

Home Energy Conservation Act Reporting 2019

Introduction

The Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 ('HECA') requires all 326 local authorities ('LA's) in England to submit reports to the Secretary of State demonstrating what energy conservation measures they have adopted to improve the energy efficiency of residential accommodation within that LA's area. This covers measures to improve properties in the owner-occupier, private rented sector, and social rented sector. BEIS uses data submitted through LAs HECA returns to inform policy thinking on energy efficiency, and to build an ongoing picture of local and national energy efficiency policy delivery.

The refreshed reporting system for 2019 streamlines the process and reduces LA reporting burdens. Newly structured around a series of questions and direct information points, the amended framework aims to support LAs to provide information and updates on the key energy efficiency topics of interest to BEIS Ministers. It will also enable LAs to provide a consistent picture of energy efficiency promotion and delivery across England within a standardized framework.

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| Name of Local Authority: Cheshire West and Chester Council | | |
| Type of Local Authority: Borough | | |
| Name and contact details of official submitting the report: Alison Amesbury | | |
| Job title of official submitting the report: Strategic Housing and Commissioning Manager at Cheshire West and Chester Council | | |
| Names of teams working on policy areas covered by this reporting tool: Strategic Housing & Commissioning Team Regulatory Services Energy and Carbon Reduction Team (Qwest Services) | | |
| Total number of staff working in above policy areas (by FTE): Housing Team: 0.6 FTE Qwest Services: 1 FTE | | |
| Headline and Overview Questions | | |
| 1 | Does your Local Authority have a current strategy on carbon reduction and/or energy efficiency for domestic or non-domestic properties? | Yes |
| 2 | If yes, please provide a link to your current strategy here: https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/documents/energy/energy/energy-and-carbon-reduction-strategy-2016-2020.pdf | |
| 3 | If no, are you planning to develop one? | N/A |

4 a. What scheme(s) has your local authority implemented in support of energy saving/carbon reduction in residential accommodation (such as owner-occupied, privately rented and social housing) or non-domestic properties since 2017? (if you have not implemented any scheme, please enter 'N/A')

Free text response to question 4a - please outline in no more than 200 words

[Eco Flex scheme](#) - the Council has a published Statement of Intent for ECO Flex. The Council has registered 8 installers. To date, 52 Declarations have been signed off relating to 220 properties in receipt of loft and cavity wall insulation.

[Park Homes](#) - funding from Technical Innovation Fund supported the installation of insulation measures to 52 Park Homes.

[Cosy Loans](#) - interest free loan of £2,500 payable over 36 months available for home owners for energy efficiency measures (scheme has now come to an end).

[Home Assistance](#) - the Council's [Home Assistance Policy](#) offers a range of financial assistance to owner occupiers and empty home owners to help with repairs and home improvements. Grants and loans are offered for works that may include energy efficiency measures, as required. The majority of these services are delivered by the council's home improvement agency, [Home Assistance Hub](#), who can also offer advice on energy related matters.

[Qwest Energy](#) - a new local white label energy offer to residents living within the Borough and wider SPEN and Midlands Electricity District Network Operator areas. Acquisition fees are reinvested into initiatives to support affordable warmth.

b. What scheme(s) is your local authority planning to implement in support of energy saving/carbon reduction in residential accommodation (such as owner-occupied, privately rented and social housing) or non-domestic properties in the next two years? (if you are not planning to implement any scheme, please enter 'N/A')

Free text response to question 4b - please outline in no more than 200 words

Warm Homes Fund

Installation of first-time central heating systems to eligible urban properties and provision of an energy efficiency service, across Cheshire. Joint £1.2m bid with Cheshire East, Cheshire West, Warrington Borough and Halton Borough Councils.

ECO Flex

Continuation of the ECO Flex scheme via a number of Installers/ Agents using the established On-Boarding system. Regular review of the Statement of Intent to reflect local priorities.

ECO

Exploration of opportunities supported by match funding from all available sources to provide measures / schemes to fuel poor households. Key focus for the Council is an offer for Park Homes to include a full envelope of insulation with energy storage solutions.

