

## EXETER CITY COUNCIL

### SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITY 15 JANUARY 2008

#### PROGRESS REPORT ON THE HOME ENERGY CONSERVATION STRATEGY

#### 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report is to inform Members of progress being made by the City Council in respect of Exeter's Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) Strategy.

#### 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 For the purposes of the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 (HECA) the City Council is designated an Energy Conservation Authority, responsible for developing strategies and working in partnership to reduce energy use from houses in the City by 30% by 2010. The Council's HECA Strategy was produced in 1996.
- 2.2 Other than improving the energy efficiency of our own housing stock and promoting energy efficiency in the private housing sector by offering financial assistance and carrying out enforcement interventions, the City Council is not able to directly impact upon energy use by householders in the City. The strategy to reduce energy use in housing, therefore, entails education, awareness raising and the promotion and funding for improved insulation, and more efficient heating systems.
- 2.3 The City Council has been involved in all of these activities by, for example:
- funding a boiler replacement and insulation scheme aimed at private sector landlords to encourage them to either provide central heating and insulation into their properties to benefit tenants or to replace inefficient boilers with modern, energy efficient boilers (through Private Landlords Energy Action grants - PLEA);
  - funding an insulation scheme for vulnerable households on low income, just above benefit level (Warm-up Exeter grants);
  - funding energy efficiency measures as an integral part of all renovation and disabled facilities grants;
  - the promotion of the Warmfront Scheme, a government funded scheme which provides heating and insulation to vulnerable households on benefit through targeted mail outs.
- 2.4 PLEA grants commenced in September 2006 and in the six month period to the end of the 2006/07 financial year 48 rented properties had benefited from energy efficiency measures, 24 having gas central heating systems installed and 14 having replacement boilers fitted. 23 of these properties had loft and cavity wall insulation installed. All in all these energy efficiency measures benefited 96 households.

- 2.5 Unlike PLEA, Warm-up Exeter was running throughout the financial year and provided energy efficiency measures to 926 houses. These measures included the insulation of cavity wall insulation to 527 houses and loft insulation to 573 properties, 67 of which had no loft insulation at all.

### **3. PROGRESS TO DATE**

- 3.1 Using data collected by from partnering agencies, such as the Devon Energy Efficiency Advice Centre, who administer the PLEA and Warm-up grants on behalf of the City Council, together with data relating to our own housing stock the Council has been able to accurately report progress against the energy saving targets to the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). This year's progress report, the eleventh, indicates an energy saving of 2.7% for the year; an overall saving over the past eleven years of 28.1%. This means that Exeter is on target to achieve the 30% saving by 2010 and is in the top 25% nationally for performance.

### **4. THE FUTURE**

- 4.1 In Exeter there are an estimated 2,440 (6.2%) private sector dwellings in fuel poverty (a household that spends 10% or more of its income on fuel for heating suffers from fuel poverty), presenting real issues in terms of both energy efficiency and occupier health. The highest rate of fuel poverty is found in the private rented sector (7.3%).
- 4.2 The Private Sector House Condition Survey 2006 reported an estimated 3,740 dwellings in the private sector would fail the thermal comfort element of the Decent Homes Standard, costing £15.5 million to rectify.
- 4.3 Each year it becomes more difficult to achieve improvements, because most of the 'easy hits' from improvements to our own housing stock have already been completed, such as loft insulation and boiler replacements. This leaves the private sector as the area where most savings can be achieved in future.
- 4.4 Financial assistance to owner occupiers, and now to rented dwellings through PLEA grants achieve steady improvements from year to year and it is important that these continue to be funded. An accreditation scheme for private sector landlords will be explored in 2008/9. Such a scheme encourages landlords to improve their own properties to achieve a desired standard, which would include energy efficiency measures.
- 4.5 Energy efficient schemes, such as Warmfront and HEAT Devon continue to be promoted using targeted mail outs and other marketing tools. However, it is clear that the private housing stock represents the biggest challenge in achieving the target of 30% saving by 2010.
- 4.6 A consortium made up of the 10 district and unitary councils in Devon has successfully bid for funding under DEFRA's Community Energy Efficiency Fund [CEEF] and been awarded £206,000 to identify a neighbourhood within each local authority to become a 'warm neighbourhood'. Once identified intensive activity will commence within each neighbourhood in April 2008 to fund and promote energy efficiency grants, provide

energy efficiency and benefits advice and to develop ‘energy champions’. It is anticipated that each warm neighbourhood will lever in substantial funding, particularly from energy supply companies and the health sector, and will make a significant contribution to the health and wellbeing of local residents.

4.7 All this activity will complement the Devon Affordable Warmth Strategy which aims to ensure that there will be no households in Devon living in fuel poverty by 2010.

## **5. RECOMMENDED**

- 1) That Scrutiny Committee Community note the progress made towards implementing Exeter’s Home Energy Conservation Strategy.

### **HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

S:LP/Committee/108SCC4  
3.1.08

COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE

### **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended) Background papers used in compiling this report:**

Home Energy Conservation Act 1995, eleventh report [2007]