

1.	<b>Meeting:</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Management Board
2.	<b>Date:</b>	12th July, 2013
3.	<b>Title:</b>	Scrutiny Review: Fuel Poverty
4.	<b>Directorate:</b>	Public Health, Neighbourhood & Adult Services

## 5. Summary

On the 6<sup>th</sup> February 2013 Cabinet received the report which set out the findings and recommendations of the scrutiny review of Fuel Poverty (April – December 2012), undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board. The review was endorsed by the Management Board at its meeting of the 11<sup>th</sup> January 2013.

The issue of fuel poverty was identified in the work programme for Scrutiny in 2011/12 and it was originally allocated to the Improving Places Select Commission. They focused on physical schemes and measures to improve fuel efficiency in communities with a high incidence of fuel poverty. The issue of the forthcoming Green Deal and its potential impact was highlighted at this stage. It became apparent also that fuel poverty was being flagged up as a key issue in the other Select Commissions. As a result, it was re-allocated to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board as part of the work programme for 2012/13.

As outlined in the Council's Constitution, Cabinet's response to the Scrutiny Review is to be fed back to OSMB within two months. An outline response to these recommendations is attached at Appendix A for Cabinet's approval.

## 6. Recommendations

That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board:-

Notes the contents of the response to the review.

## **7. Proposals and Details**

The proposed response from Cabinet to the Scrutiny Review of Fuel Poverty is attached as an appendix to this report. Cabinet welcomes the report's findings and the opportunity to provide a more strategic and co-ordinated response to this agenda. As such it is recommended that 10 out of the 11 recommendations are accepted and allocated to lead officers to implement in line with the details contained within the appendix.

Since the completion of the review, progress has been made with work underway on a number of the recommendations: A Green Deal Working Group has been established that includes representation from Strategic Housing and Investment Services, Environment and Development Services, Community Protection Unit and Public Health.

The Green Deal partnership agreement, referred to in recommendations 5 and 6, is under development and a number of recent stakeholder events with contractors and energy companies have taken place. Three options to delivering the Green Deal (GD) in Rotherham were presented:

1. RMBC as a GD provider
2. RMBC to enter into a partnering agreement with GD providers
3. Let GD develop with various providers in an ad hoc manner across Rotherham.

RMBC's preference will be to support option 2 and a report is being tabled at Full Cabinet recommending this approach. DECC are now developing 'accreditations' for Green Deal assessors, providers and installers. This will be indicated using a charter mark so householders know who is accredited with DECC. RMBC will be going out with expressions of interest to potential GD providers over the next few weeks. The estimate of work for the ECO element will amount to approximately £50 million (based on previous CESP schemes) and it is hoped to cover works to at least 5000 houses. It is estimated that there are 8000 households meeting the Affordable Warmth criteria, 28000 homes in the top 15% most deprived areas and 14000 properties are hard to treat. It is unknown at present how many of these properties or householders meet all three elements of the ECO criteria. GD and privately funded work is seen as separate to this amount. It is anticipated that within the next 3-4 months, RMBC will have a partnership agreement drawn up with at least 3 providers. Rotherham will then be split into geographical areas with each partner receiving an equal amount of GD related work.

## **8. Finance**

Recommendation 8 will rely on the partnership agreement and procurement of providers to deliver the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) component of the Green Deal. Whilst it is understood at this time that no upfront costs are required from RMBC, activity will require a large amount of officer time. However, the return expected from the energy efficiency improvements offered will far outweigh the 'in kind' offer made by RMBC.

## **9. Risks and Uncertainties**

Changes to National Energy Policy and initiatives to reduce levels of fuel poverty are still unfolding, furthermore changes to welfare reform may inhibit progress on levels of fuel poverty locally.

The Green Deal 'offer' is still in its early stages and it is unknown at present whether a fully funded ECO scheme will be offered by Green Deal Providers and their utility company partners.

## **10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implication**

The review links to the following priorities:

Corporate Plan:

- Making sure no community is left behind:
  - less people struggle to pay for heating and lighting costs
- Helping to create safe and healthy communities:
  - people are able to live in decent affordable homes of their choice
- Improving the environment:
  - reduced CO2 emissions and lower levels of air pollution

In addition, future work meeting the recommendations, contributes to:

- Sustainable Development.
- Ensuring a place where people feel good, are healthy and active.
- Increasing the satisfaction in the local area as a place to live.

Delivery of the Government's Green Deal initiative will also contribute to Public Health priorities through:

- Tackling Health Inequalities.

Dealing with issues related to improving the energy efficiency of poor quality housing has clear linkages to the seven outcomes of the Outcomes Framework for Social Care, and importantly includes:

- Improved Health and Emotional Well-being, by promoting and facilitating the health and emotional well-being of people who use the services.
- Improving the Quality of Life.