Qwest Energy

A local domestic energy offer was launched in September 2018. A range of 5 different tariffs is available to suit most households including a Local Saver tariff for pre-payment customers living in certain postcode areas.

Energy Efficiency in Social Housing

The Council has secured ERDF funds for a £1M project to provide a range of energy efficiency measures in social housing in Ellesmere Port including: solar photovoltaic systems, heating system upgrades and external wall insulation installation.

The [Home Assistance Hub](#) offers various schemes which may indirectly result in energy efficiency improvements. These are offered on an individual basis dependent upon the needs of the household.

5 **What has been, or will be, the cost(s) of running and administering the scheme(s), including the value of grants and other support, plus any other costs incurred? Please provide figures and a brief narrative account if desired.**

Free text response to question 5 - please outline in no more than 100 words

The resources to deliver the full breadth of energy schemes within the Council's Energy and Carbon Reduction Strategy is via a team of 3.6 FTE officers including a Senior Manager and 3 Technical officers the total cost of which is approximately £215,000 per annum (including on-costs). This includes wider activity than that of domestic energy schemes.

Where resources are required to deliver new programmes and projects, additional financial resources will be factored into the application for funding.

6 **What businesses, charities, third sector organisations or other stakeholders do you work with to deliver the scheme(s)?**

Free text response to question 6 - please outline in no more than 100 words

Cheshire West has a multi-agency Affordable Warmth Group which includes membership from public sector bodies, Housing Associations and third sector agencies with the collective aim to tackle fuel poverty. The Group meets on a regular basis to share knowledge on current schemes and initiatives and available funding opportunities. This ensures that work across the Borough is strategic, coordinated and that delivery partners are not competing with one another when applying for any available funding.

Cheshire West has published a Statement of Intent for ECO Flex and has registered eight companies to date to enable targeted action towards householders who fall short of the ECO criteria.

7 **What has been the outcome of the scheme(s) (e.g. energy savings, carbon savings, economic impacts such as job creation and/or increased business competitiveness, societal impacts such as alleviation of fuel poverty and/or improved health outcomes etc.)?**

This does not have to be measured against national data or benchmarks, but rather focuses on the local authority's own monitoring and evaluation.

Free text response to question 7 - please outline in no more than 200 words

The schemes outlined in the responses above all contribute to the Council's activity in working towards reducing fuel poverty levels across the Borough. Through the range of scheme and initiatives, residents are able to access advice, guidance and practical measures in helping to

address a number of issues including: improving the thermal efficiency of homes, provision of energy efficiency advice, switching advice, income maximisation, debt advice and more.

This activity assists with achieving domestic energy savings and energy management in homes resulting in both energy and carbon savings.

Fuel poverty levels across Cheshire West fluctuates slightly year on year as shown in the table below:

| Year | Fuel poverty level | Number of households in fuel poverty | Number of households in borough |
|------|--------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2012 | 9.4% | 13,081 | 139,867 |
| 2013 | 8.9% | 12,823 | 144,489 |
| 2014 | 10% | 14,461 | 143,904 |
| 2015 | 10.1% | 14,627 | 144,311 |
| 2016 | 11.3% | 16,493 | 146,577 |

A marked increase in statistics was noted after the definition of fuel poverty was changed following review and a new 'Low Income High Costs' indicator created modelling fuel bills and a reasonable cost threshold for each household.

8 What lessons have you learned from delivering this scheme(s)?

Free text response to question 8 - please outline in no more than 100 words

To develop effective energy efficiency programmes that deliver the long term policy commitments requires stable funding. These funding regimes need to dovetail with local resources and local delivery.

The energy efficiency agenda is rapidly becoming a crowded space with a range of programmes and overlapping schemes, all with short implementation timeframes. The consistent national message needs to be coupled with a strong branded scheme in order to increase take up and improve outcomes.

Competing delivery priorities of Councils could leave this agenda underfunded and over stretched, long term, sustainable sources of finance are needed as short term cash injections are exhausted quickly and prevent sustained impact.

