

ANGUS COUNCIL

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES COMMITTEE – 28 MAY 2009

PROPOSAL FOR INVOLVEMENT IN THE HOME INSULATION SCHEME

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

ABSTRACT: This report informs committee members of a recent application to the Scottish Government for involvement in The Home Insulation Scheme, and seeks approval for formally participating in the project if the application to attract investment is successful.

1. RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 It is recommended that the committee approve the proposal that:

The Council should provide support and participate in the 'Home Insulation Scheme' (HIS) if the application to attract the project to Angus is successful.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Angus Council has been working hard for several years to deal with the issue of fuel poverty, this being the over-riding aim of the fuel poverty strategy, and a major objective in the Local Housing Strategy. The Council also has a duty, as a signatory (in 2007) of the Climate Change Declaration, to reduce domestic greenhouse gas emissions in order to tackle the threat of climate change.
- 2.2 The Council has devoted a substantial amount of investment in recent years to insulating its own housing stock, ensuring that all properties meet the energy efficient criteria in the Scottish Housing Quality Standard. A major challenge to achieving carbon reduction objectives in the private sector however, is the amount of public resources that can be provided. It is therefore desirable to take every opportunity to maximise external funding for energy efficiency activity in Angus through a partnership approach so that residents benefit from improvements and advice that would otherwise be difficult to deliver.
- 2.3 Consequently the Council has been in discussions with the Scottish Government and COSLA about proposals for their new area based Home Insulation Scheme (HIS) . Although the first phase of the scheme has to be delivered in this financial year, the details were not fully available until the end of April. This means that the timescale for agreeing which areas of Scotland are to be included is extremely short. The deadline for applications from local authorities was 25th May – an application was duly made by Angus Council by that date. It is expected that the decision on whether the bid has been successful will be made by the Scottish Government by the end of June 2009.

3. THE 'HOME INSULATION SCHEME' (HIS)

- 3.1 HIS will take a street by street approach and seek to make contact with every household in selected areas across Scotland. The project aims to deliver 90,000 energy assessments and benefit / tariff checks with households being offered free or heavily discounted loft and cavity insulation. Although the Scottish Government has pledged £15million to the project, the aim is to support this with matched funding from other sources, including local authorities and energy companies. Bids will be assessed on the levels of fuel poverty; the potential for carbon savings; the potential dwellings suitable for loft and cavity insulation; the potential for complementary funding; ease of delivery; and mechanisms for community engagement.
- 3.2 Angus Council officers have submitted a bid to attract a large proportion of the funding to the north east half of Angus, based on some 20,000 homes in and around Brechin, Montrose and

Arbroath. This area has been proposed because it includes the wards recorded as having the highest incidence of fuel poverty and multiple deprivation factors in Angus. There is a mix of urban, suburban and rural properties, the majority of which are suitable for loft insulation, with a substantial number able to take cavity wall insulation.

- 3.3 Although overall delivery of the scheme will be managed by the Energy Saving Trust (EST), there would be a need for the Council to provide a supportive role. It is envisaged that this would take several forms: endorsing marketing literature; promoting the scheme through Council literature and publications; ACCESS staff providing basic project information and signposting customers to the EST; potential provision of office space; and Housing officers providing expertise and knowledge on property types. There is also potential for some Housing capital and planned maintenance programmes to be aligned with the project area where a joined up approach could bring benefits to Council tenants.
- 3.4 The success of the HIS in Angus would however also be dependant on the involvement of a number of participating organisations. These would be likely to include SCARF (Save Cash and Reduce Fuel - the Energy Saving Scotland Advice Network centre for North East Scotland), Citizens Advice Bureau, Angus Community Health Partnership, Community Planning Partnership, NHS Scotland, local Community Councils, Housing Associations and Defence Estates. Each of these potential partners could help to promote and endorse the scheme to a range of client groups. It is also envisaged that the register of private landlords could be put to practical use in enabling easier access to private rented properties.
- 3.5 There are also ongoing discussions with Aberdeenshire Council on the potential for a cross border project to maximise economies of scale, combining the northern half of Angus with the southern part of Aberdeenshire.
- 3.6 If the bid is successful there would be economic benefits for Angus in terms of employment opportunities and construction industry activity, as well as increasing disposable income of householders by reducing their fuel bills and maximising benefit uptake. The major beneficiaries however, would be substantial numbers of Angus householders in privately owned or rented accommodation, who would see their fuel bills reduce and the quality of their homes increase. This in turn would help to improve the health of many householders.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The financial implications arising from this report will ultimately be dependant on the outcome of the grant application. It is envisaged that there would be an increase in ACCESS line enquiries over the 6 months of the project, but because of the variable nature of these it is difficult to quantify at this time. Co-ordination of Council support would be undertaken by officers in Housing. It is envisaged however that these activities will be managed from within current resources.
- 4.2 Rent-free use of office space in Brechin has been offered for up to 1 year, as part of the application, at a maximum value of £5320, but with low demand for office accommodation in the current economic climate this might not be an actual loss of income.

5. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no Human Rights implications arising from this report.

6. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The issues dealt with in this report have been the subject of consideration from an equalities perspective (as required by legislation). An equalities impact assessment is not required

7. SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT

- 7.1 This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within the single outcome agreement for Angus:
 - Sustainable business growth is achieved.
 - The health of the Angus population is improved.
 - Health inequalities are tackled.

- Good quality housing is available to all in communities throughout Angus
- Children and their families have access to high quality services when required and are assisted to overcome the social, educational, physical, environmental and economic barriers that create inequality.
- Good quality housing is available throughout Angus

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The Chief Executive, the Director of Corporate Services, the Director of Infrastructure Services, the Head of Finance and the Head of Law & Admin have been consulted on the content of this report.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 Angus Council have in recent years initiated and been involved in a range of projects and activities to reduce the incidence of fuel poverty, including substantial investment in the Council's own housing stock. If the application to participate in HIS is successful the project could bring substantial benefits to householders in the private sector as well as the wider Angus economy.

**RON ASHTON
DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES**

NOTE: No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report:

HSG/AMcK/JM

EQUALITY SCREENING

Policy Control Document

Name of Policy, Procedure or Report

**PROPOSAL FOR INVOLVEMENT IN THE HOME
INSULATION SCHEME**

Lead Department/Service

Housing

What is the aim of the policy, procedure or report?

This report informs committee members of a recent application to the Scottish Government for involvement in The Home Insulation Scheme, and seeks approval for formally participating in the project if the application to attract investment is successful.

Is this a new or a review of an existing policy, procedure or report?

New Report describing potential work within existing strategic aims and policies

Screening Process

Has the policy, procedure or report already been assessed for its impact on people from different racial backgrounds, people of different genders and people with disabilities.

Yes No

If Yes, unless there have been significant changes, no further action is required. Please sign and date immediately below and retain for reference.

If No, does the policy, procedure or report involve or have consequences for the people the council serves or employs?

Yes No

If yes, proceed to Step 1 of the Full Impact Assessment on page 2.

If no, please state why not

If no, The policy, procedure or report is not relevant and no further action is required.

Please sign and date immediately and keep for reference

Name: John Morrow

Signature: _____

Date: 15/5/09