

Eden District Council

**Housing and Community Panel
10 September 2009**

'Cold Homes' Review - Final Report

Report of the Fuel Poverty Review Group

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the final report and recommendations of the Fuel Poverty Review.

2 Recommendation:

It is recommended that:

- a) Members approve the report and recommendations.
- b) Members agree to forward the report to the Housing Portfolio Holder to approve and implement the recommendations.

3 Report Details

- 3.1 A Fuel Poverty Review was approved in July 2009 following concerns expressed by Members that due to the economic downturn more residents may require assistance with energy efficiency this winter.

- 3.2 Councillors Mrs Lesley Grisedale, Mrs Sheila Orchard and Mrs Dorne Richardson were nominated to form the Review Group.

- 3.3 The Terms of Reference were:

- 1. To get a good overview of the issues rather than focusing on any one aspect in detail.
- 2. To ensure as many residents in the District in fuel poverty are supplied with information to assist them with obtaining assistance and/or benefit take-up.

- 3.4 The aims and objectives of the Group were to:

- a) To raise awareness of fuel poverty and provide residents with information, advice and education of fuel poverty and related issues.
- b) To raise the Council's profile of the work being carried out to combat fuel poverty in the District.

- c) To establish whether existing information channels can be used more effectively to spread awareness.

3.5 During the course of the review it was established that:

- There is a lot being done by many people/bodies around fuel poverty but much of it is not co-ordinated.
- There is a wealth of information but quite a number of people do not know where to start to obtain the information. Again there is a lack of co-ordination.
- A key finding is that there is a lot on offer to those on benefits but those on low incomes which are just above the benefits threshold fare very badly when it comes to obtaining assistance to install energy efficiency measures.
- Eden has a lot of poor quality housing stock in terms of energy efficiency due to their solid wall construction, which is hard to treat for thermal insulation. Eden residents also have limited access to mains gas.
- Eden District Council has some very good policies in place that are working well. There are limited finances but value for money is very good and Members are aware that whilst the current successes can be built on they do not want to raise expectations if they cannot be delivered.

3.6 Members did not like the term 'fuel poverty' and its connotations. During the Witness Session held, the term 'Cold Homes' was used and it was agreed this was a better term and more easily acceptable and understandable for the wider community.

3.7 A full report, together with the Review Group's recommendations can be found attached to this report as **Appendix A**.

4 Policy Framework

4.1 The Council has four corporate priorities which are:

- Affordable Housing
- Quality Environment
- Economic Vitality
- Quality Council

Council on 7 February 2008 agreed fifteen strategic actions to achieve these priorities.

4.2 This review could add value within three of the corporate priorities, Affordable Housing, Quality Environment and Quality Council.

5 Implications

5.1 Legal

5.1.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

5.2 Financial

5.2.1 The Council has agreed an action plan to carry through the Balancing the Budget exercise. A key part of this is the Resource Allocation Categorisation which is designed to ensure that resource allocation reflects the Council's priorities. The full categorisation was agreed at Council on 7 February 2008 and the financial implications of any report must be consistent with this.

5.2.2 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

5.2.3 The Members were very aware that a stringent financial policy is currently in place and have tried to make recommendations which have no financial impact or that finances required can be found within the existing budgets.

5.3 Equality and Diversity

5.3.1 The Council has to have regard to the elimination of unlawful discrimination and harassment and the promotion of equality under the Equalities Act, 2006 and related statutes.

5.3.2 The review looked to finding the gaps and established that there is little assistance for those on low incomes that are above the thresholds for benefit entitlement. The Council's policies address this gap but the wider policies have not done so. The Council's policies do include provision for households with children under five years of age, vulnerable people and for people with a disability.

5.4 Environmental

5.4.1 The Council has to have due regard to conserving bio-diversity under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act. More efficient heating systems will not contribute as much to global warming as inefficient systems. Slowing the rate of global warming aids the retention of bio diversity.

