

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR MAYORAL DECISION – MD3085

Title: Additional funding for the Warmer Homes Advice Service

Executive Summary:

The Mayor wants to make London a net zero carbon city by 2030, while supporting the most vulnerable by tackling fuel poverty, through his Green New Deal. The Warmer Homes Advice Service has been funded by the Mayor since February 2018 and until December 2022 has supported 19,533 London households in or at risk of fuel poverty, including delivering home energy advice visits to 13,929 homes.

Typical energy bills have doubled in the last year and are set to rise again in April. Many low income Londoners are struggling with the cost of living and demand for the Warmer Homes Advice Service is considerable, with targets being met ahead of schedule. This Mayoral Decision therefore allocates a further £147,000 to support an additional 1,270 vulnerable households and 730 home energy visits. The total number of households supported between 1 February 2018 and 31 May 2023 would therefore be 21,580, of whom 15,238 would receive home energy visits.

Decision:

That the Mayor approves:

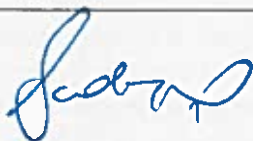
Expenditure of £147,000 in the form of grant funding to the boroughs currently delivering the Mayor's Warmer Homes Advice Service, taking total expenditure to £1,622,000 since 2018.

Mayor of London

I confirm that I do not have any disclosable pecuniary interests in the proposed decision and take the decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct for elected Members of the Authority.

The above request has my approval.

Signature:



Date:

23/2/23

PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE TO THE MAYOR

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. The Mayor wants to address fuel poverty so that every Londoner can feel warm and comfortable at home. He also wants to make London a net zero-carbon city by 2030. In addition, the Mayor's Green New Deal aims to tackle some of London's key environmental challenges, including the climate emergency and air quality, whilst creating jobs, developing skills, and supporting a just transition to a low carbon circular economy.
- 1.2. The London Environment Strategy and Fuel Poverty Action Plan set out the Mayor's ambitions to create a world-class home energy efficiency programme and is working with boroughs and other stakeholders to roll out projects to both reduce CO₂ emissions and help Londoners who are living in poverty. These are helping achieve positive health outcomes through retrofitting households struggling with energy costs. Some Londoners are spending much more time at home and many more are now economically insecure. This leads to higher energy bills, energy use rationing, and higher levels of energy debt.
- 1.3. Historically London boroughs have been a key provider of fuel poverty support programmes, with several being delivered at significant scale. Such programmes have been particularly successful in seeking to understand and address the often-complex circumstances of fuel poor homes and the links to income, health, wellbeing, and wider housing issues. Local authorities and their partner organisations are well-placed to reach populations at greatest risk of fuel poverty.
- 1.4. Many boroughs face challenges in delivering these programmes including the resources to develop and expand these programmes and around co-ordinating activities with partner organisations that work across borough boundaries. The Warmer Homes Advice Service has helped them to overcome these challenges and develop a pan-London fuel poverty advice and referral network. Between February 2018 and December 2022, the service assisted 19,533 households, including by delivering 13,929 home energy advice visits. It did this by recruiting over 330 referral partners across health and social care services, charities, housing providers and an array of community organisations.
- 1.5. The service is open to low-income households in or at risk of fuel poverty and its core activities are to recruit partners across a wide range of agencies to identify and refer fuel poor Londoners and provide them with telephone and in-home energy and water advice and a range of other services.
- 1.6. Energy prices have increased considerably over the last year, with the typical bill rising from £1,277 to £2,500 now. From April 2023 this is set to rise to £3,000. Londoners living in homes with poor energy efficiency or who use expensive forms of heating will be paying much more than this. Inflation currently stands at 10.5per cent, with food inflation even higher at 16.8 per cent¹. The budgets of many Londoners and particularly of those on the lowest incomes are therefore currently very stretched. Warrants granted to energy suppliers for forced installations of prepayment meters have also increased significantly in the last year².
- 1.7. The three boroughs currently providing the London-wide Warmer Homes Advice Service for the GLA are Islington (covering North and East London), Kensington & Chelsea (covering West London), and Lewisham (covering South London). The allocation of £350,000 to the service was approved by MD3010 and these boroughs were awarded funding in July 2022. Their existing targets for 2022-2023 are to support 2,975 households and visit 1,790 homes. Some individual borough targets have been exceeded.

