
Solihull MBC

Home Energy
Conservation Act
Progress Report
March 2017

Contents

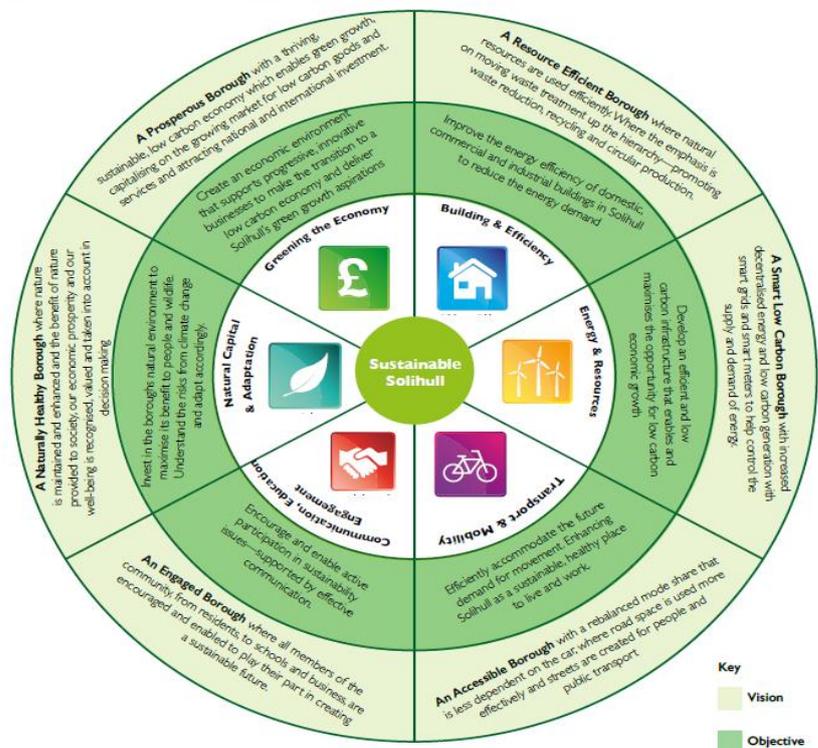
1. INTRODUCTION
2. SUMMARY
3. STRATEGIC AMBITION
4. PARTNERSHIPS
5. ACHIEVEMENTS 2015 - 2017
6. WHERE ARE WE NOW?
7. FUTURE PLANS

INTRODUCTION

The Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change requires local authorities in England to provide an update report every two years 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 the area. This report builds on previous reports setting out how Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council intends to help householders take advantage of financial incentives such as the Energy Company Obligation (ECO), Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI), Feed in Tariff (FIT) and any other schemes that became available. In addition it will also provide information on funding sourced and provided by the council.

The council's new Green Prospectus clearly sets out where we want to be by 2020. This Green Prospectus articulates Solihull's low carbon vision, ensuring that - through managed growth - we are at the forefront of the UK's transition to a low carbon economy. It is informed by a number of current and emerging borough and Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) wide strategies and activity all of

Green Prospectus Themes and Objectives



which provide the strategic direction for sustainability across the region. The Green Prospectus covers a range of themes, including Buildings and Efficiency and this will be the focus for our HECA delivery and ambitions.

SUMMARY

Since HECA was first introduced Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council has submitted annual reports to the Secretary of State from 1997 until 2011 defining any progress made towards the assumed target of a 25% improvement in energy efficiency in domestic property in our borough. With the introduction of additional specific targets under Local Area Agreements we delivered programs and works for energy efficiency, fuel poverty and carbon performance.

We are now in our third reporting stage for the revitalised HECA and this report will detail projects and work we have delivered since the last report in 2015 and our plans for the next two years to address home energy related issues across our borough.

The Council is committed to improving energy efficiency and reducing Carbon emissions whilst encouraging managed growth. The advancement of HS2 and the development of assets within UK Central will see further opportunities to promote the use of renewable technologies and to establish Solihull as a great place to live.

The Council will deliver our substantial ambitions in this area via the refreshed Home Energy Efficiency and Affordable Warmth Strategy (HEEAWS) including renewables and area-based energy efficiency schemes across the Borough.

STRATEGIC AMBITION

Our Council Plan (2016 - 2020) sets the overall strategic direction for the Council. In particular, it sets our strategy and our contribution to the delivery of Our Vision - Solihull: where everyone has an equal chance to be healthier, happier, safer, and more prosperous. The council has updated (2015) its Home Energy Efficiency and Affordable Warmth Strategy (HEEAWS) to take account of the changes in legislation and funding opportunities, as well as building on existing policies, practices and partnerships to maximise the potential for energy efficiency, low and zero carbon energy and provision of affordable warmth to residents in Solihull.

<http://www.solihull.gov.uk/Portals/0/StrategiesPlansPolicies/Housing/EnergyandAffordableWarmthStrategy.pdf>

The updated HEEAWS aims to take account of the recent changes, building on existing policies, practices and partnerships to maximise the potential for energy efficiency, low and zero carbon energy and provision of affordable warmth to residents in Solihull.

The purpose of the strategy is to guide the Council and partner agencies in committing resources to four linked objectives:

1. To improve the energy efficiency of domestic dwellings in Solihull and promote the use of appropriate low and zero carbon technologies that help to reduce carbon emissions.
2. To work towards a reduction in fuel poverty throughout the Borough.
3. To provide a range of support for residents and in particular vulnerable households and those on low income.

4. To support the emerging 'green economy' through investment in energy efficiency measures in new and existing housing and low and zero carbon technologies.

This strategy can only be delivered through effective partnership working and therefore the Council's Home Energy Officer will continue to develop effective partnerships with a range of organisations in order to support residents and to develop initiatives.

We currently do this by generating support from a range of partners who come together to form a number of groups including the Home Energy Officer Group, Corporate Sustainability Group, Winter Warmth Project Group and the Seasonal Excess Deaths Group.

PARTNERSHIPS

The Home Energy Conservation Officer (HECO) liaises with the various directorates of the Council which have roles in maximising the authority's leverage on these matters. While raising the standard of new development is important, most impact on home energy efficiency and affordable warmth will be made through investing in existing homes.

The Council collaborates with other authorities as part of the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP), Sustainable Housing Action Partnership (SHAP) and the Social Housing Energy Forum (SHEF) to develop a collaborative approach to energy efficiency that will support the increased adoption of low and zero carbon technologies. This collaborative approach will continue with further partnership opportunities resulting from the creation of the West Midlands Combined Authority.

To ensure that we can reach the wide and varied homes across the borough and are able to continue our important progress towards our goal of achieving a significant reduction in energy use in domestic homes across the district, it is important to continue and further develop our work with partners and use a number of different channels to ensure we reach out to all of our residents in a joined up and effective way. Some samples of our partnerships include:

Local Authority Consortium Groups

We are a key member of the Act on Energy Local Authority Consortium Group and Association of Local Energy Officers which identify and share best practice in energy efficiency with other local authorities on both a regional and sub regional basis. These groups not only allow us to share experiences but enable us to feed into consultations and provide a link to BEIS through the ALEO Executive.

Home Energy Officer Group

This group meets on a regular basis to look at home energy issues. The aim of the group is to work in partnership to ensure a co-ordinated approach. We are currently working to develop an Energy Data Integration System EDIS and the group are instrumental in updating and developing projects as part of our Green Prospectus.

Winter Warmth Project Group

The group has been working in partnership since 2008 to address the issues faced by our vulnerable residents who may be at risk from living in a cold home. Made up of members from a range of

internal and external partners including, Adult Social Care, Public Health, Housing and the NHS the group has been instrumental in the delivery of our highly successful winter warmth campaign. The activities of the Winter Warmth Campaign are reported to the Seasonal Excess Deaths Steering Group, Chaired by the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing.