5.5 Crime and Disorder

5.5.1 The Council has to have regard to the need to reduce crime and disorder in exercising its functions under the Crime and Disorder Act, 2004.

5.6 Children

5.6.1 The Council has to have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the exercise of its functions under the Childrens Act, 2004.

5.6.2 The Council's policies do include provision for households with children under five years of age, vulnerable people and for people with a disability.

5.7 Risk Management

5.7.1 The Members have tried not to raise expectations that cannot be delivered. There is a limited budget and value for money is being achieved, but four months into the municipal year the budget is very nearly spent. Success

breeds success and managing expectation is going to be a key factor in the future.

6 Reasons for decision/recommendation

- 6.1 The Review Group feels with minor adjustments the current policies could be improved. It is finding a balance between raising expectations and being able to deliver on those expectations. The Members were impressed by the current Council policies and felt there was more to do in the wider context than at District level.

Fuel Poverty Review Group

Governance Checks:

Checked by or on behalf of the Chief Finance Officer	✓
Checked by or on behalf of the Monitoring Officer	✓

Background Papers: None

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Cold Homes in Eden

A Scrutiny Review into Fuel Poverty

August 2009

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Introduction

Fuel poverty was included in the Scrutiny Work Plan for 2009/10. It was agreed this would be a good topic to review over the summer months to ensure any recommendations could be implemented in time for the onset of winter.

The District has been affected by the economic downturn, fuel prices are on the rise again and this has led to the assumption that fuel poverty figures will rise in the District.

Eden District has the highest carbon footprint in the county. Many factors contribute to this:

- Solid wall construction of many properties
- Lack of mains gas to many areas
- Lack of public transport etc.

A Review was agreed on 2 July 2009 and elected on to the Review Group were:
Councillors: Mrs L Grisedale, Mrs S Orchard and Mrs D Richardson.

The Terms of Reference were:

1. To get a good overview of the issues rather than focussing on any aspect in detail.
2. To ensure as many residents in the District in fuel poverty are supplied with information to assist them with obtaining assistance and/or benefit take-up.

Overall Aims and Objectives

1. To raise awareness of fuel poverty and provide residents with information, advice and education of fuel poverty and related issues.
2. To establish whether existing information channels can be used more effectively to spread awareness.
3. Raise the Council's profile, its awareness of fuel poverty and its implications to the people in Eden.

Background

The national Government has set targets for eliminating fuel poverty these are:

- *Eliminate fuel poverty for all households by 2016*
- *End fuel poverty for vulnerable households by 2010*
- *The overall aim being that by 2018 no household in the UK should live in fuel poverty*

(The UK Fuel Poverty Strategy, 6 Annual Progress Report, 2008- www.berr.gov.uk/energy/fuel-poverty/strategy.html)

Fuel Poverty/Vulnerable Households - the nationally accepted definitions:

A household is considered to be in fuel poverty if they need to spend more than 10% of their income to achieve adequate warmth for health and comfort.

A vulnerable household is deemed to be one containing children or those who are elderly, sick or disabled.

Based on this definition 4.5 million households in the United Kingdom are in fuel poverty.

For every 1% increase in fuel prices another approximately 40,000 households are forced into fuel poverty. (Gloucestershire Scrutiny Review March 2009)

According to a BBC Breakfast News topic on fuel poverty aired on Tuesday 14 July 2009:

- *Oil prices per barrel are down by 58% on summer 2008*
- *Gas prices are up 42% on summer 2008*

Desktop research, consultation with voluntary organisations, service providers and local authority officers and a 'mystery shopper' type consultation was undertaken to further the investigations into this topic.

Due to the timescales involved the Group attempted to get a good overview of the issues rather than focussing on any aspect in detail, which led to the decision not to undertake a consultation survey with the residents in Eden.

Rates of fuel poverty are twice as high in rural areas compared to urban areas. Despite Government promises to eradicate fuel poverty, the reality is that the number of families in fuel poverty has shot up this year and is set to rise even further. One in five families in rural areas is struggling to keep warm. (Written by Ruralcity Media February 2009)

A recently published Government White Paper on proposals to fight climate change proposes to introduce a levy on fossil fuels. This means that people who rely on fossil fuel to heat their homes could be hit by a £200 levy. The Government's proposals will not do anything for those who do not use mains electricity or gas for their heating. There are large areas in rural UK that do not have access to mains gas. (Written by Ruralcity Media July 2009).

Overview of Fuel Poverty

Eden District Council

Warm Front (national policy- see below)

Eden District Council (EDC) promotes and distributes the Government's "Keep Warm, Keep Well" brochure, which targets people on benefits.

Warm Front has had some criticism recently (see conclusions below), that the initiative was not always beneficial for rural areas. A maximum grant for central

heating is £3,500 but to address issues in the rural areas large contractors nominated by the Government are installing oil central heating that costs approximately £6,500 to install. EDC received queries from residents about 'topping up' the Warm Front grant, and initially some grants were given, but this opened the floodgates to further requests and given the finances this was not seen to be giving best value.

Council Projects

Grants

The Cumbria Energy Advice Centre was disbanded in 2008 and was replaced with the Energy Savings Trust (Cumbria and Lancashire). Energy efficiency plays only a small part in the Trust's remit. The focus is on a more strategic level for climate change.

EDC has entered into a Service Level Agreement with Tees and Durham Energy Advice (TaDEA). EDC sets the policies and TaDEA carries them out.

The 2009/10 budget for energy improvements in Eden is £50,000, most of which has been spent for this year. The policy is to assist vulnerable groups - especially residents over the age of 60 and families with children under the age of five. Grants are awarded for cavity wall insulation; loft insulation and draft exclusion eg tank lagging. When surveyors are visiting homes they make a note of any other disrepair issues which are then reported back to the Housing Section.

To begin this initiative a mail drop was carried out to all households in Eden. There were few responses to the mail drop so currently surveyors are cold calling on households. This has led to a number of telephone calls to the Housing Section to ensure the energy efficiency offers are real.

Education and Practical Advice

EDC has been successful in drawing down funding from the Cumbria County Council to run a programme of education and practical advice for householders. Currently the Council employs a part time officer whose role it is to visit householders who have made energy efficiency enquiries to give some practical advice to save energy. Often the session starts by taking readings from the fuel meters and the officer returns in a week to see how much fuel has been used and how this can be used more effectively. For example by:

- Turning down thermostats in rooms not used
- Microwaving a baked potato instead of using the oven etc.

The Housing section is considering producing a one side A4 advice leaflet, bullet pointing some energy efficiency measures. Information dissemination had been the initial aim of the Review Group to add value, so this suggestion found sound approval from the Members who gave suggestions on its distribution.

Members were very heartened to hear about the EDC initiatives and the fact that it does not exclude those residents on low incomes but are above the threshold for benefits; a key gap of many initiatives.

Members felt with some small adjustments there could be some improvements in targeting the households most in need. This led to a discussion about managing expectations. With limited finances the Council could not cope with a significant increase in applicants. The current policies, it was agreed, were giving value for money.

Currently the budget is split between 'decent homes' (£100,000) and energy efficiency (£50,000), but the Portfolio Holder could change the allocations if a solid case was made.

Finally, there was some discussion concerning the term 'fuel poverty'. Fuel poverty is not a title some would associate with themselves or do not wish to be associated with. Julie Monk, Principal Environmental Health Officer (Housing), stated that most people could relate to 'cold homes' and with that in mind the Members have entitled this review 'Cold Homes' to begin the process of changing perceptions to this particular topic.

Eden Website

The website currently has information on 'Credit Crunch: Fuel and Energy' and a media release 'Council Commits to Carbon Reduction'.

The Housing section web pages shows a Free phone number for people to ring in the first instance when making enquiries about energy efficiency.

Working with other Agencies (Extracts taken from the Council document 'Supporting those on Low Incomes, July 2008)

The council is often able to achieve more when it works in partnership with other agencies. The following agencies are particularly helpful to the Council in seeking to address the problems of low income.

Citizens' Advice Bureau

EDC is the core funder of the Bureau, which gives free advice targeted at those on lower incomes and addresses, in particular, debt issues. A biannual meeting is held and a 'Working Together' agreement is maintained to promote effective working with the Council.

Age Concern

Pensioner poverty is a major local issue, given the high number of pensioners in the district. Working with Age Concern is often an effective way in seeking to tackle pensioner poverty. A biannual meeting is held and a 'Working Together' Agreement is maintained to promote effective working with the Council.

Anchor Staying Put

Anchor Staying Put is a home improvement agency which is funded by the Council to provide advice and assistance to those on low incomes, the disabled and the elderly.

Eden Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)

The LSP has applied to the Communication and Engagement Fund 2009/10 for funds to carry out a 'Warmer Homes in Kirkby Thore' project.

The proposal is to create an evidence base of case studies in Eden that will assist people in combating fuel poverty.

Eden Valley Public Health Partnership (Thematic sub-group of the Eden LSP) Older People's Task Group

This Group is planning the development of a 'Winter Warmth' campaign in Eden for 2009. The campaign will follow along the lines of the South Lakeland initiative, detailed below, involving events and the issue of winter warmth packs. Given the disparate rural communities in Eden, the Group wishes to link up with existing events such as coffee mornings etc. rather than organise new events. Kath Hetherington representing Eden Community Alarms offered to draw up a list of people/agencies that may be able to deliver packs and provide information at events. This initiative has vulnerable and older people as their focus.

Cumbria Context

Cumbria Health and Well-being Scrutiny Committee undertook a review into fuel poverty in Cumbria in December 2008.

The scrutiny was initiated because of "*councillors concerns about the effect of rising fuel prices on constituents and because reduction of fuel poverty is a target for health and well-being in the Local Area Agreement*". (Extract from *Fuel Poverty in Cumbria Scrutiny Review, March 2009*).

The review was a 'snapshot' scrutiny to assess the current position and to make a contribution to the initiatives being undertaken by a range of agencies in the county. Seven recommendations were agreed. Of those seven recommendations Eden District Council can have a direct impact on two by supplying information concerning the District and working in partnership with the County Council to add weight to lobbying (see Key Findings below).

Cumbria County Council (CCC) has a Fuel Poverty Officer Group, which has a representative of EDC on it.

Cumbria County Council has produced an Affordable Warmth Strategy, with specific targets for Eden.

Different councils in the county have different policies to address fuel poverty/energy efficiency. Below are some examples:

South Lakeland Initiative

The South Lakeland Successful Aging Group held a series of events in a number of locations with the aim of increasing awareness of fuel poverty during 2008/09. The events also provided advice and information about local services, available grants, practical solutions and energy saving measures to help save money and keep warm in winter.

Four events took place. These were:

- Quick Steps to Energy Efficiency in November 2008 - a 'tea dance' hosted by South Lakeland District Council. This was a very successful event attended by over 100 older people. Resource packs (funded by NHS Cumbria) were handed out.
- Two events in Windermere and Sedbergh hosted by the Fire Service were adversely affected by a cold snap of hazardous winter weather. About 30 people attended each event
- A further event held at Kendal Fire Station targeting families in January 2009 was attended by around 25 people but was affected by very heavy rain!

The feedback from people attending the events and the organisations participating has been that the events were a great success, in particular the tea dance which managed to combine two kinds of activities, in a way that was both enjoyable and informative. This will be repeated in autumn/winter 2009.

A massive achievement from the events was the number of referrals the organisations and agencies received, with some very positive outcomes. (Fuel Poverty Report Draft, Keeping Warm and Well in South Lakeland, April 2009).

Thirlmere Initiative

This is an initiative being undertaken by Impact Housing. The housing association is working with tenants in Thirlmere to look at the long term sustainability of their community including alternative energy options, such a biomass fuel initiative.

Age Concern (Eden and Carlisle)

The above in partnership with the Housing Association Charitable Trust are working to set up a scheme called 'Home Sharing'. The purpose of the scheme is to match homeowners who are struggling on their own with a home sharer in need of housing, who would help in the home.

Eden Carers

The website for Eden Carers directs users to "First Stop", which is an independent service providing advice and information for older people, their families and carers. This service is jointly provided by Age Concern and Help the Aged. The site does offer a lot of information.

National Context

Winter Fuel Payments

Winter Fuel Payments are issued automatically to people over the age of 60. They make an important contribution to tackling fuel poverty and are responsible for taking around 100,000 households out of fuel poverty in England.

If the payments had been used to meet energy bills directly, around 600,000 households in England would be taken out of fuel poverty. (The UK Fuel Poverty Strategy, 6th Annual Progress Report, 2008).

Warm Front

Warm Front is a nationally funded initiative, which according to the Defra 6th Annual Progress Report, *“has continued to be a key tool tackling fuel poverty in the private sector in England”*.

The scheme began in 2000 and gives assistance to households by supplying a range of heating, insulation and other energy efficiency measures, often free of charge.

Warm Front is also involved in seeking out cost effective, low carbon alternative technologies to help households with ‘hard to treat’ properties.

Warm Front has come in for some criticism recently, The Commission for Rural Communities issued a media release on 3 August 2009 stating:

“... many rural properties are hard to heat and insulate but nearly 75% households helped by Warm Front are not in fuel poverty. ... although 28% of households in fuel poverty are in the rural areas, Warm Front is only reaching 15%”.

There has been a call for the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) to introduce (statutory) social tariffs for the rural fuel poor, and to widen the measures available under Warm Front to include secondary glazing, which would particularly benefit rural properties that are both hard to heat and insulate.

Warm Zones

Warm Zones is a not for profit company, a wholly owned subsidiary of National Energy Action, the English national fuel poverty charity.

Warm Zones deliver affordable warmth to low income and other vulnerable households, as well as energy efficiency measures for the able to pay households. All Zones work with an individual approach in their area, but characteristically it involves the systematic identification of the fuel poverty and energy efficiency status of all households in an area. Once the identification of households is established work is co-ordinated to deliver energy efficiency improvements and related services to low income and vulnerable households through referrals to Warm Front. Currently nowhere in Cumbria is designated a Warm Zone.

Pre-payment Meters

Around 18% and 12% of the fuel poor pay for electricity and gas respectively by pre-payment meter. Households that use pre-payment meters typically pay around £55 more for their energy than customers paying for their energy by standard credit and £144 more than those who pay by direct debit. Pre-payment meter customers cost more to service than customers using other payment methods, because of the cost of the meter itself and the administrative structure that supports it. (The UK Fuel Poverty Strategy, 6th Annual Progress Report, 2008).

Eden has a large number of properties with prepayment meters.

Energy supplier social programmes

Energy supply companies can play an important part in reducing fuel poverty. They provide a range of help to vulnerable customers through their social programmes. Each supplier offers a different form of assistance such as:

- Assistance with clearing debt
- Social tariffs
- Fixed tariffs
- Rebates

Fuel Poverty Strategy Group

Within this national group there is a sub group entitled 'the Hard to Treat Homes' which is currently focussing on reducing the incidence of fuel poverty in solid wall homes and in properties that are off the gas network.

The Rural Services Network

The above Network is to investigate the extent of fuel poverty in the countryside. Researchers will examine the effect of fuel poverty on consumers, service providers and the local economy.

The investigation will include a consultation for rural stakeholders, which closes on 15 September 2009.

Study findings will be used to advise the Government and key policy makers on ways of increasing energy efficiency.

Key Findings

1. Householders with low incomes but more than the threshold to apply for benefits have the least flexibility in reducing their fuel costs.
2. Many people do not realise they fall within the fuel poverty criteria.
3. There is a stigma attached to the 'poverty' label, which discourages people from identifying themselves as 'fuel poor'.
4. Eden has much poor quality housing stock in terms of energy efficiency. Many properties are solid wall construction making them energy inefficient and hard to treat for thermal insulation.
5. Under occupied households have a higher likelihood of being fuel poor, due to being single income households. There has been an increase in their numbers in recent years.
6. Eden residents have limited access to mains gas.
7. Installing cavity or loft insulation and efficient heating are the most effective improvements to increase the energy efficiency of a dwelling.
8. There are still quite a number of people who have limited or no access to the internet. Alternative methods of communication must be found but without bombarding householders with leaflets.

Conclusions

Low income households

This was a gap, which caused most concern to the Group. During the investigations there was found to be a wealth of information for older people and those in receipt of benefits but for those people whose incomes were just above the threshold for benefits were placed in the category of able to pay.

Eden has a low wage economy, a good number of properties are stone built and much of the district does not have access to mains gas. These are the primary issues contributing to fuel poverty in the district.

The district has quite a number of properties with prepayment utility meters installed which attract high premium payments.

While pre-payment meters are often associated with the fuel poor, according to Government statistics there are around 13% of pre-payment customers who are fuel poor, which is slightly lower than those on standard credit (15%). Those households with no gas have the highest incidence of fuel poverty at around 21%. (The UK Fuel Poverty Strategy, 6th Annual Progress Report, 2008).

Council Policies and Projects

The Group were most heartened to hear about the Council's contributions to help those in need of assistance with energy efficiency.

The policy does not differentiate between those on benefits and low income households; therefore there is no gap to fill in this area, which alleviates some of the Group's concerns.

The budget is not very large, £50,000 for 2009/10 and is very nearly spent for this year, but Members agreed that the District were getting value for money. Working with TaDEA the Council currently is trying to establish those most in need of energy efficiency measures and then addressing the problems.

By being able to draw down funding from Cumbria County Council EDC is also embarking on an education and information campaign, visiting people in their homes and advising them about making small changes to their day to day living which will save energy. It is the intention of the Housing section to create an information leaflet for district wide issue containing energy efficiency tips.

The Group felt that wider recognition should be given to what the Council is doing because it is good work, making a difference to many people's lives all on a small budget.

The only point the Group would make is that Parish Councils could be used to great effect in relation to assisting TaDEA with their energy efficiency work.

The Group were not happy using the term 'fuel poverty' despite this being nationally recognised and were pleased to learn that the Housing section felt 'Cold Homes' to be a more appropriate term and one that residents could more identify with. With that in mind it was agreed to entitle this review 'Cold Homes' to begin the process of changing perceptions.

Eden Local Strategic Partnership

The initiative that the Partnership wishes to take forward was in its initial stages when the review took place but the Group felt that with a little more 'joined up' thinking the initiative could have built on what is already in place and expanded on an area which the Council does not have sufficient funds to roll out at this moment in time.

The Group looks forward to hearing the outcomes of the initiative.

Warm Front

The Cumbria and Lancashire Energy Savings Trust is the county body, although energy efficiency is only a small part of their remit now.

EDC advertises the Free phone number as the first port of call for anyone requiring information about energy efficiency.

During the research part of this review it was found that funding from the Government on this initiative will be cut by 50% from April 2010.

Warm Front has had to weather some criticism recently, following a national study it was concluded that energy efficiency measures had not been predominantly targeted at the fuel poor or people in rural areas.

There have been calls to widen the measures available under the Warm Front scheme to include secondary glazing, which would be very welcome in Eden.

Warm Zone

There are no Warm Zone designations in the county and the Group felt this should be given some consideration. Eden has the highest carbon footprint in the county and is the most rural.

The work carried out in partnership with TaDEA in the district does include much of what a Warm Zone designation would do, so it is agreed that this would be left to those who have a better understanding of the topic than the Group.

Information

There is a lot of information out there but there are problems:

- Sometimes it is difficult to access information.
- Once accessed there is a wealth of information but wading through the different sets of information to see what you are entitled to can be daunting and time consuming.
- Much of the information relates to older people and those on benefits. There appears to be little information directed at younger families or those on low incomes.
- There is a need to provide a variety of means of communication (not everyone has access to the internet)!
- A conclusion following research is that all agencies appear to be well up to date with the problems of fuel poverty but many do not have systems for dealing with them.

The original aim of this review was to establish whether information was reaching the right groups. It was thought raising awareness would add value. It has been established that there is a lot of information out there although much of it is not 'joined up'.

EDC is doing a good job in the area of energy efficiency and with information. The Group support the proposal to create a 'Hints and Tips' information leaflet. To help 'spread the word' it is felt that Parish Councils should be asked to assist. In addition to the leaflets it is suggested posters should be used in places where people queue or wait for appointments as many people read posters while waiting.

Lobbying

As a Council it is understood we cannot fulfil all the aspirations on our own. The Group are in agreement with the conclusions/recommendations from the County Council review that:

“The County and District Councils and partners should get more involved with the lobbying of Government on fuel poverty including:

- *Joining with other rural councils on the LGA to highlight the particular fuel poverty issues affecting rural areas such as higher fuel costs in areas without access to mains gas, and high numbers of old stone properties which are less energy efficient.*
- *Supporting the National Energy Action in lobbying for carbon reduction money to be spent in sufficient amounts of the “energy poor”.*

To add to that, the Review Group feel that the Government needs to be lobbied to ensure that secondary glazing is added to the items attracting grant support under the Warm Front initiative. Secondary glazing would be a great benefit to residents in Eden who live in solid wall households without the benefit of mains gas connection.

Recommendations

The Group were very impressed with the policies and assistance given to the District’s residents and this is reflected in the recommendations below.

The Group is also aware of the current financial constraints and did not wish to make recommendations that would stretch them any further.

Finally, success breeds success and the Members are mindful that they do not wish to create expectations that cannot be delivered.

Recommendation 1

Improve information sharing with others within the Council. Both Officers and Members could enhance the very good work that is already being carried out and form the framework for any new initiatives.

A ‘wiki’ (an internet document repository folder), can be created with a hyperlink put on to the EDC website. This folder could be used as a central point for essential information. It is recommended that permissions be given to the Housing section who would ensure succinct and essential information was stored there for use by the public and officers/Members alike.

Recommendation 2

It has already been proposed that a ‘Hints and Tips for Energy Efficiency’ leaflet be produced and the Group fully endorse the proposal. It is also recommended that posters be created for use on village notice boards, village halls and places where people queue or wait for an appointment, such as Post Offices, doctors’ waiting rooms etc.

Recommendation 3

The EDC website should be used to coincide with LSP 'Winter Warmth' campaign to publicise energy efficiency in the run up to winter.

Recommendation 4

Consideration should be given to involving Parish Councils in identifying and disseminating information to those most likely suffering in a cold home.

Recommendation 5

Consideration should be given to using the term 'Cold Homes' rather than 'fuel poverty'. Residents can identify more with a cold home than being termed 'fuel poor'.

Recommendation 6

Consideration should be given to joining with the other local authorities and partners in the county to lobby Government as stated in the Cumbria County Council Fuel Poverty Review:

"The County and District Councils and partners should get more involved with the lobbying of Government on fuel poverty including:

- *Joining with other rural councils on the LGA to highlight the particular fuel poverty issues affecting rural areas such as higher fuel costs in areas without access to mains gas, and high numbers of old stone properties which are less energy efficient.*
- *Supporting the National Energy Action in lobbying for carbon reduction money to be spent in sufficient amounts of the "energy poor".*
- Also; to lobby to ensure the Government include secondary glazing to the Warm Front initiative as this would be of great benefit to many Eden residents and residents across the county who live in solid wall properties, without the benefit of a mains gas connection.