## **11. Background Papers and Consultation**

See Section 5 of the review report

## **12. Contact**

Lead officer

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## **13. Appendix A: Cabinet's Response to the Scrutiny Recommendations**

## ***Cabinet's Response to Scrutiny Review Fuel Poverty***

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Cabinet Decision</b> <i>(Accepted/ Rejected/ Deferred)</i>	<b>Cabinet Response</b> <i>(detailing proposed action if accepted, rationale for rejection, and why and when issue will be reconsidered if deferred)</i>	<b>Officer Responsible</b>	<b>Action by (Date)</b>
<p><b>Recommendation 1</b> Better intelligence will be achieved by pulling together analysis of fuel poverty patterns with robust evaluation of initiatives to tackle it.</p>	Accepted	Cabinet welcomes the requirement to use existing and emerging intelligence and evaluate current and future initiatives	Public Health Specialist with support from:  Private Sector Housing officer  Senior Energy Advisor	Review of evidence and intelligence by December 2013
<p><b>Recommendation 2</b> Such intelligence and evaluation should be used to influence the development of the Warmer Homes Strategy and future initiatives and funding bids.</p>	Accepted	Cabinet accepts the need to ensure intelligence and evaluation informs wider strategic thinking and future prioritisation activity.	Public Health Specialist with support from:  Private Sector Housing officer  Senior Energy Advisor	Review of evidence and intelligence by December 2013
<p><b>Recommendation 3</b> That all future initiatives build on the progress already made and that there is a future emphasis on tackling the problems associated with private sector properties and</p>	Accepted	The Creating Warmer Homes Strategy will maintain and further develop the multi-agency approach operating across the Borough. The Strategy provides an opportunity to ensure a coordinated pattern of delivery targeting geographic areas in terms of need and resource across partners.	Private Sector Housing Officer with support from:  Public Health	Work to continue under the Warmer Homes Strategy

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also to focus on issues of low income.			Specialist  Senior Energy Advisor  Financial Inclusion Manager	
<b>Recommendation 4</b> Rotherham should make the most of its Area Assemblies and other community infrastructure in two ways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raising awareness of fuel poverty issues and working with communities to identify and communicate solutions.</li> <li>• Acting as a liaison point between Rotherham’s communities and the Utility companies</li> </ul>	Accepted	Cabinet welcomes this recommendation and acknowledges the role the Warmer Homes Strategy will have in engaging with the council workforce and wider stakeholders based across the Borough.	Public Health Specialist with support from: Area Partnership Managers  Private Sector Housing officer  Senior Energy Advisor	Work to continue under the Warmer Homes Strategy
<b>Recommendation 5</b> There is a real and urgent need to raise awareness within communities about the choices open to them in terms of Green Deal, tariffs, smart meters etc.. Utility companies should be requested to help provide this information, including guidance	Accepted	Cabinet welcomes this and recommends an approach to set up a partnership arrangement with Green Deal providers. The Green Deal working group are currently seeking approval from cabinet in order for a partnering agreement to be set up between RMBC and three Green Deal providers.	Strategic Housing Investment Service Manager with support from:  Private Sector	Green Deal Partnering Agreement to be in place by December 2013

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in plain English.			Housing officer  Senior Energy Advisor	
<b>Recommendation 6</b> The Council should aim to work in partnership with Utility Companies, bringing its expertise and knowledge of communities and properties to the table, to focus on Green Deal and ECO and the opportunities this provides for local residents and communities.	Accepted	Cabinet welcomes this recommendation and is currently working in partnership with utility companies. This partnership will develop further through the partnering agreement with Green Deal providers.	Strategic Housing Investment Service Manager with support from:  Private Sector Housing officer  Senior Energy Advisor	Green Deal Partnering Agreement to be in place by December 2013
<b>Recommendation 7</b> The Council should also explore the establishment of an appropriate pilot project in Rotherham that will explore this partnership working and could include funding for staff time to develop community links to assist with publicity campaigns, awareness, consultation etc. Early wins could include leaflets and single point of contact for advice e.g. Golden Number.	Accepted	A paper is being presented at cabinet in July to establish the implementation process for Green Deal and the Energy Company Obligation in Rotherham.	Strategic Housing Investment Service Manager	Paper presented July 2013. Implementation action plan developed by December 2013

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<p><b>Recommendation 8</b> Endorse the establishment of the corporate steering group and request that urgent progress is made with the recommendations above and that progress is reported back to Scrutiny on a 6 monthly basis.</p>	Accepted	A Green Deal Working Group has been established and meets on a monthly basis with support from an elected member. This group is responsible for developing the partnering agreement with Green Deal providers to ensure a coordinated, prompt and effective delivery of the Green Deal initiative across the Borough.	Strategic Housing Investment Service Manager	Report to scrutiny by 31st December 2013
<p><b>Recommendation 9</b> Support the lead that the Health and Well Being Board propose to take on the Fuel Poverty agenda and request progress reports on both this and the Warmer Homes Strategy to Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.</p>	Accepted	Cabinet welcome the requirement of a formal reporting structure and governance of the Warmer Homes Strategy	Public Health Specialist	Reports provided to OSMB as requested
<p><b>Recommendation 10</b> Request that the Health and Well Being Board give consideration as to how effective co-ordination of the various initiatives can be achieved and maintained, including the work of the Green Deal steering group.</p>	Accepted	The inclusion of fuel poverty as one of the six priorities of the Health and Well Being Strategy will ensure a Borough wide strategic focus is maintained and will be led jointly by Public Health (PH) and Strategic Housing and investment Services (SHIS) based within Neighbourhoods and Adult Services (NAS).	Public Health Specialist with support from:  Strategic Housing Investment Service Manager	Reporting linked to Health and Well Being Strategy



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<p><b>Recommendation 11</b> Appropriate awareness raising and training of frontline workers in recognising the signs and impact of fuel poverty should be developed, including systems to roll this out and communicate outcomes from it. This should be done on a multi-agency basis.</p>	Accepted	Cabinet welcomes the requirement to raise awareness of front line staff in the fuel poverty agenda. Work to combine the health and housing message through the winter warmth campaign and Green Deal initiative will continue.	Public Health Specialist with support from:  Private Sector Housing officer  Senior Energy Advisor	Work to continue under the Warmer Homes Strategy