Seasonal Excess Deaths Steering Group

This group meets on a bi monthly basis and is chaired by the Cabinet Members for Health and wellbeing. This group is responsible for overseeing the work of the Winter Warmth Campaign and ensures an integrated approach to wider health policy across the council.

Boilers on Prescription Board

We have been working in a wider partnership with our colleagues from Worcestershire and Warwickshire Councils to deliver a boiler on prescription scheme which is a partnership project to ensure some of our most vulnerable households are able to access funding for a warmer and more affordable home through the provision of either replacement or first-time central heating.

ACHIEVEMENTS 2015 – 2017

Over the last two years we have undertaken a number of activities to improve energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty. Many of these initiatives provide information, advice and guidance through a variety of sources including attendance at flu jab clinics, advice surgeries to give bespoke advice on managing fuel bills, energy efficiency products, grants available, training for councillors, officers and partners, community presentations, Landlord Forum presentations, connecting with rural communities in partnership with the mobile library service. A summary of some of the more major projects is set out below:

Boilers on Prescription

Through our partnership with Worcestershire and Warwickshire we were successful in receiving funding of £325,000 from NEA which was additionally matched by partners to enable us to provide replacement/first-time heating for residents whose vulnerability put them at risk if they were living in a cold home. Age UK who deliver our Winter Warmth campaign provided the majority of referrals and our energy partners Act on Energy visited those residents in their homes to help them through the application process and ensure that households were supported throughout the process which for many vulnerable households can be a stressful experience. In addition, Act on Energy provided before and after EPC's so we could clearly see outcomes but this also offered an additional opportunity to give the householder advice and support so they felt comfortable with their new system. Residents will be contacted after 12 months to remind them of servicing and also check energy tariffs. To date we have supported over 50 residents with new heating systems and have improved their average EPC ratings.

Providing Information, Advice and Guidance

We are aware that advice provision for residents is essential and recent finding within the Bonfield Review has highlighted both the importance and value of energy advice. In Solihull this advice is delivered locally through our energy advice partners Act on Energy, who offer a combination of

telephone advice through to community based and in home support so that we can be confident that residents have access to timely, tailored support to allow them to make ongoing decisions about energy usage, from switching through to physical measures. Since our last report Act on Energy have provided support and advice to over 1,600 residents in Solihull.

Solihull Winter Warmth Campaign



The award winning Winter Warmth Campaign has been in existence since 2008. The campaign focuses on:

- Providing timely support and assistance to vulnerable residents to prevent crisis occurring.
- Providing emergency equipment and assistance when heating breakdown occurs.
- Providing referral pathways for appropriate support for both the public and professionals.
- Providing awareness training for frontline professionals across Solihull.
- Providing a proactive approach to targeting those most at risk during the coldest periods.

Delivered by Age UK Solihull, the campaign is and supported by partners including Public Protection , Solihull Community Housing and Out of Hours emergency support is delivered by the Adult Social Care Emergency Duty Team. The campaign is supported more widely by the Community Advice Hubs and its partners.

The campaign is widely publicised, including a dedicated helpline that provides access to a range of preventative advice, information and emergency support. Temperature / information cards are distributed across Solihull providing advice on keeping warm, detailing the support available and advertising the Helpline telephone number.

The Solihull Healthy Homes Project funded by the British Gas Energy Trust Healthy Homes Fund commenced on 1st November 2015, the project will end on 31st March 2017. It works alongside and furthers the aims and objectives of the Solihull Winter Warmth Campaign, a partnership of local statutory and voluntary organisations that protects those most vulnerable in our communities from the effects of cold. The main goal for the period of the funding is that all strategic plans and practical measures are in place to ensure that Solihull has the capacity and capability to protect the future of the Winter Warmth Campaign and bring about long term, positive outcomes for vulnerable residents.

