

REPORT TO: SAFER AND STRONGER STRATEGIC GROUP – 21 MAY 2009

SUBJECT: FUEL POVERTY STRATEGY

BY: CHIEF HOUSING OFFICER, THE MORAY COUNCIL

1. REASON FOR REPORT

1.1 This report informs the Strategic Group on the progress that has been made in implementing the Moray Fuel Poverty Strategy 2004-2009 and sets out proposals to develop a Moray Fuel Poverty Strategy 2009 – 2014.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Safer and Stronger Strategic Group:-

(i) notes the strategy review; and

(ii) notes proposals for the development of a Fuel Poverty Strategy 2009 – 2014.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, local authorities were required to develop a Fuel Poverty Strategy that ensures, as far as reasonably practicable, that persons do not live in fuel poverty. The Council's Community Services Committee approved the original Fuel Poverty Strategy on 24 November 2004 (paragraph 18 of the Minute refers). The Fuel Poverty Strategy forms part of the Local Housing Strategy.

3.2 On 8 September 2008, Housing Sub Committee approved an update of the Strategy for the period March 2007 to April 2008 and approved the Action Plan for the period March 2008 to April 2009 (paragraph 9 of the Minute refers).

3.3 This report presents a summary of the main achievements resulting from the Fuel Poverty Strategy 2004 – 2009 in a detailed Action Plan at **APPENDIX I**.

4. Review of Moray Fuel Poverty Strategy 2004 – 2009

4.1 The Fuel Poverty Strategy was finalised in November 2004. The Action Plan contains 44 major actions and a further 77 associated tasks. The Council's Housing Services and the charitable organisation Save Cash and Reduce Fuel (SCARF) are the lead partners for the majority of these actions.

4.2 The Scottish Executive assessed it as 'Very good'. However, the assessment identified that there was further scope to provide more details on future funding.

4.3 The main achievements of this strategy are:

4.3.1 **Improvements to Moray Council stock:**

Double Glazing

All Moray Councils domestic properties are now double glazed with the exception of a small number of properties located in Conservation Areas where double glazing has not been fitted due to planning restrictions.

Door Replacement

The Council is nearing completion of a major programme of door replacement, replacing older style doors with more energy efficient double glazed, solid core doors. This programme is in response to the results of the Tenants Survey 2001 and it is the Housing Service's view that appreciable energy saving benefits are gained from these works.

Heating systems and Insulation

All Moray Council's domestic properties have been fitted with full central heating (unless the tenant has refused for some reason) with 'A' rated boilers as standard, with condensing boilers being fitted where technically possible. All houses have at least 100mm loft insulation to meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard but many of our houses have more than 150mm. All our houses have been cavity filled where possible. We have ongoing programmes to improve the loft insulation and heating systems. In 2007/8 85 properties were fitted with new gas heating systems.

"Hard to treat" properties

The Council has identified all its properties where energy efficiency improvements are likely to be impractical, and has taken some innovative steps to improving them. Using funding from the Energy Saving Trust, the Council has completed a successful trial fit a small number of air source heat pumps to properties in Garmouth, Elgin and Forres. The outcome of these trials were impressive with fuel savings for the tenants of up to 40% and the Council is now implementing a programme of similar heating system upgrades to Provost Christie Drive, Rothes, as an alternative solution to providing mains gas, which proved to be too costly, despite grant assistance.

The Council has begun a trial programme of insulation on hard to treat properties located in Keith and Cullen which are of non-traditional and stone construction. The outcome of these trials will be used to decide on a future programme of insulation works to comply with SHQS requirements.

HECA

The Council aimed to raise the average NHER of its own stock to a minimum of 5.0 by 2007. This was achieved and the current average NHER is 6.3.

4.3.2 Improvements to Private Sector Housing

The Council has no definitive information relating to improvements in the Private Sector. The collection of information from the private sector is a continuing problem and no accurate information has been gathered locally. The Council is beginning to use data available through the Scottish Government's Home Energy Efficiency Database (HEED) to fill this information gap and this action will be continued into the new Fuel Poverty Strategy 2009 – 2014. The Council does encourage and contribute to improving fuel efficiency in the private sector by providing Private Sector Housing Grants. Over the term of the Strategy, 150 grants were approved on properties defined as Below Tolerable Standard (BTS), the majority of these works included insulation, central heating or double glazing.

