, working with energy suppliers obligated under ECO, have an opportunity to extend eligibility criteria for energy efficiency measures offered to households within their area, not covered by existing schemes e.g. the Government NEST scheme.
- 2.3 Funding is only available for private owner occupiers and private rented tenants. Qualification of flexible eligibility in Powys will be restricted to those **in fuel poverty** (spending more than 10% of income on household fuel). Eligibility will be determined by criteria specified within the attached 'Statement of Intent' and will also require a signed declaration by the property owner.
- 2.4 Qualifying energy efficiency measures that may be installed in eligible properties include: new central heating systems, heating upgrades and insulation.
- 2.5 Energy suppliers and/or their agents involved with flexible eligibility surveys and identify works, will be expected to comply with the Data Protection Act. They will need to undertake work in accordance with OFGEM requirements and act in accordance with industry best practice in relation to consumer care and quality standards.
- 2.6 There will be opportunity to derive income for the authority by levying an administration charge for providing the declaration necessary for clients to access the ECO Flexible Eligibility scheme. This will be set at £150 per application and must be paid by the energy supplier and may **NOT** under any circumstances, be passed onto clients receiving assistance via the scheme.
- 2.7 The decision on whether a household receives a measure under ECO flexible eligibility or other ECO funding stream will be made by the **energy supplier** or their **agent/contractor**. Qualification in the statement of intent or the declaration by Powys County Council will **NOT** guarantee installation of any measures, the final decision **rests with the supplier**.
- 2.8 To qualify for assistance under the scheme:
- i) the client must indicate they are in fuel poverty by answering **yes** to the initial qualifying question and sign the declaration at the end of the form.
 - ii) the property must be rated **F or G** on an **EPC** or score **15 points or more** in Table 1 of the attached statement of intent; or
 - iii) the property must have a rating of an **E** on an EPC or have a score between **10 and 14 points** and a member of the household is **vulnerable** and at greater risk due to living in a cold property. Vulnerability is ascertained by answering **yes** to one or more of the situations/conditions listed in Question 2 of the statement of intent and has been based on National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) 2015 guidance on excess winter deaths and illness caused by cold homes.

3. Proposal

- 3.1 It is proposed that Powys Council issues the Powys ECO Flex 'Statement of Intent,' set out in Appendix A regarding flexible eligibility criteria allowing residents in fuel poverty access to funding under the Energy Company Obligation (ECO): Help to Heat programme.

4. Options Considered / Available

- 4.1 The following options are available:
- Option 1** - To make a declaration and publish a 'Statement of Intent' regarding flexible eligibility criteria, allowing Powys residents suffering from fuel poverty, access to funding under the Energy Company Obligation (ECO): Help to Heat programme.
- Option 2** - Not to make a declaration or publish a 'Statement of Intent' regarding flexible eligibility criteria, preventing Powys residents suffering from fuel poverty, access to funding under the Energy Company Obligation (ECO): Help to Heat programme.

5. Preferred Choice and Reasons

- 5.1 Option 1 is the preferred choice. Making a declaration and publishing a 'Statement of Intent' will widen existing ECO criteria, thereby allowing Powys residents at risk of fuel poverty, access to funding under the Energy Company Obligation (ECO): Help to Heat programme.
- 5.2 Residents will be able to access insulation and heating upgrades specifically addressing energy inefficient (F and G rated) properties within the private sector.
- 5.3 More efficient (E rated) properties may also be addressed within the county, should a member of a vulnerable group be in occupation.

6. Impact Assessment

- 6.1 Is an impact assessment required? No
- 6.2 If yes is it attached? N/A

7. Corporate Improvement Plan

- 7.1 The proposal supports delivery of the Corporate Improvement Plan by;
- Supporting people in the community to live fulfilled lives - Ensuring suitable housing for everyone in Powys.

- Developing the economy - A dynamic, driven and confident council that finds and exploits opportunities for increasing the Powys economy.

8. **Local Member(s)**

- 8.1 This is a Powys wide initiative with potential to affect all local members.

9. **Other Front Line Services**

- 9.1 Does the recommendation impact on other services run by the Council or on behalf of the Council? No

If so please provide their comments

10. **Communications**

- 10.1 Have Communications seen a copy of this report? No

Have they made a comment? If yes insert here.

11. **Support Services (Legal, Finance, Corporate Property, HR, ICT, Business Services)**

- 11.1 Legal - The recommendation can be supported from a legal point of view

- 11.2 Finance - The Finance Business Partner notes the content of the report which could reduce the risk of fuel poverty, by allowing private sector households living in poorly insulated properties access to 'A' rated heating systems & home energy efficiency improvements, eliminating F & G rated property.

There will be an opportunity for the authority to charge £150 by levying an administration charge for providing the declaration necessary for clients to access the ECO Flexible Eligibility scheme, which must be paid by the energy supplier and may not under any circumstances, be passed onto clients receiving assistance via the scheme.

12. **Scrutiny**

Has this report been scrutinised? No

13. **Statutory Officers**

13.1 The Head of Financial Services (Acting S151 Officer) notes the comments of the Finance Business Partner.

13.2 The Solicitor to the Council (Monitoring Officer) has commented as follows: "I note the legal comment and have nothing to add to the report".

Recommendation:	Reason for Recommendation:
That Powys makes the ECO Flex 'Statement of Intent' declaration as set out in appendix A to the report	To allow private sector households living in poorly insulated properties access to 'A' rated heating systems & home energy efficiency improvements - eliminating F & G rated property - reducing risk of fuel poverty.

Relevant Policy (ies):	The adoption of the ECO Flex Statement of Intent will extend the range of measure available in Powys to tackle fuel poverty		
Within Policy:	Y / N	Within Budget:	Y / N

Relevant Local Member(s):	All
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Person(s) To Implement Decision:	Julian Preece
Date By When Decision To Be Implemented:	With Immediate Effect

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Background Papers used to prepare Report: