

HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 57

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Update on the Cabinet Members Energy Efficiency Working Group		
Date of Meeting:	7 December 2009		
Report of:	Director of Adult Social Care and Housing		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Ododo Dafe	Tel: 293201
	E-mail:	Ododo.dafe@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Key Decision:	No		
Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 The Cabinet Member for Housing's Energy Efficiency Working Group has been set up for several months. Its aim is to mobilise, over time, the actions of many people to contribute to our society's wide and important sustainability agenda. As time progresses, we will be seeking increasing support for our work to reduce fuel poverty, encourage change in individual behaviours, and increase community action on climate change initiatives.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (1) That HMCC note the contents of this report as an update on the work of the Cabinet Member for Housings Energy Efficiency Working Group.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 The Cabinet Member's Energy Efficiency Working Group consists of residents, councillors and officers. It held its first meeting in March 2009 following concerns and meetings about increased fuel bills – particularly for tenants living in high-rise blocks of flats.
- 3.2 The initial emphasis was on reducing energy consumed in communal settings eg high-rise flats, where residents pay a proportion of collective bills. However the objective of the group is now broader - looking at the potential for reducing energy use from council owned homes in order to reduce all residents' fuel bills, and in so doing lower the level of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from the council's stock.

3.3 Actions within the groups terms of reference include:-

1. Consider methods for assessing levels of fuel poverty amongst tenants, and proposing actions to minimise this.
2. Work to maximise levels of benefit take-up among tenants.
3. Look into the feasibility of training tenants to become tenant energy advisors, promoting behaviour changes around energy consumption.
4. Consider scope for seeking external funding for energy saving projects or items.
5. Assess information and communication needs of tenants and leaseholders in respect of energy consumption, particularly in order for residents to feel informed and in control of the contributions they can make.
6. Review the availability of social tariffs from energy suppliers.
7. Look at energy efficiency expectations of the new Repairs and Maintenance contract.
8. Consider producing a Winter Warmth/energy efficiency leaflet for tenants, or a dedicated Homing In edition/insert, and/or having regular energy efficiency articles in each edition.
9. Look into feasibility of generating some of our own energy which could be used for eg public way lighting or water heating to ambient temperatures.

3.4 The group has met on five occasions. It formulated and agreed its terms of reference early, and it soon became clear that water related issues needed to be included within the term 'energy'. Water issues have dominated the last three meetings of the group, and Southern Water representatives have attended the latter two.

3.5 Specific areas on which the group has made some progress are:-

- Received feedback on surveys undertaken to all high rise blocks regarding heating systems and fuel bills.
- Ascertained that our Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP or energy performance) ratings for our housing stock compares favourably with others. We have an average rating score of 76, where the average score for stock retaining councils is 64 (source: Housemark Benchmarking data).
- Updated the group on the government's Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP), and the work we hope to be doing locally.
- Reached a better common understanding of tenant concerns around Southern Water billing, and agreed some actions with Southern Water on, for example, the removal of surface water charges, and a feasibility study into alternative water charging options for blocks of flats.
- Agreed for training to be provided by the Energy Saving Trust for tenant 'energy champions' on giving energy advice on simple actions around the home that everyone can make to reduce fuel bills.

- Carried out some research into actions other organisations or community groups are taking to raise awareness of energy efficiency issues and encourage behaviour change.
 - Prepared some energy advice and money saving copy for the next edition of Homing In and invited a colleague from Corporate Communications to advise us on our overall strategy for resident communication.
- 3.6 The group will be focussing on identifying ‘energy champions’, building community capacity, and tenant training at it’s next meeting. Further on, the group will be looking at the work we can do to harness resident interest in growing, buying and preparing local food, and supporting sustainable communities by engaging in activities on local housing land with their neighbours. It will also work with colleagues looking at the potential for ‘retro-fitting’ our homes, eg through the CESP programme, to make them more energy efficient and therefore cheaper to run and keep warm.
- 3.7 From January, a further area the group will be looking at is the council’s 10:10 Campaign to reduce carbon emissions by 10% in 2010/11. The campaign will be useful for the group in galvanising individual residents, and hopefully groups, to take actions that will contribute to this challenging CO2 reductions target.
- 3.8 The nature of the groups work means that it will have a longer lifespan than our usual focus groups, and will provide updates to Housing Management Consultative Committee at six to nine monthly intervals.
- 3.9 The members of the group are:-
- Beverly Weaver
 - Brian Balchin
 - Chris El Shabba
 - John Stevens
 - Councillor Christine Simpson
 - Councillor Maria Caulfield
 - Councillor Paul Steadman
 - David Gray
 - Graham Osbourne
 - Ododo Dafé
 - Steve Cooper

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Consultation has been ongoing with councillors and residents on the group. Some officers have been involved in the group in a consultative capacity to advise on specific issues, and external organisations such as the Energy Saving Trust have been consulted. It is likely that consultation will soon extend to local residents when the group will be seeking ‘energy champions’ who will be interested in attending training to give energy advice and develop community capacity for energy projects.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However, should any reductions in energy/utility costs arise as a result of the work of the group, this will benefit the Housing Revenue Account and tenants. Full financial implications will be reported if and when they arise.

Finance Officer Consulted: Monica Brooks

Date: 24/11/09

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 The Council's wide powers of management of its housing stock in section 21 of the Housing Act, and its duty to have in place arrangements to consult on matters of housing management provide sufficient authority for the establishment of the Cabinet Member's Energy Efficiency Working Group. As the report is for noting only, there are no specific legal implications to draw to the Committee's attention. Further no individual's human rights are adversely affected by the report's recommendation.

Lawyer Consulted: Liz Woodley

Date: 24/11/09

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 It is anticipated that outcomes from the work this group will initiate is the reduction of current levels of fuel poverty. The actions the group have identified in relation to peer group advice around energy saving measures around the home will be, if it goes ahead, delivered in a way that is accessible to all groups of residents. One of the key benefits of in-home advice is that it can be tailored to meet the needs of the individual resident.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 There is the potential for using energy in more sustainable ways, sourcing more sustainable forms of energy for some Housing Management fuel needs (eg communal lighting), and contributing to more sustainable communities by bringing people together around mutually beneficial schemes.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 There are no crime and disorder implications.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 The work the Cabinet Members Energy Efficiency Working Group hopes to achieve, coupled with energy efficiency work to our properties, will reduce the risk of an increasing number of households falling into fuel poverty.

Working with households as proposed by the group increases the opportunity for residents reduce their energy consumption and make a positive contribution to the council's carbon reduction targets.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 As the work of the group progresses, it will feed more into citywide projects for energy saving, eg the 10:10 Campaign, CESP, and local food growth.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 The alternative option would have been to do nothing to capture resident interest around energy saving measures. However given the growing climate change agenda it is important for us to fully engage residents in working with us to ensure that our homes, and the way our homes are used, are able to make a contribution to our corporate agendas of protecting our environment and reducing inequality.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 To bring members of HMCC up to date with the work of the Cabinet Members' Energy Efficiency Working Group.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. None

Documents In Members' Rooms

1. None

Background Documents

1. Cabinet Member's Energy Efficiency Working Group Terms of Reference