Local Communications Strategy

9 **Does your local authority provide any advisory service to consumers (and businesses) on how to save energy?** Yes

10 **If yes to question 10, please briefly outline how this is undertaken (or enter 'N/A' if appropriate)**

Free text response to question 10 - please outline in no more than 100 words

There are a number of energy efficiency schemes available from the council and the wider affordable warmth network across the borough. The level of energy advice offered from individual schemes varies dependent on the scheme however, wherever possible, and as a measure of good practice, residents are advised on how to make energy efficiency savings, either through the best use of any measures / products which have been installed, or simple more practical energy efficiency advice. Residents are also sign-posted to national advice and guidance websites where appropriate.

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| 11 | How do you communicate or encourage energy saving amongst domestic consumers and/or local businesses? (if you do not, please enter 'N/A' and move on to the next section 'Local Green Supply Chains') |
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Free text response to question 11 - please outline in no more than 100 words

For residents, we have a webpage: Home Energy help for residents

<https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/energy/home-energy.aspx>

This lists a wide range of energy assistance schemes for our residents to support them in lowering their energy usage.

This web page also provides signposting to other local and national agencies and schemes for additional support in energy saving advice and measures.

Local Green Supply Chains

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| 12 | Does your Local Authority promote the use of energy efficient products amongst consumers (and businesses)? (if you answer no please move onto the next section 'Private Rented Sector') | NO |
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| 13 | If yes to question 12, please briefly detail how this promotion work is undertaken. |
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Free text response to question 12 - please outline in no more than 100 words

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| 14 | What engagement (formal or informal) does your local authority have with local businesses/supply chains involved in promoting energy efficiency products or carbon reduction? |
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Free text response to question 14 - please outline in no more than 100 words

The Council's Business Growth Team works alongside a range of partners and networks to assist, develop and stimulate the local economy. They support the business community from start-ups to larger companies across the borough via access to networks, events, business advisors and brokering to the national support offer. The offer includes support with energy efficiency, inward investment and skills, finance or business advice.

The Cheshire Energy Hub is private sector partnership network operating in Cheshire West and Chester which is funded and strategically driven by industry. Its members work collaboratively to advance the skills agenda and energy initiatives in the region.

Domestic Private Rented Sector (PRS) Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards

The Minimum Energy Efficiency Regulations (the Regulations) apply to all privately rented properties in England and Wales. As of April 2018, all such properties are legally required to have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) of at least an E before they can be let on a new tenancy. This requirement will then extend to all such properties by 1 April 2020, even if there has been no change in tenant or tenancy (please see BEIS's published guidance documents for the full details on the standard).

The PRS Regulations give enforcement powers to local authorities, and authorities are responsible for ensuring landlord compliance within their area.

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| 15 | Is your authority aware of the PRS Minimum Efficiency Standards which came into force in April 2018? (if you answered no, please move on to the next section 'Financial Support for Energy Efficiency') | Yes |
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| 16 | Which team within your authority is responsible for, or will be responsible for, leading on enforcement of the PRS minimum standard? |
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Free text response to question 16

The function is split within Cheshire West where enforcement is delivered by the Regulatory Services Team which leads on the implementation and enforcement of the PRS Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards. The Council's Landlord Accreditation Scheme is operated by the Strategic Housing Team leading on all information, notifications and publicity on the need and requirements for landlords and letting agents to be compliant with the PRS Minimum Efficiency Standards.

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| 17 | Please provide the contact details of the person leading this team. |
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Free text response to question 17

Regulatory Services Team Leader – Carl Murphy, Tel: 01244 973108

Email: carl.murphy@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Strategic Housing – Allan Batty, Tel: 0151 356 6410

Email: allan.batty@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

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| 18 | What method or methods does your authority use to communicate with landlords and tenants about the standards and other related issues? |
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Free text response to question 18 - please outline in no more than 100 words

The Council has a dedicated Landlord Forum with regular meetings that include energy performance talks:

<https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/housing/private-rented-sector/private-landlords/landlord-forum-training-events-and-newsletter.aspx>

The information provided at Landlord Forum events is supported by the Council's website which includes a section on energy performance:

<https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/housing/private-rented-sector/private-landlords/standards-and-guidance-for-landlords.aspx>

Other opportunities include Landlord Workshops and regular Newsletters focusing on MEES and the Landlord Responsibility, and understanding EPC's.