Key Achievements

- Single point of contact in place through Winter Warmth Helpline – used by residents and professionals. The helpline is now fully operational 9.00am – 5.00pm Monday to Friday from 1st October – 31st March. As per our bid we have employed additional resources, commencing 10th October 2016, for the winter period.
- Professionals Newsletter in place
- 10,000 temperature/information cards distributed

- The Healthy Homes Survey is being used alongside the existing Cold Homes and Energy Survey. The survey helps our staff and volunteers to identify other issues affecting the person or the household.
- 260 Healthy Homes Surveys completed.
- 308 Cold Homes and Energy Surveys completed.
- 1,040 clients have accessed the project between 01.11.15 – 28.02.17.
- 3 Events organised, 117 delegates attended.
- 1 Warm Home Discount Event held 22.09.16, 40 individuals attended.
- 14 talks/presentations given to local groups. 443 people in attendance.
- Key partners are in place, and a resource document is in place.
- A database of those identified as being most at risk has been set-up and individual data of 3,105 vulnerable people has been transferred to it ready for proactive targeting prior to winter 2016/17. An estimated 1.5% of the population of Solihull, those most at risk of the effects of cold weather, have been input.
- Work ongoing with Public Health, Coventry Solihull and Warwickshire Resilience Team to stage two events for Cold Weather Alert Leads across the Local Authority and Health
- 12 new volunteers recruited since 01st November 2015.

Solihull Community Housing

Further to the completion of works undertaken In order to meet the Decent Homes standard SCH have continued to improve the energy efficiency of homes under their management. At the commencement of SCH's Decent Homes programme the overall energy efficiency rating (SAP) for homes in their management was 46. This has risen to 73.

New installations include:

- new central heating systems to 647 homes
- double glazing to 860 homes
- Insulation measures to 407 homes

SCH have also completed the installation of renewable technologies:

- Biomass – 1,285 apartments
- Solar PV/ thermal on 11 newly built homes
- 7 air source heating systems
- Of 1,165 apartments who had biomass also had external wall insulation applied.



EWI works being completed to low rise properties

All of the SCH biomass heating installations have now been accredited for non-domestic renewable heat incentive payments. These payments are projected to be worth around £200,000 annually and contribute towards the on-going costs of managing and maintaining the systems. SCH has also secured accreditation for Domestic RHI payments for 4 sites that have had newly installed air source heat pumps. SCH will aim to secure similar funding and income streams for any further renewable technology installations that it completes.

SCH are considering alternative heating systems in a further 5 high rise blocks (200 households) which still have old electric storage heating systems. A number of options are being considered including gas fired and renewable fuel district heating systems as well as replacement high heat retention storage heaters. SCH have now enclosed the balconies on all of its relevant high rise blocks.

Beattie Passivhaus project



This was a £625,000 Innovate UK funded trial involved upgrading a block of six flats to EnerPHit standard by way of an innovative Off-site Wrap-around Large Scale (OWLS) retro-fit. The residents remained in situ throughout the work, so minimising disruption to their lives, before they were left to enjoy all of the benefits associated with Passivhaus. Our partners in the project included Beattie Passive, Encraft, Solihull Community Housing and Coventry University.

The retrofit reached its completion in October 2016. The OWLS retrofit solution not only reduces costs for residents it also provides training and labour opportunities to the same local communities whose living conditions it does so much to improve.

Private Landlords

We currently work with partners and utility companies to advertise energy efficiency initiatives that might be of interest to private landlords and their tenants. We liaise with landlords to ensure that private rented properties are being improved to exceed the minimum legal standards currently being set.

Under the provisions of the Housing Act 2004, the condition of residential premises is assessed by using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), which has 29 prescribed hazards against which the property is assessed including excess cold.

Although the Council has the power to formally require privately rented properties to be maintained in a good state of repair and in a suitable condition for occupation. It is considered appropriate however, that landlords should have the opportunity to investigate any complaint and undertake the remedial work necessary before any formal action is considered by the Council.



