

Record of operational decision

Decision title:	Decision to allocate £50,000 to provide energy advice resilience services as part of the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF)
Date of decision:	27/05/2026
Decision maker:	Director of Community Wellbeing
Authority for delegated decision:	Cabinet member decision on 18 th April 2026 delegated operational matters in relation to the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) to the Corporate Director Community Wellbeing. Link: Decision–Crisis and Resilience Fund– Herefordshire Council
Ward:	Countywide
Consultation:	Cabinet member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing, and Corporate Director for Community Wellbeing have been consulted about the approach to support Herefordshire residents as part of the Crisis and Resilience Fund framework. A Political Group Consultation has also been undertaken, with feedback informing the development of the approach.
Decision made:	<p>To award a contract to Marches Energy Advice and Severn Wye Energy Agency for the provision of energy advice and wrap around services as part of the CRF for a period of 12 months at a total cost of £25,000 each so a total of £50,000. This energy advice and wrap around support will be provided to applicants who are experiencing crisis, or at risk of crisis.</p> <p>The energy services will deliver accessible advice and practical support, aligned to the CRF definition of crisis as a circumstance of pressing need requiring immediate action to prevent or address negative outcomes. This includes a focus on the energy bills and usage within households. urgent financial shocks such as loss of income, escalating debt, housing instability, or difficulty meeting essential household costs.</p>
Reasons for decision:	<p>Fuel poverty varies across the country with 11.4% of all households in England considered fuel poor (Sub-regional fuel poverty statistics 2023). There is an estimated 15,401 households in the county (18.3%) in fuel poverty.</p> <p>The groups most vulnerable to fuel poverty include older people (65 and older), single parents with dependent children, families who are unemployed or on a low income, children and young people, pregnant women, people with disabilities, people with existing illnesses and long-term conditions, and single unemployed people.</p> <p>This figure reflects the challenges that the county faces in relation to the energy efficiency of properties including a large proportion of older, hard-to-treat properties and restricted access to mains gas due to the rural nature of the county.</p> <p>The current high level of demand for support for energy advice and application to grant schemes reflects the challenges that people are experiencing in respect to paying their bills and keeping warm. There is demand for advice and support to improve the energy efficiency of their home whilst also having an awareness of their own environmental impact.</p>

Inequalities in a range of health issues can also be tracked to the quality of housing; examples include the link between respiratory disease and dampness and mould, and excess winter deaths and poor insulation and space heating.

Recent health policy has seen the introduction of the Public Health Outcomes Framework that include health outcomes that can be positively influenced by tackling cold, damp homes and fuel poverty.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines, specifically:

- NICE Guideline 6 on “Excess winter deaths and illness and the health risks associated with cold homes” recommends the provision of “a single-point-of-contact health and housing referral service for people living in cold homes” which identifies people at risk of ill health from living in a cold home; assesses the heating needs of people who use primary health and home care services; and provides tailored solutions for them.

Severn Wye Energy Agency and Marches Energy Advice are both local based suppliers. Both organisations have a good track record of working with the Council and have a good track record in energy advice provision.

In addition to increasing levels of demand, there has also been an increase in the complexity of clients’ situations, requiring both additional time and a multi-faceted solution to help address the challenges they face. The Energy Advice and Energy Services providers will help address such challenges.

The overall purpose of the energy advice and energy provision under CRF is to:

- Support households struggling to heat their homes and those in fuel poverty;
- Enable householders to take action to improve the energy efficiency of their homes
- Support householders to access grant schemes, and where identified install a suite of low-cost ‘quick win’ energy efficiency measures
- Work with other stakeholders (as appropriate) to achieve desired outcomes for households (e.g. energy companies, grant funded schemes and District Network Operators)
- To improve the preparedness of vulnerable households to winter weather
- To work in tandem with Council health & wellbeing outreach services such as Community Hubs and Winter Outreach Programme, providing advice drop-ins, training and low-cost measures

In taking a preventative approach to reduce fuel poverty, Herefordshire Council hopes to reduce demand upon the health and social care sectors, enabling significant savings, which can be re-invested in the sector. The CRF Energy Advice and Energy Services provision therefore has a vital role to play in keeping people warm, safe and independent in their own homes.

Internal departments continue to deliver associated energy efficiency grant schemes, such as the Warm Homes Local Grant and any schemes as a result of the Warm Homes Plan and can also make referrals to these services if deemed appropriate.

<p>Equality Considerations</p>	<p>Due to the scope of this project and its potential impact on certain protected characteristics, an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is attached as an appendix to the cabinet report. In summary, the EIA did not identify any negative impacts at this time. Any future negative impacts will be reviewed and mitigated accordingly.</p>
<p>Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:</p>	<p>The cost of the energy advice provision will be funded from the Crisis and Resilience Fund allocation of £2.3 million provided by central government. The proposed expenditure will be met from this ring-fenced grant and will not place any additional financial burden on the Council’s core budget.</p>
<p>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</p>	<p>By not commissioning the service would leave Herefordshire residents without a local source of home energy efficiency and fuel poverty advice and support. Residents would therefore need to be signposted to national agencies and their own energy suppliers, which experience has shown does not always lead to a satisfactory resolution. This could leave residents in fuel poverty and the associated implications that this has. By not approving this funding would also reduce access to timely advice for residents experiencing financial shock, increasing the likelihood of crisis escalation and repeat need.</p> <p>This option is not recommended, as it would undermine the preventative intent of the CRF and limit the Council’s ability to support residents to achieve longer-term financial resilience.</p>
<p>Details of any declarations of interest made:</p>	<p>None</p>

Signed..... Date: