

# Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) Report 2021

Oxford City Council's submitted responses for the HECA reporting period 2019-2021

## 1. Introductory Questions

**1a. Name of Local Authority:** Oxford City Council

**1b. Type of Local Authority:** (District) – City Council

**1c. Name, job title and email address of official submitting report:** Ellie Ellwood, Energy Efficiency Projects Officer, eellwood@oxford.gov.uk

## 2. Headline and Overview

**2a. Does your Local Authority have a current strategy on carbon reduction and/or energy efficiency for domestic or non-domestic properties? If yes, please provide a link:**

Oxford City Council's relevant strategies:

- i. [Housing Energy Strategy 2016-20](#): A detailed strategy for meeting legal obligations, improving home energy efficiency, reducing fuel poverty, supporting tenants and cutting carbon emissions in all tenure types.
- ii. [Carbon Management Plan, Zero Carbon Oxford 2021-2030](#): Extensive plan for reducing the Council's carbon emissions from its own assets. Includes behavioural change, retrofit and upgrade measures in plans for the Council's housing stock and other buildings.
- iii. [Carbon Management Strategy 2017-22](#): The previous Carbon Management Plan, superseded by the above but still applicable to the 2019-21 period.
- iv. [Net Zero Action Plan, March 2021](#): An action plan for reaching net zero carbon emissions in Oxford. Details specific measures e.g. a shift to electric for cooking, and 80-100% more efficient heating systems. Notes the specific challenges associated with both public and private buildings in Oxford, such as having some of the best and worst energy efficiency in the city's buildings.
- v. [Oxford Local Plan 2036](#): Policy RE1 "Sustainable Construction and Design" influences new build in Oxford, with strict requirements for energy efficiency, water, heat and carbon reduction. An Energy Statement is required with planning applications to demonstrate compliance. The Local Plan also details requirements and plans for retrofit, monitoring and required standards such as BREEAM.
- vi. [Private Sector Housing Policy](#): Successive policy to be published in due course. Fuel poverty is embedded in the key priorities of the policy both directly with measures to reduce it, and indirectly as pertaining to health, safety, management condition, financial assistance and empty homes. Details specific measures such as Winter Warmth Grants. Also notes

measures surrounding enforcement, stock condition, fuel poverty rate, low income etc. for private lettings.

- vii. Previous [HECA Reports](#) – used and referred to by several Services within the Council
- viii. [Housing & Homeless Strategy 2018-21](#): Priorities include improving home condition, promoting energy efficiency across all tenures and reducing fuel poverty, with a table of objectives and associated measures to be taken. Priority 4 lists measures taken including the Local Energy Advice Project, Energy Advice Officers and several others.
- ix. [Oxfordshire Energy Strategy](#): A joint strategy between county-wide partners, developed by OxLEP and partners and is aligned to the Government’s Industrial Strategy and the Clean Growth Strategy. One of the three key principles is to reduce countywide emissions by 50% by 2030 (compared with 2008 levels) and set a pathway to achieve zero carbon growth by 2050.
- x. [Financial Inclusion Strategy](#): Within the two key priorities for the strategy is “measures to reduce fuel poverty” as a part of meeting peoples’ needs to manage finances and retain tenancies.
- xi. [Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptations Policy](#): Notes grants and support available for repairs and/or measures pertaining to energy efficiency where applicable to this policy. Also notes financial assistance for energy efficiency measures available to owners of house boats and mobile homes.

## **2b. If no, are you planning to develop one?**

As you can see we have no single policy document on carbon reduction/energy efficiency. Instead, we include actions in specific documents including HECA reports, and Financial Inclusion Strategy (see Fuel poverty section) – these are circulated widely and more relevant to the appropriate audiences.

## **2c. What scheme(s) is your Local Authority planning to implement in support of energy saving/carbon reduction in residential accommodation properties in the next two years?**

- i. Continued energy efficiency upgrade of Council housing stock (c.7500 homes): The Council is delivering upgrades to 240 homes by September 2021, of which 30 will be completed by this report period of March 2021. Many of these will be loft insulation. A pilot scheme using 10 air source heat pumps is also underway with the intention of installing more heat pumps across our housing stock if successful.
- ii. Continued delivery by Energy Advice Officers. They offer practical advice to help council tenants reduce energy and water use, reduce costs and keep warm. This includes advice on behavioural change, tariff switching, energy efficiency measures and additional support. Includes attempting to contact all social housing tenants by phone or in person, as well as:
  - Advising on savings and help tenants switch tariff or supplier, where appropriate
  - Helping tenants claim Warm Home and WaterHelp Discounts
  - Referring properties for heating / energy efficiency measures
  - Linking tenants with appropriate internal/external services for further support
  - Helping tenants access energy and/or water debt relief and support
- iii. ECO Flexible Eligibility funding (including energy efficiency measures in park homes)
- iv. Home Improvement Agency (HIA) & fuel poverty grants: HIA deliver repairs with a focus on vulnerable and disabled residents in Oxford. The annual funding we provide is specific to energy efficiency retrofits and upgrades to council stock within their line of work.