So in the first instance we write to landlords advising them of the alleged defects which may include inadequate heating and insulation asking for a timetable of works they intend to carry out in order to alleviate any hazards found.

If landlords don't contact us or carry out the required works we will take enforcement action in the form of the service of statutory notices.

Solihull Switch and Save

Solihull Council has managed three successful Collective Energy Switching Schemes called Solihull Switch 'n' Save with the aim of helping residents find a better/cheaper deal on home gas and electricity bills.

We ran the scheme in October 2015, May 2016 and again in October 2016 and the results were:

	Registrations	Average Savings	Number of Switchers	% of switchers	Total Bill Savings
Oct 2015	644	£ 264.92	247	38%	£ 65,435
May 2016	1107	£ 346.99	442	40%	£153,369
Oct 2016	618	£ 220.06	156	25%	£34,329
Totals	2,369	£277,32	971	41%	£268,967

The Council has been able to recover costs related to advertising and printing via a partnering fee from iChoosr.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

This section gives details of energy related data and how we are working to address the issues raised by these statistics.

Carbon emissions

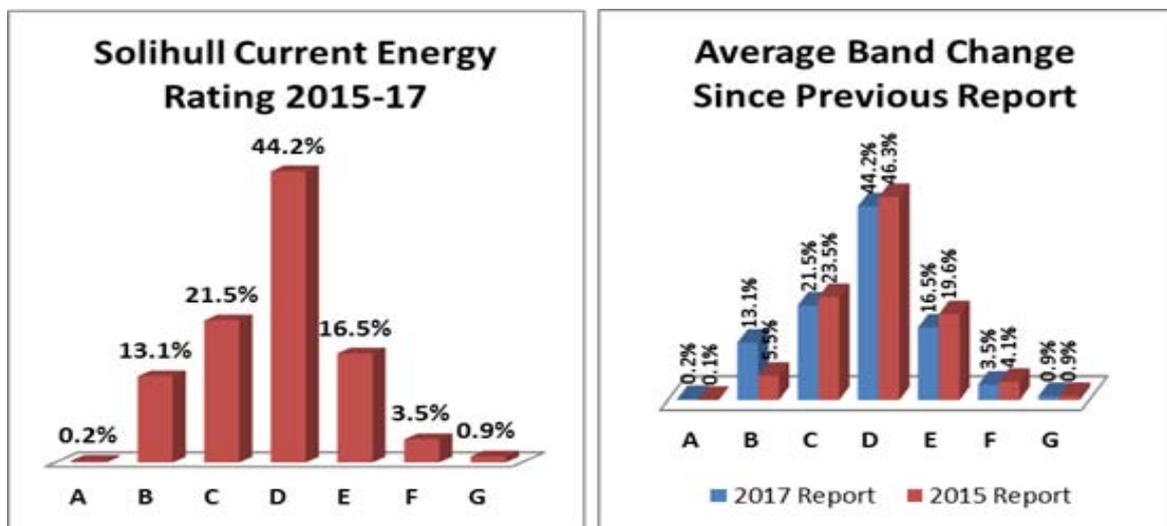
In 2014, 6.8 tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO₂) was emitted per person in Solihull¹. This is a reduction from 7.5 tonnes in 2012. However, this is a higher than the West Midlands average of 6.1 tonnes. This can be attributed to a number of factors. Homes in rural areas are often harder to heat and keep warm than those in more densely populated urban areas. The borough also has a number of key transport routes running through it and many thriving industrial and commercial businesses.

Energy Efficiency Performance

Solihull has a population of 210,400 in nearly 87,000 households. This is projected to increase to 216,000 people in 92,000 households by 2021. The proportion of the population which consists of people aged 65 and over is increasing and this is driving an increase in lone-person households, which currently account for 29% of the total.

Solihull has a particularly constrained housing market with house prices substantially above the average for the West Midlands metropolitan area and an acute shortage of affordable housing.