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| 19 | Do you directly target landlords of EPC F and G rated properties? If yes, how? If no, please explain. | N |
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Free text response to question 19 - please outline in no more than 100 words

It is not possible to target specific landlords as this information is unavailable so a "catch all" approach has been taken to inform all landlords of the need to be compliant with the PRS Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards. This has been undertaken via the PRS pages of the Council website as well as quarterly landlord newsletters and formal training given to landlords at the Landlord Forum.

Financial Support for Energy Efficiency

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| 20 | What financial programmes, if any, do you have to promote domestic and non-domestic energy efficiency or energy saving? If applicable, please outline the sums, where such funding is sourced, and where it is targeted. (If you do not have any financial assistance programmes, please enter 'N/A' and move onto the next section 'Fuel Poverty') |
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Free text response to question 20 - please outline in no more than 200 words

The Council's 3 year Capital Programme includes an annual allocation of £75k specifically for initiative to tackle fuel poverty. This allocation is not sufficient to deliver a broad programme and is therefore used to support funding applications where an element of match funding is required.

National Grid Warm Homes Fund – A Cheshire and Warrington sub-regional project with a total value of £1.2m. The funding provides for first time gas central heating to urban homes and energy efficiency home visits and is matched with the Council's Capital Programme and ECO.

Fuel Poverty

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| 21 | Does your local authority have a fuel poverty strategy? If yes, please describe the scope of the strategy, and the support that is available for low income and vulnerable households to help tackle fuel poverty in your local area. Please also provide a link to your strategy if published. | Yes |
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Free text response to question 21 - please outline in no more than 300 words

The Cheshire West Energy & Carbon Reduction Strategy 2016-20

<https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/documents/energy/energy/energy-and-carbon-reduction-strategy-2016-2020.pdf> sets out the Council's priorities for a four year period up to

2020, and sets out how the Council will ensure that low carbon, sustainable and energy efficient

considerations are embedded in the services and support provided to those who live and work in the Borough.

This Strategy covers six priorities that have been developed to drive forward current activity and new ambitions in line with national regulatory and strategic drivers.

The six priorities include:

1. Efficient use of energy by the Council
2. Increasing energy security in the Borough
- 3. Tackling Fuel Poverty**
4. Supporting Community Energy
5. Creating a strong Energy Sector and supporting a Low Carbon Economy
6. Supporting policy development and project delivery across the Council

Whilst local authorities have a social and legal obligation to lead and enable action on fuel poverty, tackling fuel poverty cannot be achieved by local authorities alone. Using the national Fuel Poverty Strategy as its strategic framework, Cheshire West Affordable Warmth Steering Group has developed a comprehensive Action Plan to deal with local issues as well as accounting for national priorities. The Action Plan sets out the following objectives for activity to ensure that there is a comprehensive and consistent approach to tackling fuel poverty in the Borough:

- ✓ Encourage behavioural change to reduce energy use
- ✓ Improve the energy efficiency of homes
- ✓ Reduce temperature related illnesses
- ✓ Maximise household income
- ✓ Increase the amount of energy generated from renewable and low carbon sources
- ✓ Support sustainable community energy initiatives

The Action Plan can be found at:

<https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/documents/energy/home-energy/affordable-warmth-action-plan-2016-2020.pdf>

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| 22 | What steps have you taken to identify residents/properties in fuel poverty? (enter 'N/A' if not appropriate) |
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Free text response to question 22 - please outline in no more than 200 words

A Private Sector Stock Condition Survey was carried out in 2013. This involved a comprehensive house condition and household survey conducted across a sample of 3,000 dwellings representing just under 3% of all private dwellings. Findings were reported on various indicators including fuel poverty levels, SAP ratings and housing conditions. This document has since been used to inform on many projects looking to address domestic energy efficiency and affordable warmth. The Private Sector Stock Condition Survey requires updating and the Council is currently considering its next steps for a refresh.