- v. New build housing: The new Local Plan has come into effect and requires new builds to meet high standards for energy efficiency. This includes policy RE1, which requires a 40% carbon reduction compared with what could be built under national Building Regulations.
- vi. Private sector landlord enforcement: Delivered within our Environmental Health function.
- vii. Better Homes, Better Health: A service delivered by National Energy Foundation. We provide funding and the service delivers energy efficiency improvements in homes to a much greater financial cost as detailed in our response appropriate question.
- viii. Oxford City Council also provides grants for energy efficiency upgrades in private sector homes occupied by vulnerable people, house boats and park homes as detailed in our [Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptations Policy](#) and [Housing Energy Strategy 2016-20](#).
- ix. New energy efficient social housing by Oxford City Housing Company, surpassing the already stringent Local Planning requirements on carbon and demonstrating to other house builders in the area what can be achieved.

**2d. What has been, or will be, the cost(s) of running and administering the scheme(s), such as the value of grants and other support made available, plus any other costs incurred (such as administration) as desired.**

- i. Energy efficiency upgrade of Council housing stock: Retrofit has not begun this period due to the pandemic. By the end of this period, approximately £50,000 will have been spent on upgrades for 30 homes. This is of a total £382,030 funding and total of 240 homes receiving energy efficiency upgrades.
- ii. Energy Advice Officers: For two energy advice officers, admin support and associated costs, the cost for salaries is £80,000 including overheads per year and £500 to £3,000a year for paper thermometers, energy monitors, energy saving lightbulbs and other useful freebies. Of this £3,000 usually around £500 is spent.
- iii. ECO Flexible Eligibility funding (including park homes): The Oxfordshire target is to provide retrofits for 150 homes by 30/09/2021 with a budget of £1,500,000. As the project is still quite early on we don't have any data about enquiries or installations in Oxford yet. These will be published in the 2021-23 report.
- iv. Home Improvement Agency (HIA) & fuel poverty grant: £13,000 per annum awarded to HIA to deliver energy efficiency work.
- v. New build housing: Embedded in the Council's relevant functions and part of Local Plan delivery and enforcement.
- vi. New build OCC social housing: Embedded in the cost of the Council's core Housing function.
- vii. Private sector landlord enforcement: embedded in the cost of the Council's core cost of Environmental Health function
- viii. Better Homes, Better Health: The council grant £7,000 to BHBH which resulted in £22,902 of value in Oxford City for 2019-20 and £22,356 of value in 2020-21, resulting in a total of £45,358 in value for 2019-21.

**2e. What businesses, charities, third sector organisations or other stakeholders do you work with to deliver the scheme(s)?**

- **Charities:** National Energy Foundation; Cosy Homes Oxford; End Fuel Poverty Coalition; Affordable Warmth Network; Greater South East Energy Hub.
- **Businesses:** We partner with local energy providers for projects including energy advice, tariffs, smart meters and energy efficiency measure delivery. We hope to partner with software developer Ambue Ltd, who have received funding from Innovate UK to develop the

3D energy modelling software we will use, for GHG LAD1b delivery. Mitsubishi Electric are our partner for delivering the air source heat pump pilot as part of our GHG LAD1b delivery.

- **Other organisations:** We partner with the two Oxford-based universities; other local authorities in the county; BEIS and ALEO
- **Home Improvement Agency (HIA):** The HIA works with vulnerable residents across the city to deliver improvements including, but not limited to, energy efficiency and fuel poverty. The HIA works with social workers, health professionals and other referral agencies.
- **Energy Advice Officers:** The Energy Advice Officers work with a range of internal stakeholders, such as tenancy sustainment, tenancy management, temporary accommodation, properties, customer services and councillors. They also take external referrals from local advice centres (such as Agnes Smith, Citizens Advice and Better Housing Better Health), food banks and health and social care professionals. Energy Advice home visits and phone calls are designed to evaluate properties' energy efficiency, household's behavioural energy usage and energy tariffs.

Since the start of the pandemic they have also been working closely with the new Locality Support Hubs that were set up as a response to the Coronavirus crisis. This has included making and taking referrals but also advising on the distribution of the central government-funded COVID Winter Support Grants to alleviate fuel poverty.

- **Energy efficiency upgrade of Council housing stock:** Mainly council tenants and council officers as well as the businesses specified above, and discussions with the charities above regarding information sharing and potential contractors as we move forward with LAD1b delivery.
- **ECO Flexible Eligibility funding:** Distinction Energy and their park homes contracted installers. Plus park home owners and residents.

**2f. What has been, or will be, the outcome of the scheme(s)? These outcomes could include energy savings, carbon savings, economic impacts such as job creation and/or increased business competitiveness or societal impacts such as alleviation of fuel poverty and/or improved health outcomes etc.**

**Better Homes, Better Health Service outcomes for 2019-21:**

- A total of 445 enquiries were made
- 31 home energy visits were made in 2019-20, although none could be made in 2020-21 due to the pandemic
- 147 new incomes awarded
- The following energy efficiency installations were made in Oxford City: 2 homes fitted with cavity wall insulation; 3 homes fitted with loft insulation; 7 new gas boilers installed.

**Energy Advice Officer outcomes 2019-21:**

- Energy Advice Officers made 1,411 visits/calls between April 2019 and March 2021. During this period EAOs made 6,567 energy and money saving recommendations. They have undertaken the following:
- Since 2017 EAOs have visited or tried to visit all of the council's 7,605 properties.
- Referring 669 tenants for further help, for example to our repairs, tenancy management or tenancy sustainment teams.

