



ECONOMY REGENERATION & HOUSING COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 27 March 2024

REPORT TITLE:	REPORT ON COUNCIL MOTIONS ON THE ENERGY EFFICIENCY OF WIRRAL'S HOUSING
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION & PLACE

REPORT SUMMARY

This report responds to the motion agreed by Council on 20th March, 2023 entitled "Greater Insulation Programme Needed for Wirral's Housing" and provides an update on the motion agreed by Council on 10th October 2022 entitled "Energy Efficiency / Residential".

Low carbon housing retrofit contributes to Theme 5 of Wirral's Working Together Plan 2023-27 by working together to protect our environment.

This is a non-key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee is requested to:

1. Note the asks of the Council motions; and
2. Approve as a Committee the responses to the Motions as outlined in Section 3.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 To approve the responses to the Council motions requested of this Committee.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The Council motions required reporting to Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee and therefore no other options were considered.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 At a meeting of Council on 20th March, 2023 a motion entitled “Greater Insulation Programme Needed for Wirral’s Housing” was agreed as amended. This outlined that:

1. Council requests that the Director of Regeneration and Place provides a briefing paper on what is currently known about the energy efficiency of Wirral’s housing stock with a view to supporting all future bids by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority for funding to enable Wirral’s housing stock to become more energy efficient. The briefing should be drawn up in cooperation with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and circulated to Wirral’s MPs.

Council also requests:

2. The Director of Regeneration and Place to circulate to all members of the Council and publish on the Council’s website, the existing report on Decarbonising Residential Buildings in Wirral, written by the Energy Saving Trust in March 2021 for Wirral Council and summarised by officers in a report to Housing in November 2021;
3. The Director of Regeneration and Place report to the next meeting of the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee regarding the motion passed by Council on 10th October 2022 in order to provide an update;
4. In order for the Council to respond to future initiatives in a timely matter the arrangements be made for relevant spokespersons of all groups, and the Director of Regeneration and Place to liaise with officers of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and its relevant Portfolio Holder to enable these to be progressed;
5. In the event that funds are released by central government that enable this Council to take them up directly the issue be discussed with the relevant spokespersons and reported to the relevant Policy and Service Committee and Policy and Resources committee as required.

The related motion agreed by Council on 10th October 2022 entitled “Energy Efficiency / Residential” stated that Council recognises that national changes are needed, but, in the meantime, asks officers to work with the Economy Regeneration and Housing Committee, to include as part of its work programme, actions to enable the Council to:

- Have an ambitious stated year on year insulation or EPC target for Wirral;
- Develop a plan by the end of financial year to help realise the target;

- Actively identify potential sources of funding (within current budgets and via external funding) to enable improvements to start this winter.

Response to Council Motions

3.2 Ask 1

3.2.1 A report on the energy efficiency of Wirral's housing stock has previously been provided to Members of this committee as part of a report in November 2021, which outlined the extent and challenge of improving the energy efficiency of housing in the borough. The report also set out the opportunities and work which officers were undertaking with the Combined Authority and other Liverpool City Region Local Authorities as part of the low carbon retrofit programme. Appendix 1 has been drawn up in cooperation with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and will be circulated to all Wirral MPs subject to approval of this report.

3.3 Ask 2

3.3.1 The Energy Saving Trust report is published on the Council's website and can be found here: <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/housing/housing-information-and-advice/home-energy-conservation-reports>

3.4 Ask 3

3.4.1 In 2022, the Cool Wirral Partnership commissioned APSE Energy (a local authority energy collaboration sitting within the Association for Public Service Excellence) to lead on a Zero Carbon Buildings Task Force. The Task Force met six times, at the end of which a report was produced. One of the recommendations within the report was to establish Task and Finish Groups to take a deeper dive and develop projects and future investments in the sector. A Task and Finish Group was recommended for Residential Retrofitting, with suggestions for targets. It is essential that targets are set, along with a plan of action for achieving these targets, by a cross-section of organisations who can implement and influence change, as the Council alone cannot do this, particularly as the uptake of retrofit improvements is dependent on many factors outside of the Council's control.

3.4.2 A Task & Finish Group was convened and met three times in 2023 resulting in a clear action plan, as set out in Appendix 2 of this report, which was developed by people from a range of organisations with an interest in improving the energy efficiency of housing in Wirral, including members of the Cool Wirral Partnership. The Group's actions have taken into consideration the Liverpool City Region Net Zero Delivery Plan 2023-28, for which the Combined Authority are taking the lead on many overlapping actions.

3.4.3 As part of the scope of the Task & Finish Group, a dashboard of measures was also identified and agreed to monitor progress and track improvements. These include:

- Average domestic annual gas and electricity consumption;
- Average greenhouse gas emissions from domestic gas and electricity consumption;

- Number of measures installed under ECO4 and the Great British Insulation Scheme;
- Proportion of homes rated Energy Performance Certificate Band A-C and D-G;
- Number of homes benefiting from local schemes (e.g. Home Upgrade Grant, Solar Together).

These measures form part of the Cool 2 Strategy and are reported annually to Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee. Officers' recommendation to Economy, Regeneration & Housing Committee is to continue to utilise measures demonstrating improvements to the energy performance of residential dwellings which have been previously approved to be reported on as part of the Cool 2 Strategy for the Borough.

- 3.4.4 Economy, Regeneration & Housing Committee should note since their approval to support the work programme being undertaken by officers and partners as part of the Liverpool City Region retrofit agenda, an additional 1,704 measures in around 1,500 homes have been installed across Wirral. This is in addition to the average annual 3,400 measures which are delivered as part of the Energy Company Obligation scheme. This is via a mixture of measures including solar photovoltaic panels, air source heat pumps, loft insulation and external wall insulation. To provide an example of programme outcome, under the Sustainable Warmth Fund, 64% of properties were lifted to an Energy Performance Certificate Band C or above.
- 3.4.5 Members were advised at the November 2021 meeting of the Housing Committee of the significant financial challenge in trying to raise the EPC standard of homes, which was estimated by Energy Saving Trust to cost around £0.8 billion to raise the Borough's housing stock to EPC Band C. The Council Motion of October 2022 recognised no adequate retrofit of insulation is possible without adequate national government funding and that national changes were required, however asked Economy, Regeneration & Housing Committee to consider existing and external funding.
- 3.4.6 Officers have worked and continue to work with others to maximise the funding and routes to installations available to assist householders and landlords. Whilst the Council, social housing providers and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority are able to maximise the funding available from these larger schemes and have continued to do so since 2021, the third sector has also often successfully bid for funding. Energy Projects Plus has regularly been successful in bids to the Energy Industry Voluntary Redress Scheme, the Smart Energy GB in Communities Fund, Cadent Foundation, Big Energy Saving Network and the British Gas Energy Trust. The Council will continue to endorse the third sector in any bids and provide officer support where required in bid development.
- 3.4.7 The Residential Retrofitting Task and Finish Group, Council officers and the Wirral lead Member for the Housing and Spatial Planning Board will continue to work with the Combined Authority to identify funding sources and finance mechanisms, such as group purchasing, to support improvement to the energy efficiency and retrofit agenda with any future reports submitted to the relevant Committee for consideration. This summer, the Combined Authority is committed to bidding for the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 3 (a £1.25bn competition) and the Local Authority Retrofit Scheme (a £500m competition), which will run from April 2025 until

March 2028. Furthermore, the Combined Authority is seeking to extend Solar Together for a third round this summer.

3.5 Ask 4 and 5

3.5.1 The Director of Regeneration and Council Officers have previously engaged with relevant Spokespersons and Policy Committee Members and reported on programme funding through existing governance structures. Economy, Regeneration & Housing Committee approved a report on 18th November 2021 supporting the work programme for low carbon retrofit programmes in Wirral as part of the Liverpool City Region partnership. Wirral Council has both Member and Officer representation on the Combined Authority Housing and Spatial Planning Board, where Liverpool City Region retrofit programme funding and bids are governed. Wider Member engagement and briefings have been undertaken for these programmes through specific briefing notes and also via Member updates.

3.5.2 The Assistant Director for Housing will ensure that this process is continued to be provided for any future initiatives which are available for the benefit of Wirral residents and will continue to be shared, including formal reporting to any relevant committees, as required.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no financial implications for the Council associated with this report. Should finance be required for future retrofit schemes, these will be the subject of a separate decision.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report. Legal input will be provided in due course should it be required in respect of future retrofit schemes.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 The strategic lead for low carbon retrofit programmes is covered by the Strategic Housing & Investment Team and there are no implications on staffing due to the current or programmed future activity. There are no ICT or Assets implications arising from this report.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 There will be risks with delivering each aspect of low carbon housing retrofit that will be assessed and managed prior to delivery. For example, LCR CA-delivered programmes always have a comprehensive risk register which is updated on an ongoing basis and reviewed by Wirral Council officers at every bi-monthly LCR-wide officer retrofit meeting.

7.2 Low carbon housing retrofit activity helps mitigate the risks of climate change impact through the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. It links directly to the "Climate Response" risk in the Corporate Risk Register (risk reference CRR007/23) in which the Low Carbon Buildings Taskforce is an existing control.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 Wide engagement has taken place in the development of the Low Carbon Buildings Taskforce report via the Cool Wirral Partnership. The subsequent requirement for a Residential Retrofitting Task & Finish Group led to a cross-section of representative organisations developing the action plan, which was presented back to the Cool Wirral Partnership.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no direct equality implications arising from this report. However, Members should note most funding sources provided by the Government have conditions attributed for specific targeted outcomes. Equality Impact Assessments have been undertaken for previous programmes of funding and will continue to be undertaken if other programme funding becomes available.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Residential retrofitting through improving insulation or installing renewable energy technologies in Wirral's homes has a direct positive impact on climate change prevention. Housing in Wirral accounts for around 40% of the borough's climate pollution.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 It is a key aim of both the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and Wirral Council to ensure local companies are engaged as much as possible in the procurement of retrofit-related programmes. In addition, the Liverpool City Region Green Jobs & Skills Plan 2022 is designed to ensure the growth in retrofit benefits local people through improved skills and training.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Member briefing on the energy efficiency of Wirral's housing
Appendix 2 - Residential retrofitting in Wirral action plan 2024

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Decarbonising Residential Buildings in Wirral, Energy Saving Trust, March 2021
2. Wirral's Zero Carbon Buildings Taskforce report, APSE Energy, June 2022

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee in accordance with Section 4.2(h)(iv) of its Terms of Reference, the Authority's role and functions to strategic and private sector housing policies and as the housing authority.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Council: motion entitled "Greater Insulation Programme Needed for Wirral's Housing"	20 th March 2023
Council: motion entitled "Energy Efficiency / Residential".	10 th October 2022
Housing Committee: Update on Low Carbon Housing Retrofit Programme	18 th November 2021