

Warmer Chard Project (Executive Decision)

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Purpose of Report

To consider a grant request from the Centre of Sustainable Energy and Home Energy Centres to support the 'Warmer Chard' project.

Public Interest

The Warmer Chard project will help the people of Chard and surrounding villages to reduce their energy bills, lower Chard's carbon footprint, and make an impact on fuel poverty.

Recommendation

That Members support a grant of up to £7,260 to the Centre for Sustainable Energy to deliver the Warmer Chard project from the Area West Community Grants budget.

Background

This is a partnership project between the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) and the Home Energy Centre (HEC). The two organisations want to work together to provide energy advice to people living in and around Chard. The advice will help people reduce their energy bills, lower Chard's carbon footprint and make an impact on fuel poverty. CSE will be the lead partner and will manage and evaluate the project, train volunteers and liaise with SSDC. Both HEC volunteers and staff from the CSE will deliver the activities of the project.

CSE is a national charity based in Bristol which delivers a variety of projects relating to energy including work on reducing fuel poverty. In 2014 CSE won the Ashden Award for Reducing Fuel Poverty, which recognises outstanding contributions to tackling fuel poverty in the UK.

Over the past 6 years CSE have been delivering the Warmer Improved Somerset Homes (WISH) project, which has had significant funding from the Big Lottery.

CSE state that over the last year across Somerset they have:

- Recruited and trained 9 new volunteers,
- Reached and provided one-to-one support to 1,257 households (via advice sessions, home visits and surgeries)
- Trained 242 front line workers, who are in contact with vulnerable households struggling to keep warm at home, at 22 training events.

Home Energy Centres is a community organisation set up in Ilminster in 2011 to provide the public with easily accessible free information and guidance about energy efficiency and renewable energy generation. In recent years they have:

- Been the lead entity for the CSE / SSDC project 'Our Green Deal' which promoted the Government's Green Deal,

- Acted as Gold Partner Somerset for the Citizens Advice Bureau.
- Organised and operated Somerset CAB Big Energy Saving Week in October 2015.

In Autumn 2015, HEC opened the Chard Home Energy Centre, a neighbourhood drop-in information point at the premises of Somerset Media Solutions, a community IT centre located on Chard High Street. Every Wednesday afternoon people requiring energy advice can drop in or make appointments to discuss specific energy-efficiency matters with an experienced volunteer. In January 2016, Chard HEC held an open day, 150 leaflets and promotional items were distributed and residents brought in their gas and electricity bills to get advice about their energy use. For example, one Martock pensioner who brought in her energy bills, then took the advice given by the HEC volunteers and reduced her monthly energy bill from £165 to £60, which took her out of Fuel Poverty and provided her with greater local spending power from her pension, her sole income.

The project

The project will focus on Chard and surrounding villages as these have been identified as having particular need, however the service will be available to residents across Area West.

There are 2 strands to the Warmer Chard Project:

Supporting HEC and CSE to provide detailed energy advice (see appendix for detail)

The advice will be delivered to community groups and residents of Chard and surrounding villages to help overcome fuel poverty:

- CSE will develop an 'Energy Essentials' training course and train HEC volunteers to deliver the course.
- CSE & HEC will run a minimum of 8 'Energy Essentials' training sessions for community groups and frontline staff, enabling them to recognise cases of fuel poverty and refer people to the project.
- Hold a public 'Energy Switching Workshop'
- Carry out home visits & supporting in depth case work (A minimum of 15 by CSE with at least 15 more by HEC)
- Provide free information leaflets and drop-in sessions in Chard.
- CSE will develop a Home Visit Information Packs, including a Fuel Poverty kit and a Draught Buster kit.

Strengthen the role and sustainability of the Home Energy Centre in Chard

The project will raise the skills and capacity of HEC Chard, making it a community focal point and key local provider of expert knowledge and information on energy efficiency. The project will support HEC Chard to become more sustainable and deliver its services in the longer term. The project will do this by:

- Training two HEC Chard volunteers in City & Guilds Energy Awareness (see appendix)
- Developing and delivering an Energy Essentials 'train the trainer' course for HEC Chard volunteers.
- Providing HEC Chard branded fact sheets, leaflets and posters, and provide artwork so that HEC Chard can print further copies as required.
- Providing a desktop computer, quality printer, MS Office software and display boards.
- Providing volunteer expenses to facilitate training, home visits and in-depth case work.

- Marketing and promotion of HEC Chard as a community focal point, its services & the project.
- Building relationships between HEC Chard and community groups and front-line staff to improve uptake.
- CSE producing an evaluation of the project and its delivery.
- Giving funding advice to support HEC Chard to attract further funding to ensure they can continue beyond the duration of the project. For example it is anticipated that HEC Chard will be able to apply for an additional £15k worth of activity through DECC's Big Energy Saving Network & Smart Energy GB support.