- Conducting 543 extended calls/visits where the household was experiencing complex problems such as energy debt, chronic health conditions and fuel poverty.
- Distributing 368 low energy lightbulbs and installing 123 electricity monitors.
- Helping 103 vulnerable tenants access the £140 Warm Home Discount and advising a further 467 tenants of their eligibility and how to apply
- Helping 62 tenants apply for the WaterHelp discount scheme (50% discount) and advised another 26 on their eligibility for the scheme.
- Referring 56 tenants for loft insulation, 22 for modern storage heaters and 17 for new gas central heating.
- Registering 54 tenants with chronic health, mobility or other conditions onto the Priority Service Register, enabling them to get support in the event of a power cut
- Helping 46 vulnerable tenants switch energy suppliers (with an average saving of £159) plus advising another 528 tenants on how to switch (with an average saving of £219).

**During 2020/2021, in response to the pandemic, EAOs also:**

- Helped 60 households reconnect (or prevented disconnection of) gas or electricity prepayment meters, including helping 49 fuel poor households to access emergency fuel vouchers
- Made 13 applications for energy or water debt relief
- Helped 20 vulnerable, shielding or self-isolating households to access food parcels or other emergency help, such as medication, and signposted 57 households to non-emergency help.
- Made 9 safeguarding referrals, such as mental health crises or suspected cuckooing.
- The total savings to tenants from the service are estimated to be £261,358 and 52.2TCO2e

**Park Homes:** Delivery began in May 2021, which is beyond the report period, although planning occurred within the report period. A mailout will be sent to 541 homes in Oxford, consisting of 72 Park homes and 469 other houses. Two Park home sites have been targeted: St Nicholas Park and Wards Caravan Site. The other areas the mailouts have gone to include Littlemore, Iffley, and Rose Hill which are lower income areas and therefore likely to reach residents suffering from fuel poverty. The Oxfordshire target is to provide retrofits for 150 homes by 30/09/2021 with a budget of £1,500,000. As the project is still quite early on we don't have any data about enquiries or installations in Oxford yet. These will be published in the 2021-23 report.

**Efficiency Upgrades of Council Stock:**

- 30 homes have had energy efficiency upgrades through LAD1b by the end of this period, March 2021. A further 210 are planned, totalling 240 homes, and will be completed by September 2021 as per the funding requirements.
- The Council have begun delivery of a pilot scheme using 10 air source heat pumps in its housing stock.
- 274 electricity smart meters and 13 gas smart meters have been installed on housing landlords and temporary accommodation supplies.

**MEES 2019-2020:** 252 cases were investigated or are currently open during the project and 41 property inspections made with 8 enforcement notices being served

There was a 100% compliance rate for the domestic MEES enforcement work with total of 72 improved EPCs being submitted. 8 compliance notices were served; of which all have been complied with. A number of properties have been advised that they will need to be compliant by 1 April 2020

and will be followed up after this date. Enforcement staff now are able to enforce MEES going forward.

The project provided a great deal of information for BEIS to use in their toolkit for other councils including training packs and standard documents.

**New builds:** Planning permission will only be granted where the following have been met:

- Sustainable design and construction principles can be demonstrated, in accordance with our Local Plan, including maximising energy efficiency and the use of low carbon energy. This includes meeting a minimum of BREEAM excellent standard or equivalent.
- An Energy Statement will be submitted to demonstrate compliance with this policy for new-build residential developments (other than householder applications) and new-build non-residential schemes over 1,000m<sup>2</sup>. The Energy Statement will include details as to how the policy will be complied with and monitored.
- New build residential dwelling houses or 1,000m<sup>2</sup> or more of C2, C4 HMO or Sui Generis HMO floorspace must achieve at least a 40% reduction in carbon emissions from a 2013 Building Regulations compliant base case through on-site renewable energy and other low carbon technologies (broadly an equivalent to 25% of all energy used) and/ or energy efficiency measures. The requirement will increase from 31 March 2026 to at least a 50% reduction in carbon emissions. After 31 March 2030 the requirement will increase to Zero Carbon.
- New build non-residential buildings must meet BREEAM Excellent standard or equivalent in addition to the carbon reductions noted above for residential dwellings.

### 3. Communications

#### 3a. Does your Local Authority provide any advisory services to customers on how to save energy?

Yes

#### 3b. If yes, please briefly outline how this is undertaken.

- Two Energy Advice Officers are employed by the Council to provide advisory services.
- Better Housing, Better Health Service provides advisory services on behalf of the Council, along with signposting and taking referrals for energy efficiency measures and grants.
- The Council uses a range of media to promote the Better Housing Better Health Service. These include social media, press releases and mini videos promoting the Warm Homes Discount in appropriate timeframe.
- Businesses: Oxfutures II is a project funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) offering SME free energy surveys, delivered by Oxford Brookes University (OBU) and Council staff

#### 3c. How do you communicate or encourage energy saving amongst domestic consumers and/or local businesses?

- **Businesses:**
  - New builds must follow Local Plan Policy RE1, and are monitored in accordance.

- The Council continues to support Oxfordshire Cosy Homes, a BEIS funded project led by Low Carbon Hub and National Energy Foundation (NEF), with Council support. The project encourages energy saving among domestic consumers
- BHBH Service achieved £22,356 of grant funded installs for home energy efficiency in Oxford in 2020-21. The Service encourages energy saving as well as referring and signposting domestic consumers to the best available commercial services and options for energy efficiency, savings and keeping warm and well.
- Energy Advice Officers encourage domestic energy savings through home visits as well as referrals and signposting where appropriate.