The Council's Insight and Intelligence team has developed the local [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#) (JSNA) which brings together data and intelligence to help understand the needs of the local population. A combination of statistics has produced a comprehensive picture across all wards for various themes, including fuel poverty. This is available on the Council website.

Annual fuel poverty statistics provided by BEIS are extensively used to help identify areas to target affordable warmth schemes and projects.

23 **How does fuel poverty interlink with your local authority's overall carbon reduction strategy? (enter 'N/A' if not appropriate)**

Free text response to question 23 - please outline in no more than 200 words

See response to Question 21 above.

24 **a. What measures or initiatives have you taken to promote fuel cost reduction for those in fuel poverty? (enter 'N/A' if not appropriate)**

Free text response to question 24a - please outline in no more than 200 words

From 2013 until mid-2018 the Council offered residents the opportunity to take part in a collective energy switching scheme, known as Ready to Switch (administered by Ichoosr). This national scheme offered a number of benefits to residents, particularly to those averse to switching and who felt the council provided a more trusted brand. Over the course of the Ready to Switch scheme 1588 residents signed up with an average saving of £213 made by participating residents. Cumulatively, the amount saved by residents switching over the duration of the scheme was £338k.

In September 2018 the Council launched [Qwest Energy](#). This is a white label product developed as a partnership between the Council, Qwest Services and ENGIE. Qwest Energy is available to residents across 2 District Network Operator areas; SPEN and Midlands Electricity and has a range of tariffs to suit most households. In order to help tackle fuel costs for vulnerable households, a special 'Local Saver' discounted tariff has been created and is available in specific postcode areas to householders on pre-payment meters. Furthermore, switching acquisition fees are used to create a Community Fund to support fuel poverty projects across the Borough.

b. If you have taken measures or initiatives to promote fuel cost reduction for those in fuel poverty, what partnership with business or energy providers have you undertaken? (enter 'N/A' if not appropriate)

Free text response to question 24b - please outline in no more than 200 words

See response to Question 24a above.

The Energy Company Obligation

The Energy Company Obligation (ECO) is an obligation on energy suppliers aimed at helping households cut their energy bills and reduce carbon emissions by installing energy saving measures. Following the Spring 2018 consultation, the Government set out in its [response](#) that ECO3 will fully focus on Affordable Warmth – low income, vulnerable and fuel poor households.

The recently introduced ECO “[flexible eligibility](#)” (ECO Flex) programme allows LAs to make declarations determining that certain households in fuel poverty or with occupants on low incomes and vulnerable to the effects of cold homes, are referred to ECO obligated suppliers for support under the Affordable Warmth element of ECO. LAs involved are required to issue a Statement of Intent that they are going to identify households as eligible, and the criteria they are going to use; and a declaration that the LA has been consulted on the installation of measures in a home.

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| 25 | Has your local authority published a Statement of Intent (Sol) for ECO flexibility eligibility? | Yes |
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If yes, please include a link to your Sol below.

Link to Statement of Intent;

<https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/documents/energy/home-energy/statement-of-intent-march-2019.pdf>

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| 26 | Please use the following space to provide any further information you feel might be of benefit to BEIS, in helping us to understand ECO Flex delivery in more detail. For example, the number of declarations signed versus the number of households helped. | |
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Free text response to question 26 - please outline in no more than 200 words

In 2018-19 a total of 54 Declarations were submitted as part of ECO Flex process. This represented 304 measures installed in 268 households across the borough. The breakdown of measures being;

- 256 cavity wall insulation
- 34 loft insulation
- 3 internal wall insulation
- 2 room in roof
- 6 boiler replacements
- 2 first-time central heating systems

ECO Flex registration requires potential agents/installers to go through an ‘on-boarding’ process with the Council. The Council’s role is to set out the eligibility criteria installers and agents must comply with and to check and sign off submitted Declarations only.

Responsibility for identifying eligible households, checking for eligibility and proposal of measures lies with the agent / installer.

The eligibility criteria is contained in the Statement of Intent and published on the Council’s website. The Statement of Intent is review on a regular basis.