The borough's housing stock is generally of more recent construction and in better condition than other West Midlands Metropolitan areas. The latest available EPC data highlights that we have an increasing number of properties in the higher ratings.

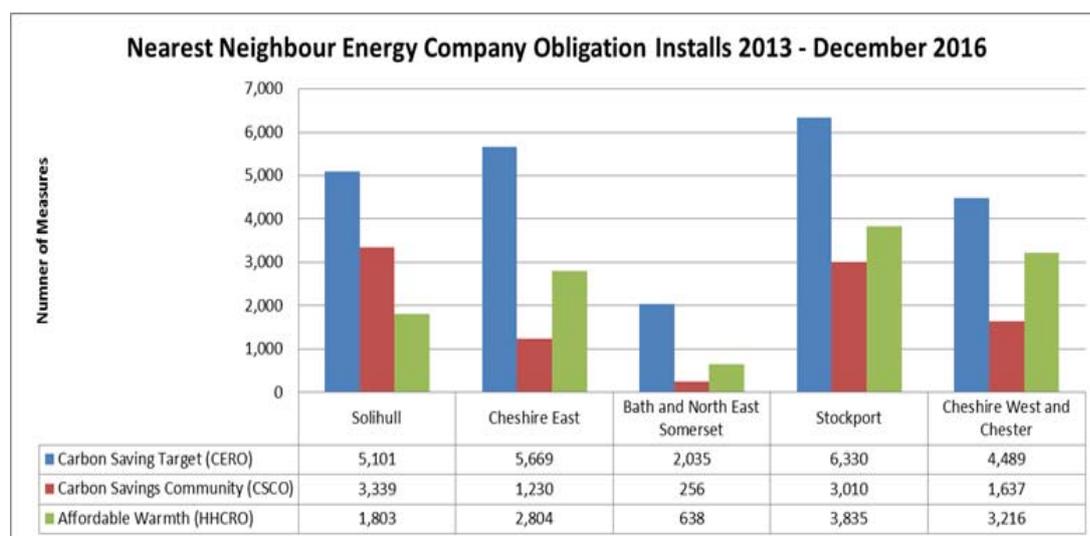


The council will continue to take evidence based approaches when considering which energy efficiency projects will deliver the greatest benefit for residents. The data available from EPC's will be invaluable going forward and is already helping to prioritise areas of work. The Council will continue to support schemes that promote and install energy saving measures in homes and particularly engage with energy suppliers delivering ECO support to communities wanting to get involved in installing renewable technologies.

¹source LA CO₂ Emission Estimates (2005-2014) Full Data Set BEIS

Energy Company Obligation

We have worked with partners to help deliver ECO funded projects across the borough and promoted the importance of energy saving measures to residents with a specific focus on the fuel poor. We have had a good take up of ECO measures in the past and plan to work with partners on the new ECO obligations to ensure we can support those living in rural and potentially off gas areas. This links to our aspirations under the ECO: Help to Heat Flexible Eligibility as detailed further in this report.



Fuel poverty

The latest fuel poverty figures for Solihull published May 2016 suggest that there were 7,917 (9.1%) fuel poor households at 31 March 2014. We have seen a reduction from 9,015 (10.7%) from 2012. The average fuel poverty figure across the West Midlands authorities is 11.8%.

The Council are aware that those living in poverty are more likely to live in poorer housing, precarious housing circumstances or lack accommodation altogether. The right home environment is essential to health and wellbeing and we will work together across housing, health and social care sectors to promote the principles of joint-working to deliver better health and wellbeing outcomes and to reduce health inequalities.

FUTURE PLANS 2017 – 2019 AND BEYOND

To contribute towards our long term strategic ambitions, we are planning a number of actions and initiatives to improve energy efficiency, reduce fuel poverty and improve health, housing and lifestyle choices. We have achieved much but there is so much more to do. The HEEAWS sets out our plans for improving the energy efficiency of homes, reducing fuel costs and maximising incomes. If we can do this whilst incorporating renewable technologies this will help to achieve our goals and help in the transition to a zero carbon economy.