#### 4. Local Green Supply Chain

**4a. Have you made any assessment, or undertaken any analysis of the existing capacity in your local energy efficiency retrofit supply chain to support the decarbonisation of buildings by 2050? If Yes, please summarise the outcomes.**

Through the Ox futures II partnership project we provide 10 free energy audits for SMEs – 9 SME energy audits partnering with the Environmental Information Exchange (EiE) at Oxford Brookes University.

Procurement processes (e.g. Requests for Quote) ask suppliers if they have an Environmental Management System (EMS) (e.g. ISO 14001).

**4b. What actions are you taking, if any, to upskill and/or grow the local energy efficiency installer supply chain? This could include the facilitation of training, and local installer networking opportunities.**

Training for HIA staff, who provide energy advice and work with contractors who complete installations or repairs: City & Guild level 3 award in energy awareness, run by NEA, Feb 2021. All six members of the HIA team had online energy efficiency advice one day course – more informal. “Introduction to domestic energy efficiency” and “Introduction to fuel poverty and health” delivered by NEA.

Ox Futures II partnership project: Provides 10 free energy audits for SMEs – 9 SME energy audits partnering with the Environmental Information Exchange (EiE). Support for a local SME start-up company developing their heating control solution. Runs Green Fund, which co-funds energy efficiency measures and also business development activities for SMEs developing low carbon products and services.

**4c. What actions are you taking, if any, to promote energy efficiency and the installer supply chain to consumers, and encourage households to consider energy retrofit?**

- The Local Plan requires that new builds must show a 40% reduction in emissions from compliance level in the 2013 Building Regulations, and this is set to increase to 50% over the next few years, and to zero carbon requirement by 2030. This is communicated to consumers via planning policy requirements and planning officers, through our energy advice services e.g. Energy Advice Officers and BHBH, as well as the Council’s social media channels and communications to consumers. There is also a high standard of energy efficiency required in Homes in Multiple Occupation (HMO) properties to get licenced in

Oxford, and we have approval for the additional licensing requirements to be extended. A bid is currently underway for additional licensing in single occupancy dwellings and this will be included in the next HECA report.

- The Council's Housing Company has committed to a 70% reduction in emissions from 2013 building regulations, setting an example to other organisations and consumers.
- The Council continues to support Oxfordshire Cosy Homes, a BEIS funded project led by Low Carbon Hub and National Energy Foundation (NEF), with Council support. The project promotes energy efficiency at consumer level.
- BHBH Service achieved £22,356 of grant funded installs with consumers in 2020-21 through their advisory service and referrals, involving various partner organisations and consumers in the promotion of energy efficiency measures.
- The Council employs two Energy Advice Officers who provide advice to social housing tenants regarding energy efficiency, and signposts measures including retrofits and funding available.
- The Ox Futures II Partnership Ox Futures II partnership project promotes energy efficiency among the supply chain. The project provides 10 free energy audits for SMEs – 9 SME energy audits partnering with the Environmental Information Exchange (EiE). The partnership also supports a local SME start-up company developing their heating control solution, and delivers the Green Fund, which co-funds energy efficiency measures and also business development activities for SMEs developing low carbon products and services.

**4d. If no action is taking place in either of these two areas, please let us know of any barriers you have encountered.**

Action is taking place, however: Inadequacy of the government GHG scheme has made promotion and signposting difficult.

The low price of gas relative to electricity makes it difficult to justify replacement of gas boilers with electric heat pumps. They have higher capital costs than gas boilers and higher running costs at present, as a retrofit. Fuel options do not reflect the carbon content or the UK's trajectory towards zero carbon. There is a business case for heat pumps.

**4e. How effectively is your LA able to engage (Trustmark/PAS2035/PAS2030 certified) installers?**

Oxford City Council engages Trustmark suppliers through partnerships. Oxfordshire Cosy Homes engages with, and encourages consumers to use, Trustmark certified installers as well as promoting them to domestic consumers.

**4f. Do you have any plans to develop policies or initiatives in this space over the next five years as part of supporting your local decarbonisation efforts?**

The Council is part of the Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership (ZCOP), which has superseded the Low Carbon Oxford Partnership to align with our Carbon Management Plan and associated targets. ZCOP plans include:

- Some members of ZCOP are in real estate and/or are landlords/housing associations, for example Lucy Properties, A2Dominon, Universities, as well as Oxford City Council. These partners will clearly be expected to engage with their tenants on carbon reduction.
- ZCOP is currently developing a Roadmap and Action Plan for getting the city to net zero. Emissions from domestic buildings are a huge concern for Oxford so the action plan will no



doubt include lots of actions that look at retrofitting and improving energy efficiency, electrification and decarbonisation with a potential retrofit programme in future.

- The partnership has the ambition to introduce a 'community stand' to the work of the ZCOP. Which would conceivably do more direct engagement with residents. For example, the ZCOP website may ultimately incorporate advice and information for residents.

We have accessed Heat Network Investment Programme (HNIP) funding to assess feasibility of low cost ambient loop (using supermarket chiller waste heat and heat pumps at each home for existing estate housing. However, though technically feasible, it did not work financially even with RHI due to high capital cost and high running cost compared to replacement gas boilers.

