

All Committee meetings were cancelled with effect from 23rd March, 2020 due to the COVID-19 emergency.

The recommendations in this report were approved by an Executive Director of the Council, acting under delegated authority in terms of paragraph 2.1.1 of the Council's List of Officer Powers

1st April 2020 (CANCELLED)

Approved by Executive Director, Communities – 2nd April, 2020.

Supporting the Levenmouth Local Community Plan – Fuel Poverty Approach

Report by: Paul Vaughan – Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods

Wards Affected: Ward 21, 22

Purpose

This report is to update members on the work of Greener Kirkcaldy in delivering focussed fuel poverty advice and support in the Levenmouth area, and to seek funding agreement to extend this service in the 2020/21 financial year.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the latest performance figures relating to the fuel poverty work for the current financial year.
- Agree the new target areas for this piece of work.
- Note the willingness from SGN to part fund the energy advice part of this approach with up to 10K of external funding

Resource Implications

The total cost of this approach will be £35,000, with £25,000 committed from the Anti-Poverty budget for the area, the balance, as noted above, will be secured from sponsorship by SGN.

Legal & Risk Implications

There are no legal or risk implications for Fife Council inherent in this report.

Impact Assessment

An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required because the report does not propose a change or revision to existing policies and practices.

Consultation

The work of Greener Kirkcaldy in the Levenmouth area over the last two years has earned particular plaudits from local colleagues involved in anti-poverty work from a number of Services. Elected members have commented on the detailed reporting element that highlights progress on a quarterly basis. This work is also discussed at the local WRAP group meetings.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the area has supported fuel poverty work in Levenmouth over a number of years, the relationship with Greener Kirkcaldy has become more formally established using the Cosy Kingdom approach of home energy advice, home visits in the last few years.
- 1.2 The original concept was based on a focus on private rented properties in the Buckhaven South area, where we had a particular issue relating to affordability for tenants notably in the winter period, who were faced with the option of heating or eating.
- 1.3 We sought to introduce practical help to local people, through the provision of advice on best value tariffs for heating, and assistance to switch providers initially through Citrus Energy, which offered best value in most cases. Alongside this our colleagues in Cosy Kingdom helped with advocacy to assist in the mitigation of debt issues relating to utilities cost, to the extent of helping write off some debt from a number of overburdened households.
- 1.4 Coupled with this practical advice and advocacy support, the package of assistance offered, stretched to a handy service where a range of good quality interventions helped local people to heat, light and insulate their homes in a way that would positively impact on the longer-term viability of their tenancy.
- 1.5 The availability of this advice and practical support was also extended in the first year to cover mainly elderly homeowners, who were experiencing difficulties in relation to their utility costs, notably in large family homes that they now occupied on their own or with their spouse.
- 1.6 Work in year 2 expanded geographically into wider Buckhaven and Methil, with the current year work looking specifically at Leven and Kennoway. It is important to note that where a new client was identified in the former areas of focus, the service would still be made available.
- 1.7 The addition of financial support from SGN on this approach will help to reinforce this way of working which has generated significant benefits for local people. As part of the work SGN has commissioned Greener Kirkcaldy to carry out a survey which asks a few simple questions about their attitude to current and future heat solutions as well as climate change. This is important precursory work to help our understanding of what the energy market could look like in the near future.

2.0 Project Detail

- 2.1 The approach taken by Greener Kirkcaldy in offering this service locally noted in the paragraphs above has led to a range of clear benefits locally.
- 2.2 Originally tasked with 80 home energy visits for the 2019/20 financial year, GK had achieved 92 visits by the end of quarter 3 in December 2019. This work was supplemented by 51 handy service visits which exceeded the original full year target of 40.

- 2.3 In their regular reports Greener Kirkcaldy have provided a range of case study profiles which show the work with a referred client from start to finish, this also tends to show that the issues with fuel poverty is only one of the concerns that the client is having to deal with at the time. On that basis this work has enabled Greener Kirkcaldy to refer clients to other specialist services where other help may be found.
- 2.4 For ease of reference a copy of the previously distributed Q3 outcomes report for the project has been attached, further updates which will tell the full year story of progress made will be forwarded as soon as it is compiled.

3.0 Conclusions

- 3.1 This approach aligns with a specific statement in our local community planning approach which seeks to find practical and long-term solutions when dealing with issues that negatively impact on the resilience of families and individuals to lead full lives, specifically in targets around Opportunities for All.