Smart Metering

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| 27 | <p>Please provide a brief statement outlining your current or planned approach to:</p> <p>Engage and support your residents (including those in vulnerable circumstances or with pre-payment metering) to promote take up of smart meters and achieve associated benefits (e.g. ability to control energy use, identify best value tariffs)? Please detail any work undertaken or planned with local/community groups, housing associations, micro businesses, Smart Energy GB under their Partnership Programme and energy suppliers.</p> |
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Free text response to question 27 – please outline in no more than 150 words.

The Council is supportive of the roll out of smart meters by 2020. Activity is focused on raising awareness of the roll-out programme by energy suppliers and promotion of energy behaviour change to help maximise the benefits of smart meters to our residents. This works is taking place Borough-wide, with particular focus on areas of low income and high fuel poverty levels and areas identified as having high levels of prepayment meters.

Information from Smart Energy GB indicates that at the end of March 2019, 59,309 domestic properties in the Borough of Cheshire West and Chester have smart meters installed. This equates to 38% of all domestic properties. There is no indication of the split of SMETS1 and SMETS2 across the Borough.

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| 28 | <p>Please provide a brief statement outlining your current or planned approach to:</p> <p>Integrate your approaches to delivering energy efficiency improvements in residential accommodation with the opportunities presented by the installation of smart meters, drawing upon materials from the Smart Meter Energy Efficiency Materials Project or other sources of independent information.</p> |
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Free text response to question 28 – please outline in no more than 150 words.

There is currently no bespoke scheme in place focusing on the promotion of smart meters. Advice and guidance on the benefits of smart meters is provided as part of the programmes offered across the borough from both the Council and the affordable warmth members, where appropriate. Residents are signposted to the national Smart Energy GB website for further information.

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| 29 | <p>Please detail any:</p> <p>Resources/ support (e.g. services, funding) available to residents who have had an appliance(s) condemned for safety reasons and cannot afford to replace it (e.g. during visual safety checks conducted during their smart meter installation or otherwise).</p> |
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Free text response to question 29 – please outline in no more than 150 words.

All requests for assistance from residents having appliances condemned are assessed on an individual basis. There are a number of possible options available which would be explored for eligible residents including the council's Decent Home Loan, Home Safety Grants, ECO and schemes available from partners across the borough.

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| 30 | <p>Please detail any:</p> |
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Existing relationships with energy suppliers to help ensure that the opportunities presented by vacant properties under your control are effectively utilised (i.e. gaining access to install a smart meter).

Free text response to question 30 – please outline in no more than 150 words.

At present there is no existing scheme in place to install smart meters in vacant properties. We are currently liaising with social housing providers across the Borough to look at an integrated partnership approach in terms of energy supply and smart meter installation social housing and a default installation when properties become void.

Future Schemes or Wider Initiatives

31 Please outline any future schemes or wider initiatives not covered above that your local authority has carried out or is planning to undertake to improve the energy efficiency of residential accommodation or businesses in your area, for example, within your Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Energy Strategy (if you do not plan any future schemes currently, please enter 'N/A').

Free text response to question 31 - please outline in no more than 500 words

Social Housing

The Council has secured ERDF funding for a £1M project to provide a range of energy efficiency retrofit measures to social housing stock in Ellesmere Port, including;

- 151 Solar Photovoltaic (PV) systems
- 27 Heating system upgrades (provision of eco radiators)
- 21 External wall insulation installs (to uninsulated solid wall properties)

A property address list has been developed. However, property addresses are subject to change if tenants refuse a measure or the property is deemed unsuitable following a further survey. The external funding is conditional upon achieving carbon emission savings from the properties.

Smart Systems

The Council has supported the Cheshire Energy Hub with an applications to the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund to develop a nationally-replicable model for a local energy system that can deliver lower cost, low-carbon energy for industrial, commercial and domestic users. The energy master plan will set out a ten-year private sector investment programme in smart energy solutions that is scalable across the UK.

The Study will show how energy use across electricity, gas, heat and transport energy vectors can be optimised to permit energy intensive industries to benefit from low-carbon, low-cost energy - improving their competitiveness in the global market while improving the lives of local people through access to the same low-cost, low-carbon energy sources.