Local Plan requirement is to reduce carbon in new developments will go from the current 40% reduction compared to the minimum standards allowed under prevailing Building Regulations, to 50% reduction in 2026.

## 5. Social Housing

### **5a. What action, if any, has your LA taken to install energy efficiency or low carbon heat measures in social housing? Have these been installed to a satisfactory quality? What actions (if any) have your social housing partners taken?**

The Council's Energy Advice Officers provide advice and signposting for energy efficiency or low carbon heat measures in social housing. Based on customer feedback they are installed to a satisfactory quality.

Measures for Oxford City Council's housing stock:

- 30 homes have had energy efficiency upgrades through LAD1b by the end of this period, March 2021. A further 210 are planned, totalling 240 homes, and will be completed by September 2021 as per the funding requirements. *Post-submission note: The intended target of 30 homes by the end of report period was delayed due to covid restrictions. None have yet been delivered but the recipient properties have been identified and work is being arranged with contractors as of June 2021. A total of 240 homes will have improvements made and will be included in the next HECA report submission for 2021-2023.*
- The Council have begun delivery of a pilot scheme using 10 air source heat pumps in its housing stock.
- 274 electricity smart meters and 13 gas smart meters have been installed on housing landlords and temporary accommodation supplies.

Oxford City Council owns its social housing and therefore does not work with other providers.

Any new build homes will need to comply with requirements of RE1 in LP. And we have policy for new developments to include a certain proportion of affordable homes.

### **5b. Do you have easy access to the information/knowledge within your organisation that you would expect to need for social housing retrofit projects? (e.g. stock condition; property data; approach to procurement; alignment with existing internal maintenance/upgrade plans; tenant engagement and management plans; costings)**

To an extent. Initially the stock condition survey did not have the resources required, but this has now been taken over by LAD1b. It will be resourced according to LAD1b implementation. At present, property data has some inaccuracies to the data being cloned, but this is being resolved. The approach to procurement has strict guidelines as is necessary, but lacks flexibility which can be a hindrance.

Communication between Oxford Direct Services (ODS) and the relevant teams within the Council has been hindered by the pandemic, as emails have not been found to be as effective as in-person office meetings. ODS complete the majority of the improvements on the housing stock but do not record the upgrade information. Communication between teams has also been more challenging due to the lack of an office base.

**5c. If no, would it be easy/difficult to obtain this information?**

We have the CROHM database which is being constantly updated, and the relevant team are working to ensure this information is accurate and up-to-date. There is a plan to get all of the housing stock to have an EPC survey by 2022, again this has been hindered by Covid. There is also going to be a detailed stock survey of 20% of our housing stock.

**5d. Have you experienced any challenges to retrofit, including during any previous government schemes you have taken part in (e.g. supply chain, funding, tenant cooperation, mixed tenure, split incentive, policy clarity, etc)? Please provide some detail. Have social housing partners reported any challenges to retrofit?**

This is the team in question's first retrofit so it is not possible to speak for previous instances. Retrofits during previous periods before 2019-21 of have been expensive and challenging, such as external wall insulation.

**5e. How does your LA currently/how will your LA in future plan to go about identifying suitable housing stock and measures for retrofit? How do social housing partners identify suitable stock? By the same measures or via a different method?**

We will be using a 'whole house retrofit' approach and will avoid a piecemeal based on Government funding available. Completing one measure at a time can cause additional problems or mean the measure has to be changed/removed at a later date. The house must have a risk assessment and assessment of insulation, heating, ventilation, and energy so all improvements are identified and improvements installed in the right sequence.

Housing stock is identified through a range of measures including referrals from partner organisations, using EPC ratings or targeting energy inefficient heating systems.

**5f. What considerations would make you more or less likely to apply for government funding? If known, what is the opinion of your social housing partners?**

Short term and limited by criteria would put us off applying. Long term and linked with PAS2035 would encourage us to apply.

**5g. To what extent are social housing tenants willing or unwilling to undergo retrofit, and what are the barriers and facilitators to their participation? If known, is this the same opinion across all social housing tenants or is it different with HA and ALMO tenants?**

We had to get sensitive information about household income which meant we had to contact each tenant. We sent out 1,109 letters to ask tenants to disclose their income information and if they

want to be included in the LAD1b programme. We received 180 replies, which is fewer than the 230 houses required to meet our target. We have come up with an alternative plan but this highlights the difficulty to get tenants to 'buy in' to retrofit programmes. The pandemic has meant that it is difficult to gain access to properties, as well as making many tenants reluctant to engage.

**5h. Does the approach to retrofit change for leaseholders in mixed tenure blocks? What encourages them to co-operate?**

We are planning to install cavity wall insulation in flat blocks with mix tenure. The improvements are also offered to leaseholders free of charge, because it is inefficient and ineffective to improve solely the Council's properties. The Council will not be targeting leaseholders unless it is the case highlighted.

## 6. Domestic Private Rented Sector (PRS) Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards

**6a. Is your authority aware of the PRS Minimum Efficiency Standards regulations requiring private rentals in England and Wales to meet a minimum energy performance rating of EPC Band E as of April 2020, unless a valid exemption applies?**

Yes.

**6b. Which team within your authority is responsible for, leading on enforcement of the PRS minimum standard? Please provide the contact details of the person leading this team.**

Regulatory Services and Community Safety (part of Environmental Health). Ian Wright - Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety, [iwright@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:iwright@oxford.gov.uk), 01865 252553.