The capacity built by the project will enable HEC Chard to continue to deliver services beyond the funded period. Participating in the project and ensuring the volunteers are well trained and have the necessary equipment and resources will help make Chard HEC more effective, more eligible and attractive to funding bodies and more sustainable.

Chard Town Council has confirmed that HEC can be allocated a regular weekly slot at the Town Hall Reception.

Subject to approval by AWC the project will run from the 1 September 2016 until 31st March 2017. Although both CSE & HEC would like to see the project run for longer, the end date is determined by the Big Lottery match funding. It is the intention of both parties to continue delivery beyond the project end date.

Fuel poverty in the Chard area

The Chard and surrounding villages have been identified as an area with a particular need for energy advice services due to pockets of high fuel poverty, as a result of:

- a. A higher proportion of poverty and deprivation, compared with other areas of South Somerset, according to the indices of multiple deprivation.
- b. Poor levels of understanding amongst low-income households around energy use and costs
- c. Lack of capacity amongst local community groups to support local residents.
- d. Rising energy bills (particularly many of the surrounding villages without mains gas, relying instead on more expensive options to heat their homes, such as LPG or night storage heaters.
- e. High proportion of older populations who are more susceptible to cold and damp homes. Cold homes can contribute to excess winter deaths, cardiovascular disease, depression, arthritis and rheumatism, it affects dexterity, increasing the risk of accidents and injuries in the home.
- f. Higher proportion of older properties, solid walled properties are typically £300 per annum more expensive to heat than those with more modern cavity insulated homes.

Figures from **DECC Fuel poverty sub-regional statistics, 2013** (the latest figures) show that the national average for fuel poverty is currently 11%, which is similar to South Somerset (11.2%). For example the average for the parishes of Buckland St Mary, Combe St Nicolas, Wambrook and Whitestaunton is 16%, which is a similar level to many of the deprived parts of inner-city Bristol. The average for the villages of Donyatt, Ashill, Broadway and Horton is 14% and for Tatworth and Forton it is 13%. This demonstrates that many of the villages around Chard have an above average rate of fuel poverty.

As well as the fuel poverty statistics, the table below shows that the WISH project is receiving proportionally higher numbers of referrals from agencies to support people in Chard, compared to other areas in South Somerset:

Town & surrounding area	No. of enquiries to WISH 2015	Population	% of population
Chard	92	13,074	0.7%
Langport	6	1,082	0.6%
Castle Cary	11	2,276	0.5%
Yeovil	170	45,000	0.4%
Crewkerne	26	7,000	0.4%
Wincanton	16	5,272	0.3%
Ilminster	8	5,808	0.1%
Bruton	4	2,907	0.1%
Somerton	6	4,697	0.1%
Others	115		
Total	454		

Finance

CSE have already secured 50% of the funds for this project from the Big Lottery and are seeking the match funding from SSDC.

Project budget	Total	Big Lottery	SSDC
Tasks			
Project Management	£ 700		£ 700
Reporting	£ 350		£ 350
Marketing and promotion	£ 420		£ 420
Training and delivery of training			
CSE develop two Energy Essentials courses (the EE course and the 'train the trainer' course)	£ 700	£ 700	
CSE training and supporting HEC Chard to deliver Energy Essentials training	£ 700	£ 700	
CSE delivery of a minimum of 8 Energy Essentials training courses to other community groups	£ 1,400	£ 1,400	
CSE delivery of Energy Switching Workshop	£ 525	£ 525	
City & Guilds training to two HEC Chard volunteers (£806 +vat)	£ 1,934	£ 1,934	
Chard volunteer expenses (up to £50 per day for C&G training, up to £30 for delivering Energy Essentials & Energy Switching courses)	£ 685	£ 685	
Advice Provision			
CSE Home visits (minimum 15)	£ 1,680		£ 1,680
CSE in-depth case work and referrals to other agencies	£ 2,380		£ 2,380
HEC Chard expenses for home visits (up to £30 per visit, minimum 15 visits)	£ 450		£ 450

Direct support for the Centre			
Factsheets with HEC logos + artwork	£ 550	£ 550	
Draught-busting kit (draught excluders, insulation, information) + artwork	£ 400	£ 400	
Home visit kits and fuel poverty packs + artwork	£ 440	£ 440	
Equipment to support the HEC Chard centre (PC, printer, essential software & hardware, display boards)	£ 1,000		£ 1,000
Monitoring and Evaluation	£ 280		£ 280
Total	£14,594	£7,334	£7,260

Assessment

The Neighbourhood Development Officer has assessed the grant application and has given it the following score:

Category	Maximum score	Score
A Eligibility	Y/N	
B Equalities Impact	7	6
C Need for Project	5	4
D Capacity of Organisation	15	9
E Financial need	7	4
F Innovation	3	3
Total	37	26

Financial Implications

£7,260 can be met from the Area West Community Grants budget, which will leave a balance of £10,021 for other projects.

Implications for Corporate Priorities

SSDC Council Plan

Focus 2 – Environment:

- Deliver campaigns and projects that help householders and businesses (including the Council) to cut energy use and adapt to climate change.
- Promote the Green Deal and similar schemes that enable householders and businesses to make existing buildings more energy efficient.

Focus 3 – Homes

- Work with partners to combat fuel poverty.
- Continue to work with partners to bring private sector housing up to Decent Homes Standard.

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

The project will raise awareness and reduce energy consumption in Chard and surrounding villages by improving energy efficiency in resident's homes.

Equality and Diversity Implications

The Warmer Chard project will be open to all and will be promoted to all groups and members of the community. Home Energy Centre Chard is accessible and the project's home visits will enable wide participation.

Promotional materials will be produced to an accessible standard. Project materials will be available in a range of languages and forms and interpreters will be used if required.

Background Papers

1. Community grant criteria
 2. WISH Project webpage: <https://www.cse.org.uk/projects/view/1219>
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APPENDIX – Energy training and advice provision

City & Guilds in Energy Awareness

The training covers the following:

- the efficiency and appropriate use of heating and hot water systems, and the functions of the controls
- interpret domestic fuel cost data using reference materials
- advise clients on how to record gas and electricity consumption and work out costs
- inform clients of ways of paying for gas and electricity
- identify the potential to improve the energy efficiency in a range of dwellings
- explain Green Deal and Energy Company Obligation
- advise clients on how to avoid condensation and how to take remedial action where condensation dampness exists.

Energy Essentials

The Energy Essentials 'train the trainers' aims to train HEC Chard volunteers so they can provide Energy Essentials training to groups, or frontline workers (e.g. district nurses) who are not energy specialists, but who need to better understand the energy issues of their clients or customers. This might include spotting customers who might be struggling with fuel poverty and how to detect this e.g.

- how to spot people struggling with bills/high energy use;
- key things people might mention e.g. person mentions their home is cold/damp/mould growth present or customer mentions difficulty programming heating/using portable heaters instead of central heating;
- spotting a 'deep green' type householder who wants solid wall insulation and renewable energy etc;
- recognising how heating fuel and type affects the likelihood of householder being in fuel poverty.

Energy Essentials provides an overview of the main energy issues that they will need to know and where to go for help. The sorts of subjects that the training would cover includes:

- Fuel poverty;
- how prevalent fuel poverty is and how many of their customers may be struggling and may or may not reveal this;
- types of customers that are more likely to be fuel poor (e.g. fuel poverty is not simply a single low income pensioner archetype)
- health and other impacts of fuel poverty on our country and discussion of impacts on debts to energy suppliers etc;
- what is a healthy house- what temperatures, damp issues etc.
- The relationship between Economy 7 and night storage heaters.
- A general awareness of the Energy Companies Obligation and funding available through the Renewable Heat Incentive and the Feed In Tariff etc.

CSE will directly support 8 sessions with HEC Chard, and would anticipate that HEC Chard would be able to continue to provide this level of training to groups locally on an ongoing basis.

Home visits & casework

CSE and HEC will carry out home visits and follow-up casework independently. CSE will deliver 15 home visits; HEC Chard volunteers will be funded for expenses for a minimum of 15 days of visits and could deliver more. Home visits will be followed up with casework where clients need in-depth ongoing support.

Case work could include some or all of the following:

- Support to receive grant-aided energy efficiency measures and housing improvements for new heating systems, insulation, or grants for gas grid connections. For people in private rented accommodation this will also involve liaising with the client's landlord.
 - Supporting the client to maximise income from increased benefit uptake, including attendance allowance, £140 off electricity bills through the little-known Warm Home Discount Scheme (WHD) and Water bill discount (20%).
 - Clear or reduce fuel debt, including negotiating repayment plans with their fuel supplier, or energy trust applications for debt clearance, or refer the client to a specialist debt advice organisation (and following up with them to understand the outcome).
 - Registration on Priority Service Register provided by energy supply and distribution companies, this includes (but is not limited to)
 - advance notice if your supply is going to be interrupted
 - priority reconnection if your supply is interrupted
 - Provision of alternative heating and cooking appliances during interruptions
 - annual gas safety checks
 - extra help to use your meter or appliances
 - Additional security measures such as account passwords, knock and wait
 - Improved accessibility of materials i.e. alternative languages and correspondence formats
 - Refer to services or liaise with clients' landlord/housing association to address other barriers to tackling cold homes (e.g. Home Improvement Agency to fix a leaking roof causing damp).
 - Help the client switch to better value energy tariffs
 - Help the client move off pre-payment meters (PPMs) and/or consider smart PPMs"
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