List of Appendices

- Q3 Update Report

Background Papers

The following papers were relied on in the preparation of this report in terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act, 1973:

- None

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Levenmouth Community Planning Group

Energy advice for Hard to Reach Households in Leven and Kennoway



Project update

October to December 2019

Project Summary

Greener Kirkcaldy continues to make excellent progress towards our targets in quarter 3. We have completed 92 home energy visits and 51 handy service visits since the project began, resulting in a total of £50,858 in participant financial gains. After our initial door knocking campaign, we are continuing to receive a high number of “word of mouth” referrals from people in Leven and Kennoway, along with referrals from partner organisations such as Clued up and the Bethany Christian Church.



Cosy Kingdom Home Energy Advice visits

Talks and Events

Between October and December, we attended several events and drop-ins in the Leven and Kennoway areas, including the Kennoway Flu Clinic event and the Home Start event. There was a high attendance at the Flu Clinic and we spoke to 63 people about their energy, some of who went on to book a more in-depth home energy visit. At the Home Start event, we provided a one-to-one service with participants and arranged home visits where necessary.

Project targets and results

To date, the Greener Kirkcaldy energy advice team have completed 92 home energy advice visits and 51 handy service visits, installing energy efficient measures to increase participants' energy efficiency and help them feel cosier within their home, as well as saving them money.

Project objective	Target	Completed
Number of households given energy advice	80	92
Number of households receiving handy service	40	51

Financial Gains

During the project, we collate information about our participants' financial gains from the energy advisors. We get these financial gains from measures installed through the handy service, money saved through debt clearance, credit added to participants' meters, and money received through the Warm Home Discount. We also give out energy saving devices, including halogen heaters.

To date, 90 participants have received a total of £50,858 in financial gains. This is an average of £565 per household. These gains will increase through the life of the project as more debt is cleared.

Gain type	Total gain
Boiler and radiators	£27,000
LED light bulbs	£2,700
Furniture Plus application	£250
Curtains	£3,290
Fuel top ups	£250
Foodbank Voucher	£75
Fuel debt removed	£606.70
Halogen heater	£120
Kettle	£15
Microwave	£80
Radiator panels	£105
Switching advice	£4,707
Utility Charity (white goods)	£600
Warm Home Discount	£11,060
Total amount saved	£50,858.70

Next Steps

Our next steps will include:

- Continuing our energy advice and handy service work over the final quarter
- Attending local events
- Ongoing support for local groups in the area
- Attending the Leven Pantry to offer support

Case Studies

Case Study 5

Situation

Mr M Lives alone in a 2-bedroom, old stone mid terraced flat in Leven. He had been working at the end of last year, but had recently lost his job due to a shortage of work. His recent wages meant that he would not receive any benefits for a number of weeks.

As he had to pay rent, council tax and living expenses from his last wage, he was really struggling financially.

We had visited Mr M previously to give energy saving advice and he called us to see if we could do anything to help his current situation.

Support

We visited Mr M at home and discussed his situation. He had not put any money into his meters for over a week. He also had no money for food and other living expenses.

We called his supplier to request some friendly credit, but as he does not have smart meters installed, they could not add this from their end and will send out an engineer to fit smart meters.

As he has no credit or money to top up meters, our energy advisor added £20 to each meter from our discretionary fund to clear his emergency credit and leave him with some credit.

We provided Mr M with a voucher to take to the local food bank, so they will give him food to last a week.

We also discussed the Scottish Welfare Fund and applying for a crisis grant to try to get money for living expenses.

Although we had previously visited, Mr M was working last time and did not qualify for our handy service. During this visit, we referred him to our handy service for thermal curtains in his bedroom to help retain heat in property, and LED bulbs to help reduce his fuel spend.

We also put a referral in to Citizens Advice & Rights Fife (CARF) for help with his benefits and for advice on dealing with the debt he has accrued since he stopped working.

We also provided Mr M with advice on how best to use his heating system affordably, whilst discussing not leaving things on standby etc. to keep electric usage down as much as possible. We also provided a halogen heater to help him focus on only heating rooms he is spending time in.

Outcome

Mr M is very grateful for all the support we provided and has now started to receive benefits again after our referral to CARF.

He stated that before our visit, he wasn't sure how he was going to be able to afford to keep his home and he was feeling very low due to the fact he couldn't afford to top up his fuel meters or buy food for himself.

The discretionary top-up we provided, along with the foodbank voucher, helped him feel like he was beginning to turn a corner and, with support, he could see himself being back on top of things and in a much better place mentally.

He is also very grateful for the thermal curtains and LED bulbs we fitted and stated that he had noticed a difference in how long his bedroom retains the heat. He also loves the halogen heater we provided and now uses barely any gas to heat the property as he moves the heater from room to room and uses this for heat rather than heating the whole home.

Overall Mr M stated that he doesn't know what he would have done without our help and support, and said he couldn't thank us enough.