**6c. What method or methods does your authority use to communicate with landlords and tenants about the standards and other related issues?**

- Advising and signposting landlords on how to improve property's energy efficiency and thermal comfort for occupants including using thermal imaging. Previous thermal imaging programme to inform landlords about heat loss
- Events including the Landlords' Information Exchange, which usually takes place twice a year and is attended by the Energy Efficiency Projects Officer, but has been restricted by the pandemic
- A landlord consultation was held this year which partially replaced the Landlords' Information Exchanges
- Landlords accreditation training is usually held once every couple of months but could not be delivered this year due to the pandemic. The relevant teams have been looking into the potential for delivering online or outsourced landlord accreditation training in future
- ALEO/ BEIS information events for landlords
- Information included in newsletters circulated to landlords
- [Information about energy efficiency on the Council's website:](#)
- Detailed web pages on MEES:
  - [MEES in privately rented homes](#)
  - [MEES Documents](#)

- [MEES in Commercial Properties](#)
- [Landlords accreditation programme](#) – Requires a Minimum D in EPC plus energy training at every session. Details can be found here
- Landlord newsletter includes relevant information when applicable. Previous newsletters can be found on the Council’s website on the [Landlord Resources](#) page, along with other information for landlords
- Social media (Facebook and Twitter) notifications
- Use HMO licensing/visits to inform landlords of requirements

**6d. What barriers, if any, does your local authority face enforcing these regulations (e.g. identifying non-compliant properties/landlords, budgeting/resourcing, any legal issues)?**

The pandemic has been a barrier this period for a number of reasons. It has increased the number of landlords that have appealed licensing notices and asked for extensions.

**6e. i. Do you directly target landlords of EPC F and G rated properties to enforce these regulations? If yes, how? If no, please explain.**

Yes. Desktop checks are used to identify F and G rated properties, and these are targeted as a priority with available funding for energy efficiency measures and retrofit installations. EPC F and G rated properties correlate strongly with cold and hazardous homes.

252 cases were investigated or are currently open during the project and 41 property inspections made with 8 enforcement notices being served

There was a 100% compliance rate for the domestic MEES enforcement work with total of 72 improved EPCs being submitted. 8 compliance notices were served; of which all have been complied with. A number of properties have been advised that they will need to be compliant by 1 April 2020 and will be followed up after this date. Enforcement staff now are able to enforce MEES going forward.

The project provided a great deal of information for BEIS to use in their toolkit for other councils including training packs and standard documents.

**6f. Where possible, please set out your answers to the following questions by tenure (owner occupied, privately rented, or social housing).**

- **What financial programmes, if any, do you have to promote domestic energy efficiency or energy saving? If applicable please outline the budget (and % of the budget that is used), where such funding is sourced and where it is targeted.**

**Owner Occupiers:**

£20,000 per year for fuel poverty support and grants for private sector housing.

£7,000 of this is allocated to NEF’s Better Homes, Better Health Service, which created £22,356 of funding for energy efficiency installations and £14,680 energy bill savings that will directly improve energy efficiency in households across Oxford City. The carbon savings total 70,868kg CO2.

£13,000 is allocated to the Home Improvement Agency (HIA) for energy efficiency and heating-related measures.

**Oxford City Council's social housing stock:** 30 homes have had energy efficiency upgrades through LAD1b by the end of this period, March 2021, which is approximately £50,000 of the total £382,030 GHG LADb1 funding. A further 210 are planned, totalling 240 homes, and will be completed by September 2021 as per the funding requirements. The Council have begun delivery of a pilot scheme using 10 air source heat pumps in its housing stock as part of this funding.

We publish a list of [available energy saving grants and financial services](#) on our website

For house boats, a maximum of £5,000 in a three year period is available to qualifying households (Based on ERA criteria) to cover essential repairs required to meet the minimum standards required by Canal & River trust under the Boat Safety Scheme and appropriate energy efficiency measures. For mobile homes, a maximum of £5,000 in a three year period is available to qualifying households (based on ERA criteria) to cover essential repairs and appropriate energy efficiency measures.

**6g. What future investment for energy efficiency or low carbon heat measures do you have planned, and when are these investments planned for?**

The Council have applied for GHG LADb1 funding which targets low income and low EPC rated (D, E, F and G rated) properties to raise their EPC to C. The targeted 240 homes are all social housing and by the end of this report period, March 2021, an estimated 30 homes will be upgraded. The 210 remaining homes will be delivered by September according to the Council's schedule.

Pilot schemes for air source heat pumps have begun as part of our GHG LAD1b delivery. If successful, the Council will look into delivering further heat pump installations across its housing stock.

The Council is working on decarbonisation of commercial properties including up to a £10.9 million investment for heat pumps at leisure buildings from PSDS, and as part of the Energy Superhub Oxford (ESO) project. This has scope to reduce the carbon emissions associated with residential properties as the heat pumps can be connected to residential properties.

OCC have also been successful securing up to £10.9m from the government PSDS fund to shift heating from gas boilers to electric heat pumps, with the increased electric demand being met from PV. Tight delivery times mean this will be challenging to complete.

## 7. Fuel Poverty

**7a. Does your Local Authority have a Fuel Poverty Strategy?**

The Council's strategy on fuel poverty is integrated into our Financial Inclusion Strategy as well as other relevant strategies. While fuel poverty is an issue within itself, there are overlaps with broader poverty issues and this integration allows us to provide the best possible service to address residents' needs for fuel poverty and wider or connected issues.

