

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO HEALTH & HOUSING COMMITTEE

meeting date: THURSDAY, 23 MARCH 2023
title: ECO4
submitted by: NICOLA HOPKINS – DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING
principal author: RACHAEL STOTT – HOUSING STRATEGY OFFICER

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To propose a change to the ECO 4 delivery in the borough to enable householders to choose the installer.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Other Considerations – To support energy efficiency improvements in the home.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Energy Company Obligation (ECO), first introduced in 2013 is an energy efficiency scheme that places legal obligations on energy suppliers to deliver energy efficiency and heating measures to domestic premises. This aims to reduce home heating costs for low-income, fuel poor and vulnerable people, and incorporates the replacement of broken heating systems, the upgrade of inefficient systems and the installation of insulation.

2.2 The ECO1 scheme ran between 1 January 2013 and 31 March 2015. The ECO2 scheme then ran from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2017. This scheme was then extended and ran from 1 April 2017 to 30 September 2018 and was referred to as ECO2t. The 'LA Flex' component of the scheme was introduced as part of the changes to the scheme in April 2017. The ECO3 scheme ran from 3 December 2018 to 31 March 2022. ECO4 is the new scheme that will replace it.

2.3 Government has published their response to their ECO4 consultation and committed to a four-year successor scheme worth £4 billion from April 2022 to March 2026. The main objective of ECO4 is to reduce fuel poverty by improving the least energy efficient housing stock occupied by low income and vulnerable and fuel poor households.

3 ISSUES

3.1 Since the introduction of ECO, RVBC joined the Lancashire CHiL (Cosy Homes in Lancashire) group and all enquiries were sign posted through to CHiL. Blackpool were the lead authority on the scheme, and they procured Rhea Projects to deliver all the boiler installations and energy efficiency measures.

3.2 Whilst at the time this was considered to be the most efficient way for our residents to be able to access the grant it has meant that no local installers were able to draw down the grant to carry out the works which has resulted in some households being reluctant to proceed. The council also had no control over the referrals or workmanship being undertaken. Data shows that the take up in RV has been very low and the majority of CHiL work has been delivered in Preston and Blackpool.

- 3.3 Going forward with ECO4 Officers have considered whether there is another way of enabling our residents and local installers to benefit from the grant. A meeting was held with the Energy Efficiency Officer from another Lancashire district who have opted out of the CHiL scheme, Chorley and South Ribble to discuss how the scheme now works in these districts. Following this discussion it appears that this may be a suitable way forward.
- 3.4 The proposal in Ribble Valley going forward is for ECO4 to be delivered internally. With this option the council will issue a declaration to any installer who is qualified to enable them to access the ECO funding (there is no intention to opt for one installer in the Borough enabling any qualified installer to benefit along with the residents preferred installer choice). The council can still issue declarations to any customer applying through ChiL which will ensure no applicant misses out. This will also increase the use of local installers and will enable better targeting of areas in the Valley. The installer will be responsible for ensuring that all the correct paperwork is collated and submitted to the council before a declaration can be issued.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:
- Resources – There will some staff resource required in respect of administering the declarations however this can be absorbed by the existing housing team.
 - Technical, Environmental and Legal – All paperwork should be managed by the installer. The declaration is the only input required by RVBC.
 - Political – Members have highlighted the issue of local installers not being able to secure the funding in the past.
 - Reputation – ECO4 can be used to enable local businesses to deliver measures to local people.
 - Equality & Diversity – This will give householders the choice of installer which includes the option of CHiL.

5 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

- 5.1 Accept the proposal to deliver ECO 4, as opposed to signing up to Lancashire CHiL, internally and allow the householder to choose the installer. The full details of the scheme will be published on the Council's website.

RACHAEL STOTT
HOUSING STRATEGY OFFICER

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

For further information please ask for Rachael Stott, extension 3235.