

Report to: Community Services Scrutiny Committee

Date: 7th October 2008

Report of: Energy Manager

Subject: Energy Conservation Report

Ward: All

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide information on the progress with the District of Easington Fuel Poverty and energy conservation schemes;
- 1.2 This report summarises the main schemes and activities that have taken place over the period April to September 2008 in line with the corporate Fuel Poverty Strategy and Warm Homes Campaign.

2.0 Consultation

- 2.1 In preparing this report we have consulted with the Executive Member for Social Inclusion and Culture, Executive Member for Liveability, Head of Housing and Housing Renewals Manager.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 The Warm Homes and Energy Conservation Act 2003 requires the eradication of Fuel Poverty by 2016 and sits alongside the Home Energy Conservation Act 1997 which sets a national target of a 30% reduction in domestic energy consumption and carbon dioxide emissions over the same time period.

4.0 Position Statement

- 4.1 The District of Easington Fuel Poverty Strategy seeks to maximise external funding opportunities for energy conservation and fuel poverty schemes. Delivery is via the corporate Warm Homes Campaign to provide warmer healthier homes using a variety of schemes.

5.0 National Performance Framework NI 187 (Fuel Poverty)

- 5.1 Fuel poverty occurs when a household has to pay more than 10% of their income to provide an adequate level of heating to maintain a healthy indoor environment;
- 5.2 The Government have introduced National Indicator 187 to monitor levels of fuel poverty at a local level. The indicator requires Local Authorities to target poorly insulated properties where the occupants are in receipt of a means tested benefit in order to maximise the assistance provided;
- 5.3 NI 187 represents an unparalleled opportunity to demonstrate how Local Authorities can maximise the numbers of households being brought out of fuel poverty.

5.4 NI 187 Best Practice Pilot Scheme

- 5.5 Easington is one of the few Local Authorities nationally to have a whole stock energy database for all 38,000 Council and private dwellings. This places Easington in a unique position nationally being able to identify all individual households to be targeted under NI187;

5.6 A bid has been submitted to DEFRA to undertake an NI 187 best practice pilot. The main delivery partner will be Eaga Partnership the Government's fuel poverty agency along with a focus group drawn together from Local Members, residents and the national fuel poverty charity;

5.7 The pilot will produce best practice guidance for Local Authorities on reporting of NI 187, developing a whole stock targeting database and working with partners to maximize the help available to fuel poor households.

6.0 **Energy Performance Certificates**

6.1 As from October 2008 all new tenants in Council properties will be issued with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) supplying information on the energy performance of their home;

6.2 District of Easington have obtained DEFRA approval to develop best practice guidance for Local Authorities in production of EPC's. This scheme in partnership with East Durham Homes and the national fuel poverty charity to demonstrate how to provide added value to the issue of EPC's;

6.3 On completion of the pilot DEFRA will issue the guidance to Local Authorities in March 2009.

7.0 **Housing Stock Condition Pilot**

7.1 District of Easington are in a uniquely data rich position having a whole stock energy database;

7.2 The British Research Establishment (BRE) are the exemplar research centre for the built environment and have approached District of Easington to undertake a pilot to develop a national model, based on Easington's database;

7.3 It is anticipated that this pilot scheme could be the basis for a national stock condition database which would set the authority at the cutting edge of innovation in private sector housing stock surveys;

7.4 The project will commence in October 2008 and will be completed early 2009.

8.0 **Fuel Poverty Strategy**

8.1 The current District of Easington Fuel Poverty Strategy obtained corporate approval in 2002 and has provided the framework to coordinate activities among the main partners;

8.2 Since the original strategy was launched there have been a number of changes in the energy supply market with the cost of energy increasing by over 40% with an inevitable knock- on effect of increases in the numbers of households falling into fuel poverty;

8.3 In order to ensure the Council's key Strategy document for Fuel Poverty is up to date with all current grant schemes and initiatives, Officers from the Council's Housing Service have engaged with the national fuel poverty charity National Energy Action in an exercise to update the strategy;

8.4 The Strategy was re-launched to partner organisations in July 2008.

9.0 **Implications**

- 9.1 **Financial**
There are no direct financial implications as the initiatives contained within this report are already funded and there are no new commitments made.
- 9.2 **Legal**
There are no direct legal implications.
- 9.3 **Policy**
This report is in line with the District of Easington Housing Strategy 2008 – 2011.
- 9.4 **Local Government Review**
This report does not introduce any new commitments for the new Authority post- April 2009, and the good practice currently undertaken by District of Easington Council will be fed into the Housing Workstream as part of the overall LGR transition project.
- 9.5 **Risk**
The key risk identified is the risk of not being able to maximise future funding opportunities if the Council's approach to Fuel Poverty is not updated.
- 9.6 **Communications**
The schemes detailed in the Strategy document will continue to be promoted through Infopoint and the Corporate Website as well as District-wide as part of the ongoing Warm Homes Campaign.
10. **Corporate Implications**
- 10.1 **Corporate Plan and Priorities**
The update of the Council's Fuel Poverty Strategy is in line with the Transitional Plan priority of recognising those services and activities that are exemplars of good practice and of 'managing and monitoring' our existing service priorities.
- 10.2 **Equality and Diversity**
The Council's approach to tackling Fuel Poverty, as set out in the Strategy document, is specifically targeted at vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups. The updated version has been referred to the Corporate Equality & Diversity Officer for consideration for an Impact Assessment.
- 10.3 **E-Government**
There are no E-Government implications.
- 10.4 **Procurement**
There are no Procurement implications.
- 11.0 **Recommendations**
- 11.1 That Members note the contents information provided in the report and the positive progress made.

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