**7b. What steps have you taken to identify residents/properties in fuel poverty? What blockers, if any, have there been in identifying households in fuel poverty?**

The Better Homes, Better Health Service takes referrals from other partner organisations

There is a strong correlation between F and G rated properties, and those that are cold and hazardous. This information from desktop assessments is used to help identify homes in fuel poverty.

**7c. How does fuel poverty interlink with your local authority's overall Carbon Reduction Strategy?**

Fuel poverty response is coordinated via the same part of the Council – Environmental Sustainability. It is embedded in the work done by Housing, Environmental Health and Environment & Sustainability teams within the Council. Working with our partners, we take a holistic approach to ensure all staff in appropriate positions are trained to be able to identify issues and make referrals on energy efficiency and fuel poverty related issues.

**7d. Please highlight any fuel poverty issues specific to your area.**

The historical nature of the city creates difficulty in addressing fuel poverty, due to factors including the narrow streets within the highly concentrated mediaeval centre, and the thermally inefficient nature of much older development (compounded by the listed status of many buildings). Oxford has introduced ambitious and forward-thinking local policies to help overcome this, including producing the [Heritage Energy Efficiency Tool \(HEET\)](#) to help assess energy efficiency improvements for heritage buildings. Oxford also has a high proportion of private rented dwellings compared with the South East and England as a whole (around 28%). These are generally poorer in energy efficiency terms, which is why they have been specifically targeted by the council. This is done with enforcement and funding.

**7e. What measures or initiatives have you taken to promote fuel cost reduction for those in fuel poverty? Include information on partnerships with local businesses or energy providers you have.**

Better Housing Better Health in Oxfordshire is funded by all Oxon councils and delivered by NEF. The service offers a single point of contact via phone, website or email for residents, carers, or professionals to refer into to access advice, support and financing around energy efficiency and fuel poverty. This includes council grants, home improvement agency and ECO/other national funding pots. The helpline also links into the LEAP project, offering home energy and small repairs visits to any tenure if they meet the vulnerability criteria plus access to Income Maximisation support. Additionally the service provides a link to ECO funding and Local Authority Flexible Eligibility via its Supplier network. The Council has provided updated Statement of Intent and declarations in order to access this.

Our Energy Advice officers visit council tenants who are in fuel poverty to support them on keeping warm whilst reducing their energy bills. Key outputs from this include support in switching, applying for Warm Homes Discount, getting them on the priority services register and a range of other fuel cost reductions. This is in addition to the energy advice and energy saving freebies.

Our Home Improvement Agency works sourcing grants for boiler/ insulation installs with the most vulnerable homeowners (see Projects Section).

## 8. Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery

Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery of the £2bn Green Homes Grant scheme introduced in summer 2020, £500m was assigned for Local Authority Delivery (LAD). LAD enables Local Authorities to bid for grant funding to support low income households in their area with energy efficiency and low carbon heating upgrades. £200m was made available through Local Authority grant competitions in 2020, known as phases 1A and 1B and £300m was allocated under Phase 2 between the five regional Local Energy Hubs.

**8a. Has your Local Authority Participated in GHG: LAD? If yes, please indicate which phase you participated in and briefly outline the project. If no, please indicate what barriers prevented you from participation in the scheme.**

Yes. The Council has participated in GHG LAD 1b. The Council will deliver upgrades to a total of 240 homes, 30 of which will be this period, and the majority will be loft insulation. A pilot project using air source heat pumps is also underway. The Council's participation is delivered through partnership with NEF.

**8b. Would your Local Authority be in a position to manage the delivery of upgrades through a scheme such as LAD in 2022? If yes, please indicate the anticipated number of homes that could be upgraded per year. If no, please indicate what barriers would prevent you from delivering upgrades in your area. The Energy Company Obligation (ECO)**

There is potential interest for the Council to take part in the 2022 scheme. This depends on the success of our 2021 delivery. In particular, the results of our heat pump pilot will be necessary to determine if this would be an aspect of managing upgrades through a LAD scheme in 2022.

## 9. Energy Company Obligation

The Energy Company Obligation (ECO) is an obligation on energy suppliers aimed at helping households cut their energy bills and reduce carbon emissions by installing energy saving measures. Following the Spring 2018 consultation, the Government set out in its response that ECO3 will fully focus on Affordable Warmth – low income, vulnerable and fuel poor households.

The ECO “Local Authority flexible eligibility” (LA Flex) programme allows LAs to make declarations determining that certain households in fuel poverty or with occupants on low incomes and vulnerable to the effects of cold homes, are referred to ECO obligated suppliers for support under the Affordable Warmth element of ECO.

LAs involved in the LA Flex programme are required to issue a Statement of Intent that they are going to identify households as eligible, and the criteria they are going to use; and a declaration that the LA has been consulted on the installation of measures in a home.

**9a. Has your local authority published a Statement of Intent (Sol) for ECO flexibility eligibility? (Y/N)**

Yes.

**Please answer the following questions to help us to understand LA Flex delivery in more detail:**

**9b. How many declarations were issued for low income vulnerable households?**

During the 2019-21 period, 34 declarations were made.

**9c. How many declarations were issued for Fuel Poor households?**

All 34 were from low-income and vulnerable households.

**9d. How many declarations were issued for in-fill?**

None.

