

REPORT TO: GREENER STRATEGIC THEME GROUP ON 8 OCTOBER 2009

SUBJECT: FUEL POVERTY STRATEGY

BY: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

1. REASON FOR REPORT

1.1 This report informs the strategic partners of the Council's intended actions to address fuel poverty issues during 2010 – 2013.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the strategic partners comment on the actions to be taken to address fuel poverty issues.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Scottish Government is committed to the target that by 2016, as far as is reasonably practicable, no-one in Scotland is living in fuel poverty. The Council published a Fuel Poverty Strategy 2004–2009. This strategy was developed in partnership with SCARF (Save Cash And Reduce Fuel). This strategy forms part of the Local Housing Strategy and implementing this strategy is an aim within the Social Inclusion Strategy 2008-2011.

3.2 The Scottish Government and COSLA published guidance to local authorities on fuel poverty in May 2009¹. This guidance states that a separate strategy for fuel poverty is no longer required. This is intended to encourage “integrated strategic thinking across all housing and related areas to maximise the gains which can be made in tackling fuel poverty and on the related issue of climate change.”

3.3 In December 2008 the Housing Strategy Group agreed that the Housing Service should develop an Interim Local Housing Strategy 2010–2013, and development of a new Local Housing Strategy 2013–2018. This timescale provides a better fit with Moray's Local Plan development.

4. FUEL POVERTY ACTIONS

4.1 Prior to the guidance publication, the multi agency Fuel Poverty Strategy Working Group had drafted a new Fuel Poverty Strategy. This will now form a chapter within the Interim Local Housing Strategy (**APPENDIX 1**), which will be made available for public consultation in January 2010.

¹ Guidance to local authorities on fuel poverty available at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/05/28154359/1>

4.2 The Fuel Poverty chapter will be structured around 4 strategic themes associated with addressing fuel poverty, namely:

1. Intelligence - ascertain the nature and extent of fuel poverty in Moray
2. Awareness raising and training
3. Energy efficiency of the housing stock
4. Fuel costs and income maximisation

4.3 Many of the actions are continued from the previous strategy e.g. the Council intends to continue work in partnership with SCARF who provide access to impartial advice on fuel poverty issues to the people of Moray. SCARF also continue to run publicity and leafleting campaigns throughout Moray.

4.4 However, some new actions have been added. These are:

Showers for Council tenants

4.4.1 On 27 March 2009 Housing Sub Committee approved implementation of a shower fitting programme for Council tenants (Paragraph 11 of Minute refers) (Action 3c). Showers were one of the investment priorities for tenants reported in the Tenants Survey 2007. Providing showers will allow tenants to reduce their fuel consumption and their fuel costs. The programme begins in 2010/11.

Council new build properties

4.4.2 The Housing Service intends to provide Council new build properties that are as well insulated and efficient to heat as possible (Action 3d). The Housing Service intends to make an application for funding from The Scottish Government's Community and Renewable Energy Scheme (CARES) to allow specification of enhanced insulation and heating systems using renewable energy. If the application is successful, the extra features funded will mean that the properties are likely to achieve an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of B.

4.5 It will be proposed to the Communities Committee:

- that it approves the Interim Local Housing Strategy as a basis for consultation with a wider stakeholder group including the Moray Council Tenants Core Group and local forums, Moray Community Planning Partnership, Moray Community Health and Social Care Partnership, Community Councils and other relevant groups.
- that the Council undertakes this wider public consultation during January/ February 2010.
- that the final Interim Local Housing Strategy 2010-2013 be published in April 2010.

5. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Single Outcome Agreement/Service Improvement Plan

- Fuel Poverty action plan supports the objectives of the Single Outcome Agreement. Fuel poverty issues fall within the remit of the Safer and Stronger Strategic Group by seeking to increase the quality of housing stock, and within the remit of the Greener Strategy Group by seeking to reduce fuel consumption.
- The Fuel Poverty action plan complements the work done under the Council's Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) Strategy.
- Implementing the Fuel Poverty Strategy forms part of the implementation of the Social Inclusion Strategy.

6. Policy and Legal

6.1 None.

7. Resources (Financial, Risks, Staffing and Property

7.1 The Council supports the work of SCARF through funding from the Private Sector Housing Grant budget. The Private Sector Housing Grant budget funds improvement works to properties which address fuel poverty. Improvements to Council stock are funded through the HRA budget.

8. Consultations

8.1 The Chief Housing Officer, the Housing Programmes Manager, The Housing Strategy and Policy Manager, the Capital Programmes Manager, The Housing Improvement Manager and the multi agency Fuel Poverty Strategy Working Group have been consulted on this report and agree with its contents.

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 This report has presented information on the actions the Housing Service intends to take to address fuel poverty in Moray, along with information on how the Housing Service intends to develop its Interim Local Housing Strategy 2010 – 2013.

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