

**NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL**

**ASSET MANAGEMENT, CULTURE AND HOUSING  
CABINET MEMBER**

**RURAL COMMUNITIES ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROJECTS**

**1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT**

- 1.1 To seek approval from the Cabinet Member to target energy efficiency measures at those rural communities which are located off the mains gas supply network and where fuel poverty levels are relatively high.
- 1.2 The key points of the report are as follows:-
  - 1.2.1 The targeting of resources is based on robust data including levels of fuel poverty, index of multiple deprivation and off mains gas information.
  - 1.2.2 A number of community-based, Government launched projects should help rural areas particularly vulnerable to increasing fuel costs.
  - 1.2.3 The targeting of specific support to rural communities to help themselves improve their properties and reduce fuel costs.

**2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2.1 North Lincolnshire has an average level of fuel poverty of 18.5% across the borough. A number of areas however have levels significantly higher than that.
- 2.2 A householder is in fuel poverty where they have to spend 10% or more of their income on heating their home to an acceptable level.
- 2.3 A number of the current pots of money available to assist homeowners to improve the energy efficiency of their homes are targeted at the worst lower super output areas (LSOAs), as defined nationally and at those homes which are hard to heat.
- 2.4 A home is hard to heat if, because of its construction, and heating type, it is expensive to heat and difficult to improve.
- 2.5 The Government has recently relaunched its Renewable Heat Premium Payment for households, which supports the installation of renewable technology in domestic homes through the provision of vouchers to cover some of the capital cost of the system.

- 2.6 The types of system covered by the premium payment include solar panels and biomass boilers.
- 2.7 In addition to the household scheme, there is also one targeted at communities. Again, the scheme will part fund the capital cost of purchasing renewable heating systems.
- 2.8 The council, in partnership with a “not for profit organisation” is looking to put a bid into this scheme.
- 2.9 Communities where there are high levels of hard to heat properties; include North Axholme, Keadby and parts of South Axholme. These areas are off the mains gas network and are therefore, very reliant on oil, electricity and bottled gas, where the greatest prices have occurred in recent years.
- 2.10 For solid constructed properties, the only real effective way of improving the energy efficiency is to treat the external walls to prevent heat loss using internal or external wall insulation.
- 2.11 A scheme is already under way within the wards of Crosby and Town and Park. Three areas in Barton, Keadby and South Killingholme have been identified as suitable for similar treatment.
- 2.12 The council is looking to lever in contribute towards the cost of the works using the Government’s CERT (Carbon Emissions Reduction Target) or CESP (Community Energy Saving Program) schemes.
- 2.13 In addition to the above, the council is looking to support those rural communities identified previously to establish fuel co-ops, which can help householders reduce fuel costs by up to 6p a litre.

### **3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**

- 3.1 Option 1 – to engage with the current Government schemes to fund improvements in energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions by tackling hard to heat properties in rural areas along with supporting communities to help themselves.
- 3.2 Option 2 – not to engage with rural communities in the ways outlined above.

### **4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS**

- 4.1 Option 1 – to target resources into the rural areas particularly affected by fuel poverty and raising fuel prices due to hard to heat properties. Option 1 is the preferred option.

## 5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

- 5.1 Financial Implications – there are no additional financial implications related to the targeting of advice and support. There are financial implications related to the measures discussed within the report but these can be met from existing budgets held by Housing. The Home Assistance policy allows us to help vulnerable householders to improve their properties with the aim of reducing fuel poverty. Through its current funding streams, the Government is supporting a targeted, area-based approach around those communities, and households who struggle to heat their homes due to either their financial situation or the characteristics of their home.
- 5.2 Staffing Implications – the Affordable Warmth Officer works 4 days a week and is the only officer role across the council with specific responsibility for working with domestic householders to give them help and advice to improve the energy efficiency of their homes. Significant staff input is going to be necessary to support communities and is to come from redirecting existing internal resources and staff. Our partner in the Renewable Heat Premium Payment will also provide some face-to-face contact.
- 5.3 IT Implications – there are no additional IT implications.

## 6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS (STATUTORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, DIVERSITY, SECTION 17 CRIME AND DISORDER, RISK AND OTHER)

### 6.1 Statutory

The Home Assistance policy allows the targeting of resources to tackle fuel poverty and improve energy efficiency on an area basis and to individual householders. This policy complies with the statutory requirements.

### 6.2 Diversity

Those in fuel poverty are often the elderly and most vulnerable. Data indicates that older, single households in rural areas of North Lincolnshire are most at risk of fuel poverty and therefore suffering from ill health due to a cold home.

The impact of cold homes on both physical and mental ill health is well documented, with the elderly being the most at risk.

### 6.3 Environmental

Any improvements in the energy efficiency of homes will reduce the amount of Carbon released and thus assist in meeting local and national carbon reduction targets.

An Integrated Impact Assessment exists for this report.

## 7. **OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION**

7.1 The Environment Team have received this report along with Health.

## 8. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 That the Cabinet Member notes the range of measures to be targeted at rural communities and agrees that approach.

8.2 That the Cabinet Member receives a further report by November 2012, detailing the cost benefits from the additional energy efficiency measures prior to any work commencing on site.

### DIRECTOR OF PLACES

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**Background papers used in the preparation of this report:** None