**9e. What is the highest income cap published in your Sol?**

£37,500 for one adult and four or more children. £45,750 for two adults and four or more children.

**9f. If you have used an income over £30k gross, what reason have you given?**

These are the HHCRO approved figures with a 25% increase to cater for high housing costs in the city. The Council will reserve the right to flexibility when determining eligibility around the thresholds set out in Table 1, should examples be found where residents are struggling under unforeseen circumstances not covered in the existing guidance.

**9g. Do you charge for declarations to be signed? If so, please state how much?**

No.

## 10. Smart Metering

**10a. Please provide a brief statement outlining your current or planned approach to promote smart meter take up and supporting residents to achieve benefits.**

Energy Advice Officers encourage the uptake of smart meters as the automatic meter readings make billing more accurate and prevent issues around badly estimated bills and missing top-ups. Since Covid, smart prepayment has allowed the energy companies to take action remotely to keep people on supply with either grants or extended emergency credit without people having to go to a top up location. It has also allowed the locality response hubs to remotely top up prepayment meters.

For our own housing stock, the Council does not have capacity to install smart meters, and these are readily available to many residents through their energy provider, depending on their choice of energy provider.

The Council is currently reviewing an offer from a company regarding a product, "Switchee", with a smart controller and five sensors that can offer similar, and additional, information to smart meters. The Council has not decided the best way forward yet.



It is believed that the majority of social housing properties have smart meters, with a mix of SMETs 1 & 2. The majority of energy tariffs come with a smart meter fitting in the T&Cs to access the best tariffs. Rollout was slowed during the pandemic as lockdowns stopped energy companies visiting properties, with the exception of emergency works. Tenants who requested smart meters in January 2020 only began receiving them from October in the gap between lockdowns.

**10b. Please provide further information on activities relating to smart metering, including but not limited to:**

- i. Integrating approaches to delivering energy efficiency improvements in residential accommodation:** 274 electricity smart meters and 13 gas smart meters have been installed on housing landlords and temporary accommodation supplies this period.
- ii. Arranging for smart meters to be installed by energy suppliers in vacant social housing premises:** The void energy accounts currently stay with the existing supplier for the property. Many of them do take the opportunity to ask for a smart meter fitting due to the change in customer, although their time scales for a smart meter fit can often be longer than a property is void meaning the smart meter can't be fitted before its let and the customer changes to the tenant.
- iii. Using social landlords to promote smart meter uptake:** Energy Advice Officers encourage the uptake of smart meters as part of their roles.
- iv. Including smart meters in landlord licencing schemes:** Our energy advice web pages for landlords and rented properties include relevant information, but we do not include smart meters in licensing directly.
- v. Supporting residents who have had appliances condemned for safety reasons** N/A
- vi. Other supporting activities:** In empty properties with prepayment meters where tenants want them removing, the default is to install a smart meter

## 11. Future Schemes and Wider Incentives

**11a. Please outline any further schemes or wider initiatives not covered above that your local authority has carried out or is planning to undertake to improve energy efficiency in residential accommodation.**

The Council is working on decarbonisation of commercial properties including up to a £10.9 million investment for heat pumps at leisure buildings from PSDS, and as part of the Energy Superhub Oxford (ESO) project. The latter has scope to reduce the carbon emissions associated with residential properties as the heat pumps can be connected to residential properties.

Zero Carbon Oxford (ZCO) has replaced Low Carbon Oxford. While ZCO does not currently engage householders, there is potential for this to begin as several members of the partnership are involved in housing or real estate. Examples include the universities, A2Dominion and Lucy Properties as well as the City Council. There is a clear expectation that partners will engage their tenants on carbon reduction. There is an ambition to engage more directly with residents and householders, as well as a Road Map with Action Plan for bringing the city towards net zero.

Post construction monitoring to improve our understanding and to ensure that low carbon performance standards are being met.

The Council's housing priorities are directly aligned with improving energy efficiency and reducing fuel poverty.

Oxford City Council are ongoing members of the End Fuel Poverty Coalition, through which we indirectly tackle fuel poverty more widely. It is a broad coalition of anti-poverty, environmental, health and housing campaigners, charities, local authorities, trade unions and consumer organisations. The End Fuel Poverty Coalition campaigns to influence government and other bodies to take action to end fuel poverty and thereby improve people's health and quality of life as well as seeking to reduce the cost of living, create jobs and negate carbon emissions in the process.

At a meeting of cabinet on 29 May 2019, Oxford City Council agreed to renew their offer of a revolving loan facility of £2.3m to Low Carbon Hub to support the build of more community energy projects in Oxfordshire. This will reduce the use of carbon-based fuels in both homes and other buildings across Oxford.

Oxford City Council's strategies and policies are integrated across our services to ensure that we effectively, efficiently deliver a zero carbon, sustainable future for all residents, workers, students and visitors to the city.

Zero Carbon Oxford (ZCO) has the ambition to engage more directly with residents and householders. As many of the partners are in real estate, are landlords or housing associations there is an expectation for them to engage with tenants on carbon reduction. Emissions from Oxford's buildings are a huge concern for reaching net zero, so it is likely that this will include lots of actions looking at retrofitting, improving energy efficiency, electrification and decarbonisation specifically. ZCO is also looking to introduce a "community stand" which would do more direct engagement with residents. For example, ZCO's website may incorporate advice and information for residents.