

**ACTION SURREY PARTNERSHIP: REQUEST FOR FUNDING**

Report of the: Head of Housing and Environmental Services

Contact: Rod Brown

Urgent Decision?(yes/no) No

If yes, reason urgent decision required: N/A

Annexes/Appendices (attached):

Other available papers (not attached):

**REPORT SUMMARY**

**Action Surrey is collaboration between all eleven Surrey districts delivering the statutory requirement on the Council to promote Home Energy Conservation under the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995. A contribution of £6,000 has been requested from each of the partnering Local Authorities to continue providing this service to Borough residents for 2016/17 and 2017/18.**

**RECOMMENDATION (S)**

**That the Committee approves the expenditure of £3,000 per annum for 2016/17 and 2017/18 to renew the contract with Action Surrey and this to be funded from the Corporate Projects Reserve**

*Notes*

**1 Implications for the Council's Key Priorities, Service Plans and Sustainable Community Strategy**

- 1.1 Key Priority – Quality of Life; The provision of energy efficiency measures such as loft and cavity wall insulation and efficient boilers along with advice on staying healthy and keeping warm in the winter months play a key role in improving ‘the quality of life of all residents, but particularly the most vulnerable in our society’
- 1.2 The Council has a statutory duty to promote Home Energy Conservation under the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 and complete a return which is currently completed on behalf of the Council by Action Surrey.

**2 Background**

- 2.1 Action Surrey is part of Thamesway Sustainable Communities Ltd and forms Surrey's Low Carbon Community network. It is a collaboration between the 11 Surrey Districts to deliver CO<sub>2</sub> emission reductions from

the private housing stock in each participating locality. In addition to reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, Action Surrey's intent is to save all residents money on their fuel bills and assist those vulnerable residents in fuel poverty to keep warm. Action Surrey manages a network of local trusted installers who can install a variety of measures.

- 2.2 Funding for the first 3 years of the partnership was met by the Climate Change Area-based Grant from DEFRA. During this initial period, this Council has forged a strong partnership with Action Surrey; the Council regularly refers residents to the Action Surrey One Stop Shop Service. Crucially, Action Surrey identifies, project manages and oversees any funding opportunities from Central Government, Surrey County Council and the Surrey Downs Clinical Commissioning Group. This work has been essential in providing a reliable and consistent service to this Borough's residents as well as fulfilling the Council's statutory duties under the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 (HECA), which includes submission of an HECA Report.

### 3 Proposals

- 3.1 Action Surrey has requested £6,000 from all the partnering Local Authorities to continue its support for 2016/17-2017/18. This is in order to maintain Action Surrey's core services to householders and to build on what has already been achieved. This amounts to £3,000 per year/per authority (i.e. £6,000 for each authority). This will also fulfil local authority responsibilities under the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995.

### 4 Financial and Manpower Implications

- 4.1 The Council does not have the knowledge within existing staff to provide this statutory requirement and would be unable to absorb the service provided by Action Surrey without additional resources.
- 4.2 The funding opportunities available for Home Energy Conservation are better accessed by Action Surrey as a Surrey Wide Partnership with the expertise and time available to submit bids which often have short deadlines.
- 4.3 It is proposed that the £6,000 funding would come from the Area Based Grant totalling £35,000 which is currently held within the Corporate Project Reserve. This originated from the Area Based Grant originally intended to fund an aerial thermal image project which is no longer required for this purpose.
- 4.4 **Chief Finance Officer's comments:** *The Council holds £35,000 of Area Based Grant within the Corporate Projects Reserve and can be used to fund this service for 2 years, however if this is going to be a service that we continue to support then the long term funding will need to be identified.*

## **5 Legal Implications (including implications for matters relating to equality)**

- 5.1 A decision to not continue to fund Action Surrey would mean the Council would no longer be part of the Surrey Wide partnership. As a result the Council would no longer be able to sign post vulnerable residents for advice and assistance, and would potentially miss grant funding opportunities. This would in turn mean that the HECA report by default will be a zero return.
- 5.2 **Monitoring Officer's comments:** *Under the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995, local housing authorities are "energy conservation authorities". Energy conservation authorities have a statutory duty to prepare a report setting out the conservation measures that the authority considers practicable, cost-effective and likely to result in significant improvement in the energy efficiency of residential accommodation in the area, The report is to include*
- 5.2.1 an assessment of the cost of the energy conservation measures set out in it,
- 5.2.2 an assessment of the extent to which carbon dioxide emissions would be decreased as a result of those measures, and
- 5.2.3 a statement of any policy of the authority for taking into account, when deciding whether to exercise any power in connection with those measures, the personal circumstances of any person.
- 5.3 The report described above may contain other matters. The report is to be published and sent to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State may request progress reports, and may take steps to assist and encourage the measures in the report to be implemented. Guidance has been issued in relation to the Act.

## **6 Sustainability Policy and Community Safety Implications**

- 6.1 Action Surrey provide advice to residents on energy conservation which is one of the Council's main sustainability objectives

## **7 Partnerships**

- 7.1 This is a strong example of partnership working across all the Surrey Boroughs providing value for money and an equitable service to all residents.

## 8 Risk Assessment

Risk	Level	Mitigation
Not renewing with Action Surrey would lead to reputational damage from other Surrey Councils, central government and the wide public. Penalties unlikely but the council is likely to be identified for criticism by central government, environmental and anti-poverty groups.	<b>M</b>	The Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) requires this council to prepare a report setting out the energy conservation measures that the authority considers practicable, cost-effective and likely to result in significant improvement in the energy efficiency of residential accommodation in its area. Although a report could be prepared, it would indicate that the Council is unlikely to contribute to energy conservation measures within the borough.
Not renewing with Action Surrey would deny local residents access to specialist advice and direction to suitable contractors. This may have a reputational risk through adverse local publicity.	<b>M</b>	There is no existing capacity to provide this advice from existing resources. There is some information available free of charge via the internet and other sources but this is unlikely to be of the quality and reliability of that provided by Action Surrey.
The Council and borough residents miss out on future funding opportunities (as part of the wider Surrey Energy & sustainability Partnership) which would help reduce energy use and CO2 emissions. This would be because we would not have access to Action Surrey's expertise on bid writing or the critical mass to make bids successful.	<b>L</b>	It is unlikely that the Council would have access to Action Surrey's assistance. Successful bids tend to be awarded where there is evidence of co-ordination. Limited internal resources could be directed to drafting a bid.

## 9 Conclusion and Recommendations

- 9.1 All other 10 Local Authorities have given a commitment to fund Action Surrey for the next 2 years.

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- 9.2 The Green Deal (the Governments flagship scheme for Home Energy Conservation measures) did not prove to be a national success. As a result the Government announced in August 2015 that the scheme would be discontinued. In addition, the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) funding scheme imposed on major energy suppliers to support domestic energy efficiency improvements has also been scaled back. This puts greater responsibility on local authorities.

**WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL**