

Reigate and Banstead Borough Council

Meeting of Council 1 December 2022

Public Questions

	Question by	To be answered by	Subject
1.	Mr Christopher Whinney	Councillor Lewanski, the Executive Member for Corporate Policy	Retrofitting insulation

Mr Christopher Whinney will ask the **Executive Member for Corporate Policy and Resources, Councillor Lewanski**, the following question:

Question 1: Retrofitting insulation

In the Autumn Statement the Government re-affirmed its intention to mitigate Climate Change and continue measures to reduce use of energy. It has put aside considerable funds to encourage Local Authorities to retrofit dwellings in their Boroughs.

In 2021/22 90 low-income households were retrofitted in Reigate & Banstead, so for 2022/23 what amount of central funds were tendered for and funds actually received to date and how many dwellings have been retrofitted to date and how many still to be retrofitted, please?

What is the intention of RBBC for 2023/24?

Response:

Cllrs and interested persons have indicated concern on lack of sufficient number of operatives capable of installing such systems etc. Would the forthcoming reply include some comment on training for operatives, please?

Thank you Mister Mayor and thank you for your question Mr Whinney.

In total, there are around 61,500 dwellings in the borough, of which just over half are thought to require measures to make them more energy efficient.

Government funding for domestic retrofit includes two main strands. I will take these in turn.

However, before I do so, it is worth explaining that the Council has limited direct ability to influence the fitting of energy efficiency measures in people's homes. This is because we do not own or manage the social housing in the borough, and we do not have the powers to require upgrades to private-rented or owner-occupied housing.

Our focus is therefore on assisting social housing providers and private landlords to access funding, and informing residents of what can be done and how they can access support. This approach has underpinned our work to date and will continue to do so in 2023/24.

When it comes to the Government funding that has been made available over the last few years, firstly, there is the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund.

The Council partnered with two social housing providers, Raven Housing Trust and Accent Housing, to successfully bid for £1.435m of funding to retrofit 92 social houses, 26 in Reigate & Banstead and 66 in Surrey Heath. Work is underway to progress this project now.

The latest round of SHDF funding allows social housing providers to bid for funding directly, rather than needing a local authority to bid on their behalf (as was the case for the first round).

Secondly, there is the Government's 'Green Homes Grant' funding. This comprised different funding streams including the Local Authority Delivery Fund Phases 1a, 1b and 2, and more recently the Sustainable Warmth Fund and Home Upgrade Grant.

Under phase 1a of the Local Authority Delivery Fund, a consortium of Surrey authorities was awarded £6.3 million, with a further £3.1 million awarded in phase 1b. 122 low income households in hard to heat homes within Reigate & Banstead benefitted from this funding. In total, the spend in Reigate & Banstead was £897,510.

Under phase 2 of the Local Authority Delivery Fund, the Government provided £79.6 million of funding to the South East England Net Zero Hub. 22 properties in Reigate & Banstead benefitted from this round of funding, to a total value of £181,200.

The current round of funding for residents is the Sustainable Warmth Fund and the Homes Upgrade Grant. Under this scheme, £11.9m has been provided to Surrey County Council to support owner occupiers and private landlords across the county.

The funds are still open for applications, and I would encourage any resident who is interested to contact Action Surrey to see if they are eligible.

In addition to all of this, the Council provided £0.5m of its own capital funding to support Raven Housing Trust to deliver a flagship Net Zero Carbon scheme in the north of the borough.

Finally, Mr Whinney, you ask about skills. It is true that there is both a materials and labour shortage when it comes to domestic retrofit. As a Council we work closely with education providers such as East Surrey College and have been exploring with them how more training in relation to construction skills can be provided. As this is a 'wider than borough' issue, I would also encourage you to look at Surrey County Council's recently adopted Skills Plan and the work of the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership.

Supplementary question:

There was no supplementary question forthcoming.