¹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices>

² <https://inews.co.uk/news/uk-energy-debt-crisis-half-million-warrants-granted-forced-prepayment-meters-2008884>

- 1.8. Whilst the boroughs have been able to secure match funding from other sources such as energy suppliers, network operators and the Ofgem Redress Fund, demand for the service is considerable. Demand for the advice service increased by 79 per cent in Quarters 2 and 3 of 2022-23 compared to the previous year. Without additional funding the boroughs will have to limit the number of households they support in Quarter 4 at a time when many low-income households are seeking support during the winter months. The additional funding will go to all three boroughs.
- 1.9. In November 2022 Energy Advice London, a new service delivered by the Energy Saving Trust and supported by the Mayor, was launched. This service is available through a telephone helpline and website, offering all Londoners, regardless of income or vulnerability, energy advice and signposting to further sources of support. Vulnerable and low-income Londoners in need of support with fuel and water debt, billing disputes, or Warmer Homes grant applications are passed from Energy Advice London to the Warmer Homes Advice Service, who can also arrange home visits where needed. In addition, we are currently piloting a benefit check service which currently solely receives referrals from the Warmer Homes Advice Service. In 2022 we also established a single referral form for all NHS service providers in London.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

2.1. The core activities of the service are to:

- recruit partners across a wide range of agencies to identify and refer fuel poor Londoners
- deliver telephone advice and outreach
- deliver energy advice visits and fit or provide small energy and water saving measures
- support applications to the Mayor's Warmer Homes grants programme and other grants
- support households referred from Energy Advice London and NHS partners
- enrol households for energy and water social tariffs
- assist households in fuel and water debt or billing disputes to negotiate with suppliers and secure relief
- refer households for benefit entitlement checks
- refer vulnerable households for London Fire Brigade fire safety checks.

2.2. The additional funding would allow the service providers to support an additional 1,270 households. In addition, a further 730 home energy visits would take place. By the end of May 2023 this will mean a total of at least 21,580 low-income households will have been supported, including through at least 15,238 home energy advice visits. This figure includes those yet to be supported in Quarter 4 through existing funding. Support for households facing fuel and water debt will also increase within this. Existing funding agreements will be changed to allow this extension.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1. Under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, as a public authority, the GLA is subject to the public sector equality duty and must have due regard to the need to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not; and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not. Protected characteristics under section 4 of the Equality Act are age, disability, gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity, race,

religion or belief, sex, sex orientation, and marriage or civil partnership status (all except the last being "relevant" protected characteristics).

- 3.2. The GLA will take appropriate steps to ensure there are no potential negative impacts on those with protected characteristics in relation to the development, design, targeting, marketing and delivery of the scheme. This will be done by ensuring compliance with the Mayor's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and developing and testing in line with GLA guidance on equalities and diversity. Those with protected characteristics will gain from the positive benefits of this scheme in equal measure should their households be eligible, and there will be equality of access to participate in the delivery and benefit from the scheme, without discrimination.
- 3.3. The programme has been designed in line with the London Environment Strategy and the proposals in there were tested to ensure they had due regard to the public sector quality duty. The programme will target residents who are in or at risk of fuel poverty. The programme is therefore designed to advance equality of opportunity and support those who are particularly vulnerable, whether because of their protected characteristics or other factors, such as their health or personal circumstances. It is therefore expected that this scheme will have a positive impact on lower income and fuel poor households. Indirect benefits are also anticipated by catalysing greater awareness of energy use and the opportunities for people to reduce their energy consumption and bills, whilst still protecting their health.

4. Other considerations

Key risks

Risk	Likelihood (out of 5)	Impact (out of 5)	Rating	Mitigation
Insufficient referrals coming from the network	2	2	2	Avoid. The GLA Energy Team will work with the service providers to promote more widely
Excessive number of referrals received	2	2	2	Avoid. Demand will be regularly monitored, and service providers will be advised to reduce their offering and supported to secure third party funding.

Links to Mayoral strategies

- 4.1. Relevant London Environment Strategy objectives are:
- **Proposal 6.1.2.a:** The Mayor will work with partners to help alleviate fuel poverty in London through implementing the recommendations of the Fuel Poverty Action Plan.
 - **Proposal 6.1.1a:** Contribute to helping Londoners improve the energy efficiency of their homes, where appropriate, by providing technical assistance, support and funding.
- 4.2. Relevant Fuel Poverty Action Plan actions are:
- implement a programme to help Londoners, particularly the long-term ill and disabled, through ensuring that they are getting access to all of the income support they are entitled to, including Benefit Entitlement Checks

- provide a Fuel Poverty Support Fund of up to £500k over four years (2017-18 – 2020-21) to support the roll out of local advice and referral networks, including home visiting services, as a way of helping to improve the living conditions of fuel poor households
- improve identification of vulnerable energy and water consumers and ensure that they are aware of support available to them
- support the rolling out of existing local authority and community advice and referral networks, as a way of helping to improve the living conditions of fuel poor households.

4.3. Relevant Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy objectives are:

- **Strategic Objective 12:** To work with government, businesses, transport providers, voluntary groups and all relevant partners to help ensure our approach to tackling fuel poverty and improving green spaces is inclusive.

4.4. Relevant Health Inequalities Strategy objectives are:

- through his London Food Strategy and Fuel Poverty Action plan, work with partners to tackle food poverty and fuel poverty and their impacts on vulnerable Londoners.

4.5. Relevant recovery missions are:

- **A Robust Safety Net:** The pandemic has impacted on Londoners' incomes and household bills and support from the Warmer Homes Advice Service will help to relieve hardship.
- **A Green New Deal:** Londoners living in fuel poverty are more likely to experience cold, damp homes and the Warmer Homes Advice Service supports them to use energy more efficiently and supports access to funding for heating and insulation improvements.

Conflicts of interest

- 4.6. There are no conflicts of interest to note for any of the officers involved in the drafting or clearance of this decision form.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1. Approval is being sought for expenditure of £147,000 in the form of grant funding to the boroughs currently delivering the Mayor's Warmer Homes Advice Service.
- 5.2. This expenditure will be funded from the Warmer Homes revenue budget within the Energy Efficiency team. The expenditure will span financial years and based on the project timeline it is anticipated that approximately £49,000 will be spent in 2022-23 with the remaining £98,000 spent in 2023-24. This is subject to approval of the Mayor's budget for 2023-24.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1. The foregoing sections of this report indicate that the decisions requested of the Mayor concern the exercise of the GLA's general powers, falling within the GLA's statutory powers to do such things considered to further or that are facilitative of, or conducive or incidental to, the promotion of economic development and wealth creation, social development or improvement of the environment, in Greater London.

- 6.2. In implementing the proposals in respect of which a decision is sought, officers should comply with the GLA's related statutory duties to:
- pay due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people
 - consider how the proposals will promote the improvement of health of persons, health inequalities between persons and to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom
 - consult with appropriate bodies.
- 6.3. In taking the decisions requested, as noted in section 3 above, the Mayor must have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, namely the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010; to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (race, disability, gender, age, sex, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, and gender reassignment) and persons who do not share it; and to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. To this end, the Mayor should have particular regard to section 3 (above) of this report.
- 6.4. Section 1 of this report indicates that part of the sought budget will amount to the provision of funding and not for the payment for services. Officers must ensure that the funding is distributed fairly; transparently; in accordance with the GLA's equality policy and subsidy control rules; and in a manner that affords value for money in accordance with the GLA Contracts and Funding Code. Officers must ensure that an appropriate funding agreement is put in place and executed by the GLA and the recipient before any commitment to funding is made.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

Activity	Timeline
Delivery start date	27 February 2023
Delivery end date	31 May 2023
Project closure (Round 4)	31 May 2023
Open Round 5 funding (subject to budget approval and further MD)	Spring 2023

Appendices and supporting papers:

None.

Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) and will be made available on the GLA website within one working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary. **Note:** This form (Part 1) will either be published within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

Part 1 - Deferral

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? NO

Part 2 – Sensitive information

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under FoIA should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form – NO

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Drafting officer to
confirm the
following (✓)

Drafting officer:

John Kolm-Murray has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

Sponsoring Director:

Philip Graham has reviewed the request and is satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

✓

Mayoral Adviser:

Shirley Rodrigues has been consulted about the proposal and agrees the recommendations.

✓

Advice:

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal.

✓

Corporate Investment Board

This decision was agreed by the Corporate Investment Board on 20 February 2023.

✓

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RESOURCES:

I confirm that financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this report.

Signature:

D. Gane

Date:

20/02/2023

CHIEF OF STAFF:

I am satisfied that this is an appropriate request to be submitted to the Mayor

Signature:

D. Bellamy

Date:

20/02/2023

