

NEWS RELEASE



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Date: 18/11/2020
Issued by: Melanie Allen 07789941014

Issue No: 239/20
Version: 0.1

KEEPING THE BOROUGH WARM

With the weather getting colder there's great news for residents as Wokingham Borough Council continues to roll out schemes to help them make their homes more energy efficient and reduce fuel bills for years to come.

The initiatives which include the Help to Heat scheme, the Green Homes Grant and the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery (LAD) element, are an important part of the council's plans to tackle the Climate Emergency by reducing carbon emissions across the borough and to tackle fuel poverty for some of our most vulnerable residents.

"As people start to turn their thermostats up it's the ideal time for us to think about our homes and whether they could be more energy efficient or less expensive to heat." said Cllr Gregor Murray, executive member for Climate Emergency. "Not only is heating our houses a major contributor towards carbon emissions it's also an increasing concern to many of our residents who are seeing crippling energy bills grow each year and don't realise that installing insulation in their homes could save them hundreds of pounds and be effective for years.

"There's often a misconception about fuel poverty with many people assuming it only affects those on the lowest incomes but that's simply not the case. Rising energy costs have an impact on many local residents with people forced to decide between heating their home and paying other household bills. We don't believe any local resident should have to make decisions like this which is why we have introduced our ECO Flex criteria which means we can offer support, not only to those on low incomes, but also to those who might be more vulnerable to the cold or have other commitments such as residents with children under 5, or those with a range of health conditions.

"Being able to offer so many different schemes at once, with greater flexibility, means that most local homeowners or landlords can access some form of free financial support to help make their properties more energy efficient. Whether that's a Green Homes Grant towards the cost of installing low carbon

heating such as a ground source heat pump, or getting free, or heavily subsidised, insulation through Help to Heat there is something for all.

“We’re also very pleased to announce that we have made a successful joint bid with Bracknell Forest Council for £900,000 of Green Homes Grant funding allowing both local authorities to deliver additional works to support those most in need. This money will have a massive impact as it can be used for a much wider range of improvements such as installing solid wall insulation to park homes. We’re rolling this out alongside the Help to Heat scheme so encourage residents to keep any eye out for a letter arriving through their door soon.

“And it doesn’t stop here as these schemes are just the beginning of our ambitious plans to help create a greener Wokingham for all. We’re continuing to seek out sources of funding as well as new and innovative ideas which I’m looking forward to sharing over the next few months.”

Cllr Murray was speaking as he visited a Woosehill property which is having works carried out as part of Help to Heat.

Rolling out support

The Help to Heat and LAD schemes are being rolled out across the borough in partnership with local business Insta Group Ltd who are at the forefront of the industry and are currently celebrating 40 years of helping residents and businesses make their properties more energy efficient.

“As a local businesses we’re very pleased to be working with the council to help residents improve their homes” said Bob Smith, from Insta Group Ltd. “We’ve been working in the industry for years all over the country and know that most people simply don’t understand the difference good insulation can make to the home. They also believe that the work will be incredibly disruptive when in reality it can be installed really quickly and, in the case of most cavity wall insulation jobs, even from outside.”

Mrs Pearce, a local homeowner having works done as part of the help to heat scheme, echoed these comments, saying: “I had insulation installed at my previous house under a similar scheme in a different area. Having the work done made a huge difference to my home making it much warmer during the winter and even cooler during the summer months. I was really pleased when I heard something similar was being offered here and phoned up to find out more.”

Since the scheme was approved at the end of October several hundred letters have been delivered to local residents to advise them of the scheme with more than 50 people signing up to have their homes surveyed within the first fortnight and more following on.

Over the coming months Insta Group Ltd will continue to deliver letters across the borough with residents being invited to find out if they are eligible for free or heavily subsidised work. All surveys and works are conducted in a covid secure method to with contractors provided with appropriate PPE. Works carried out are funded through the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) scheme which sees large energy suppliers contribute a proportion of their profits towards initiatives aimed at reducing fuel poverty and carbon emissions.

Which scheme is right for me?

Each scheme covers a range of works and eligibility criteria as follows –

- Green Homes Grant – A government run scheme to offer most homeowners and landlords vouchers of up to £5,000 (up to £10,000 where households are receipt of certain benefits) to part fund energy efficient and low-carbon heating improvements to their homes. Find out more about eligibility and how to apply at www.greenhomesgrant.campaign.gov.uk
- Help to Heat – A council run scheme that offers free, or heavily subsidised, cavity wall and / or loft insulation to qualifying households. Eligibility includes those in receipt of certain benefits, those with a household income below £35,000 after taxes or those on a list identified as persons vulnerable to cold which includes residents over 65, or with children under 5 or with a range of health conditions such as cardiovascular disease or cancer. Find out more about eligibility and how to apply by searching for Energy Saving on the council website www.wokingham.gov.uk
- Local Authority Delivery (LAD) – A council run scheme, funded through a joint £900,000 Green Homes Grant bid with Bracknell Forest Council, and focussed on helping households with an income of less than £30,000 make improvements to their homes. Wokingham Borough Council and our partners Insta group ltd will be delivering letters to properties across the Borough inviting you to be surveyed prior to being offered insulation works as part of this scheme.

And it's not just local residents who can benefit from support as local businesses may be entitled to a grant to help part fund green ideas and reduce greenhouse gas emissions as part of the Low Carbon Workspaces Initiative backed by the Thames Valley Local Enterprise Growth Hub and delivered by local business Ngage. For more information about support for businesses visit www.lowcarbonworkspaces.co.uk

-ENDS -

Further information:

1. More from Cllr Gregor Murray, Executive Member for Climate Emergency, at gregor.murray@wokingham.gov.uk or on 07486 455760
2. Photographs were taken at sit visit before lockdown commenced