



Area East Infra-Red Camera – Update

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Purpose of the Report

To update members on progress to date of the infra-red camera project.

Public Interest

This report provides members with details of progress made towards purchasing infra-red cameras to be made available to communities in Area East. The project was agreed as a priority for members in the Council Plan as part of the Area Chapter.

Recommendations

That Area East members;

1. Note and comment on the report.
2. Endorse the approach and details of the scheme.

Background

Members will recall that the aspiration to have infra-red cameras available to communities in Area East was agreed as part of the Area Chapter for 2021/22.

Members received a detailed report on the recommended approach to delivering the project at the informal area committee meeting in May of this year.

Project Update

The scheme aims to help people identify areas in their homes that would benefit from insulation and draft proofing to improve energy efficiency and reduce heat loss and fuel bills.

The project will pilot two slightly different approaches. One camera will be hosted by Bruton Town Council's Retrofit project and will be made available to individuals and Town & Parish councils as part of the wider Retrofit Project. The second camera will be held and distributed by the SSDC Locality team. Both cameras will be available in

November to take advantage of the most appropriate conditions for taking thermal images when there is a minimum 10 degrees temperature difference between outside and inside the home.

SSDC Environment Team have researched the options in terms of available technology.

There are different cameras available which differ in terms of cost and technical specification.

A number of factors have been considered.

Durability – Equipment needs to be robust and easy to transport and withstand use by a range of abilities. Some options operate as a stand alone camera and others are plugged into other equipment (phone or tablet) and this has been considered.

Ease of use – This is fairly specialist equipment and the recommended approach will be pilot use by some with technical experience and some without.

Quality of images – The camera needs to produce images that are good enough to enable interpretation by those with and without experience.

Cost – The option of purchasing one, more expensive but potentially more robust camera has been considered. Reliance on one camera reduces the number of users in a relatively small window of opportunity to use. The preferred option of purchasing two, more affordable cameras will enable multiple cameras to be loaned out, maximising the benefit to the community.

The Environment Team has also looked at other similar schemes. The FLIR OnePro is the option used by other schemes that regularly lend out Thermal Imaging cameras for public use. They have been used as they are good quality and easy to use and the householder can directly download and keep the images. Schemes that use these include the C.H.E.E.S.E project <https://cheeseproject.co.uk/> (one of the directors is a top specialist in thermal imaging having designed thermal imaging cameras for the Government) and Octopus Energy's thermal imaging loan scheme <https://octopus.energy/blog/flir-thermal-cameras/>

The cameras are designed to be robust and durable for professional use, are built to take the abuse of working on a jobsite and is rated to take a drop from 1.8 meters and built to last. They are also a lot more affordable than other options. They are designed to plug into a smart phone or tablet and produce images of the quality required to interrogate and interpret in order to identify potential improvements.

The team is now ready to purchase a couple of thermal Imaging cameras and promote availability for use in Area East.

A how to use instruction sheet will be included along with links to CSE Home Energy advice and grants for those eligible to apply for home improvement solutions.

We will review the success of the trial launch with a follow up to those who have used the thermal imaging camera a year after its use to see what home improvement measures have been undertaken.

Further details of how to book the camera will be distributed to Area East Members along with promotional communication to Town and Parish Councils and community groups.

Financial Implications

The cost of purchasing the two cameras is £558. The purchase will be funded from Area East Discretionary budget.

Council Plan Implications

The infra-red camera initiative is a specific project in the Area East Chapter 2021/22.

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

Thermal images will show up where homes would benefit from improved insulation and draught proofing. Homes account for 22% of the UK carbon emissions and there needs to be an urgent application of energy efficiency improvements if we are going to hit the carbon reduction targets necessary to stop run away climate breakdown. Using the thermal imaging cameras will stimulate action for the homeowner to improve energy efficiency and therefore reduce carbon emissions.

Equality and Diversity Implications

The intention is to make the equipment available to all.

Background Papers

- Area Chapter Outturn report, Appendix A - Area East Committee (Informal) May 2021
 - Area East Chapter 2021/22
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