We look forward to working with partners to assist the residents of Solihull in achieving affordable warmth. The majority of these initiatives are highlighted in the HEEAWS action plan with a selection detailed below:

Delivering the Energy Company Obligation

We aim to deliver energy efficiency measures through the Energy Company obligation (ECO) with a specific focus of working in partnership to deliver the 'flexible eligibility' element to allow us to support fuel poor households who are not in receipt of benefits and low income households whose health could be adversely effected from living in a cold home. We intend in the next few weeks to publicise our statement of intent so that we can provide declarations for the delivery of measures to homes across our borough.

Solihull Community Housing

Over the next two years SCH intend to continue improving the energy performance of the social housing stock. One of SCH's key strategic objectives is to provide warm healthy homes and safe places to live. There are a number of specific projects that SCH will be involved in,

- Continuing with programmes to update old inefficient heating systems
- Carrying out further works to improve the insulation levels of solid wall and system built properties
- Completing the options appraisal and feasibility study for a suitable replacement heating system for 5 tower blocks with old electric storage heaters
- In conjunction with Solihull MBC carry out a feasibility study to undertake a large scale solar PV scheme on SCH managed stock
- Working in partnership with Solihull MBC to advertise and promote the take up of new smart metering technology amongst local residents
- Identifying social housing properties that currently have an EPC rating of Band F & G and implementing measures to improve this rating
- Consider commissioning an evaluation of the performance of the high rise block biomass heating systems with a particular focus on the financial impact and well-being and comfort of residents
- Continuing to work with and support Solihull MBC in providing advice, information and guidance to local residents on energy saving measures
- Identify potential opportunities provided by the new Energy Company Obligation and Redress funding to fund energy efficiency projects within the social housing stock

SCH is also currently in the process of reviewing and updating its Asset Management strategy. This will include a detailed assessment of the performance and sustainability of every property that it manages, including energy performance. It will be used to inform future investment strategy, a key feature of which will be energy improvement.

Private Rented Sector Energy Efficiency Regulations

Solihull Council regularly jointly convenes forum meetings for private landlords with the National Landlords Association. We already help to make landlords aware of changes in legislation and our intention is to advertise the new minimum energy requirements widely and offer support to any landlord or private tenant that requires help.

Although we do not have a dedicated resource to enforce the minimum energy standards we aim to work with known landlords to ensure they are aware of the requirements. In the event that we are made aware of non-compliance we will work with landlords to ensure that the minimum standards are met and the property is available to be let as quickly as possible. We see our role as one that works with landlords to encourage and support compliance rather than looking to limit the availability of already scarce private sector housing.

Information, Advice and Guidance

This is a critical aspect of the energy journey for many households and without it, residents may find making the appropriate energy decisions more of a challenge especially as some of our most vulnerable residents maybe digitally excluded or socially isolated. We will continue to offer the following support services through our energy advice partners Act on Energy:

- Freephone energy advice line
- Community based support ensuring we reach our most rural communities
- Energy clinics offering switch advice
- Smart metering – offer advice and support on the roll out of smart meters through dedicated community events
- Warm Homes Discount – promotion of the scheme with a specific focus on our Park Homes
- Home visits for the most vulnerable in our community
- Working with partners to ensure we provide a one stop advice provision and onward referrals. This will build on our already excellent relationships with the Fire Service, GP's and third sector.

Winter Warmth Campaign

We will continue to deliver our successful campaign to ensure vulnerable residents are supported throughout the winter months. We will ensure that the campaigns links to guidance provided by NICE and to engage with existing and potential partners to ensure necessary support to residents is available and to lever in financial support where possible.

Switch and Save

This has been a successful way for us to encourage residents to fuel switch. We will continue to promote group switching with our next campaign taking place in spring 2017.

We will continue to consider other ways of reducing fuel costs that might include White Label partners and involvement in an Energy Services Company.