In addition, 331 grants were approved through the Care and Repair scheme. The majority of these works include roof repairs, window and door replacement, heating system upgrades and eradication of damp – all of which contribute to minimising the risk of fuel poverty.

PSHG Budget	Year PSHG approved					Total	%
	2004/5	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8	2008/9		
Care and Repair	60	62	68	79	62	331	56.2%
BTS and Disrepair	48	61	1			110	18.7%
Disrepair			26	34	28	88	14.9%
BTS			18	11	11	40	6.8%
Disability Adaptations	2	4	4	5	5	20	3.4%
Grand Total	110	127	117	129	106	589	100%

4.3.3 Energy Advice

The Council funds the Moray Energy Efficiency Advice Projects in conjunction with Save Cash and Reduce Fuel (SCARF). This is funded through Private Sector Housing Grant. This joint project currently provides a part time Energy Efficiency Advice Officer and an administrative support officer for the Moray area. The Advice Officer carried out energy surveys, home visits to discuss energy efficiency issues, and gives information and advice on a wide range of energy issues.

The Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) Progress Report 1 April 2005 to 31 March 2007 was presented to the Policy Committee on 5 March 2008 (Paragraph 50 of Minute refers). During that period, 4750 households received energy efficiency advice through this service, with 38 home visits having been carried out. 445 individuals were referred by the project to the various grants bodies. Other householders receiving advice and information may have accessed grants directly. Of the 4750 households receiving energy advice, 76% were from the private sector.

The Moray Energy Advice Project is supported by SCARF through its Aberdeen & North East Energy Efficiency Advice Centre by providing telephone advice, support with local events and providing householders with energy efficiency reports specific to their properties and information on grants and funding available to install energy efficiency measures.

4.3.4 North East Cosy Homes Project

SCARF has secured funding to establish the Northeast Cosy Homes Project which provides access to basic income maximisation action checks for all tenures.

4.4 The action points not achieved were:

4.4.2 Targeted leafleting campaigns

It has proved resource intensive to develop the mapping exercise (Action A1, Appendix 1) into mailing lists to be used for leafleting campaigns, targeted to groups most at risk of fuel poverty. It is proposed to continue this action into the new Fuel Poverty Strategy 2009 - 2014.

4.4.3 Private Sector House Condition

The HECA Progress report 2007 acknowledged that there was limited information available about property conditions in the private sector. The Scottish House Condition Survey is of limited assistance due to the small number of properties in Moray included in their sample. A Private Sector Housing Condition survey has been considered but would be very costly, requiring a large sample size to reflect the diverse nature of the types and locations of private sector housing. In the absence of relevant private sector stock condition information, the Fuel Poverty Strategy Action Plan has concentrated on publicity, awareness raising, training, provision of Private Sector Housing Grants and the Care and Repair Service as a means to assist households in fuel poverty in the private sector.

5. Moray Fuel Poverty Strategy 2009 – 2014

- 5.1 New Local Housing Strategy Guidance issued by the Scottish Government in June 2008 requires Local Authority action on fuel poverty to form part of their Local Housing Strategy (LHS). Officers recommend that Moray develops a separate Fuel Poverty Strategy which will be considered part of the overall LHS, and suggest that Members should consider a consultative draft Fuel Poverty Strategy 2009 – 2014 in Autumn 2009.

6. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Development Plan /Community Plan/ Service Improvement Plan

The Fuel Poverty Strategy forms part of the Council's Local Housing Strategy.

The Fuel Poverty Strategy 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.

The Fuel Poverty Strategy 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.

(b) Policy and Legal

None.

(c) Resources (Financial, Risks, Staffing and Property)

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.

(d) Consultations

The Director of Community Services, 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 were consulted on the report presented to the Communities Committee in March 2009.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 **This report presents the Safer and Stronger Strategic Group with an assessment of the achievements of the current Fuel Poverty Strategy 2004 – 2009, along with information on the action points which were not achieved. This report goes on to outline proposals for development of a new Fuel Poverty Strategy 2009 – 2014.**

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Background Papers: Held by author
Ref: SSSG – Fuel Poverty – 21 May 2009