

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

12 February 2008

Joint Report of the Director of Health and Housing and Cabinet Member for Housing

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 HOUSING ENERGY EFFICIENCY STATEMENT UPDATE

Summary

This report provides background information to complement the presentation from Creative Environmental Networks (CEN) who are working with the Housing Service to develop a revised Housing Energy Efficiency Statement. The statement once adopted will form part of the revised housing strategy (to be developed during 2008/09) and will replace the Energy and Fuel Poverty Strategy 2003-2006.

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Members will recall that the Council adopted in 2003 the Energy and Fuel Poverty Strategy 2003 – 2006. This focused on reducing the energy consumption of the housing stock in the borough by 24 per cent by 2006 against a 1996 baseline energy consumption figure. This target has been met through a combination of the community's own desire to reduce domestic energy use and the Council's housing programmes including advice and promotion and grant assistance to improve the energy efficiency of the housing stock. A new target was set in April 2006 to achieve a 3 per cent per annum reduction in energy consumption and Members should be pleased to learn that the progress reported to government between 1 April 2006 and 31 March 2007 was 3.2 per cent reduction.
- 1.1.2 Members will also be aware that the tackling of energy consumption and improving the efficiency of the housing stock has a knock on effect in helping to alleviate fuel poverty; an issue gaining increasing prominence given the recent price rises in domestic fuel.
- 1.1.3 Since the 2003 Strategy the climate change and energy efficiency agenda has broadened to move beyond a pure housing focus to include the Council as a whole and the role it can play in responding to the challenges posed by climate change. The term climate change is now generally used when referring to changes that are attributable to human behaviour rather than natural changes on the climate of the earth.

1.1.4 These changes have resulted in significant national and regional policies seeking to reduce the use of energy and tackle fuel poverty. For example the Sustainable Energy and Climate Change Act 2006 places a duty on local authorities, when exercising their functions, to have regard to an energy measures report published by the Secretary of State to

- improve energy efficiency;
- increase micro generation;
- reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and
- alleviate fuel poverty.

1.1.5 The Council has also signed up to the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change. This declaration is a voluntary pledge to address the issues of climate change. The Council's commitment to ensuring that tackling climate change is at the centre of its work is demonstrated by the recent development of the Climate Change Strategy 2008-11.

1.1.6 The strategy highlights the key contribution that housing and energy conservation can make to the causes and effects of climate change. Improving energy efficiency in housing is a quick and cost effective means of:

- saving energy;
- reducing carbon emissions;
- combating climate change; and
- contributing to the reduction of fuel poverty.

1.1.7 It is therefore timely for the Council to be reviewing its approach to improving the energy efficiency of existing housing in the borough and to tackling fuel poverty.

1.2 Housing Energy Efficiency Statement

1.2.1 It is proposed the Housing Energy Efficiency Statement will replace the existing Energy and Fuel Poverty strategy and form part of the revised housing strategy to be developed during 2008/09. The action plan will comprise targets which support the aim of reducing energy use in housing and alleviating fuel poverty in the borough.

1.2.2 We have been working with Creative Environmental Networks (CEN) to develop a statement and action plan. This evening you have heard a presentation from CEN on the role that housing and energy conservation can play in reducing energy use, hence impacting on climate change and fuel poverty.

1.2.3 It is envisaged that delivery of these energy reductions will rest in six main areas of activity:

- raising householder awareness;
- providing mechanisms to support householders in installing energy efficiency measures;
- ensuring council policy reflects national and regional policy;
- developing partnerships;
- attracting funding to increase energy conservation, increase affordable warmth and increase the amount of energy generated from renewable sources; and
- facilitate and encourage action in the social rented sector of housing.

1.2.4 Government has introduced new National Indicators for all local authorities for climate change and fuel poverty, which will come into force in April 2008. It is anticipated these will be included in the new Local Area Agreement 2 for Kent. At the time of writing no decisions have been taken on the specific targets that will inform these indicators. Clearly it will be necessary to ensure that the Housing Energy Efficiency statement takes account of the new targets once agreed.

1.2.5 The draft Housing Energy Efficiency Statement will be presented to Members at a future meeting of the Board once these new indicators and targets are agreed.

1.3 Legal Implications

1.3.1 The Council has a legal duty under the Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Act 2006 to have regard to energy efficiency, increase microgeneration, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and alleviate fuel poverty.

1.3.2 Under the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 the Council is required to report on energy consumption levels in the residential sector as at 1 April 1996, and how they are going to increase the energy efficiency of those dwellings by 30 per cent over the next 10 to 15 years.

1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.4.1 None

1.5 Risk Assessment

1.5.1 None arising from this report.

Background papers:

contact: Hazel Skinner

Nil

John Batty
Director of Health and Housing

Councillor Jill Anderson
Cabinet Member for Housing