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**Report of Head of Scrutiny and Member Development**

**Report to Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board**

**Date: 30<sup>th</sup> July 2012**

**Subject: Inquiry into Fuel Poverty – Formal response to the Scrutiny Board’s recommendations**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

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**Summary of main issues**

1. Last year, the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board undertook an in-depth inquiry into Fuel Poverty. In April 2012, the Board published a report setting out its findings and recommendations following this inquiry.
2. It is the normal practice to request a formal response from the relevant Directorate(s) to the Board’s recommendations once a report has been published. Details of the formal response to the Board’s recommendations are set out within this report for the Board’s consideration.

**Recommendations**

3. Members are asked to consider the formal response to the recommendations arising from the fuel poverty inquiry and decide whether any further scrutiny involvement is required at this stage.

## **1.0 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 Last year, the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board undertook an inquiry into Fuel Poverty. In April 2012, the Board produced a report setting out its findings and recommendations following its inquiry. This report is attached for information.
- 1.2 It is the normal practice to request a formal response from the relevant Directorate(s) to the Board's recommendations once a report has been published. This report presents the formal response to the Fuel Poverty Inquiry recommendations for the Board's consideration.

## **2.0 Background information**

- 2.1 Recognising that fuel poverty impacts on individuals, the community and public services in many different ways, the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board agreed to undertake an inquiry to make an assessment of and, where appropriate, make recommendations on the following areas:
- The social, health, economic and environmental impacts of fuel poverty.
  - The scale of fuel poverty in Leeds and those most at risk.
  - National and local policy drivers aimed at tackling fuel poverty and achieving affordable warmth.
  - The current commitment of relevant stakeholders within public services, the private sector and community organisations in tackling fuel poverty in the short, medium and long-term.
  - Identification of existing partnerships, plans and strategies where fuel poverty is not currently explicitly identified as an issue but is implicitly affected by actions taken or not taken.
  - Referral networks and existing services aimed at tackling fuel poverty in Leeds.
  - The relationship between the industry and energy regulator and how Local Authorities can influence the scale, frequency and targeting of price increases.
- 2.2 This inquiry led the Scrutiny Board to make 20 recommendations in total, which seek to raise the profile of fuel poverty and encourage the Council and its partners to work more collaboratively to achieve greater efficiencies and better outcomes for those at risk of fuel poverty.

## **3.0 Main issues**

- 3.1 It is the normal practice to request a formal response from the relevant Directorate(s) to the Board's recommendations once a report has been published. This response includes the views of the relevant Directorate on the recommendations, action and timescales in responding to the recommendations or the reasons for not agreeing with the recommendations. The formal responses to the Board's recommendations are set out below.

### Response of the Director of Public Health

- 3.2 The Director of Public Health has been identified as the Lead Director on a number of the recommendations arising from the Fuel Poverty inquiry. A summary of the

formal response provided by the Director of Public Health is attached to this report for Members' consideration (see appendix 2).

#### Response of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods

- 3.3 The Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods is also identified as Lead Director on a number of the recommendations arising from the Fuel Poverty inquiry. A summary of the formal response provided by the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods is also attached to this report for Members' consideration (see appendix 3).

#### Response of the Head of Partnerships

- 3.4 Recommendation 6 within the Scrutiny inquiry report states as follows:

##### **Recommendation 6**

**That the Leeds Initiative Board integrates the Leeds Affordable Warmth Partnership into the formal Health and Wellbeing Board, reporting directly into the Health Improvement Board, to assist in attracting and retaining future commitment of key partners and enable a more transparent process of monitoring the delivery of the Leeds Affordable Warmth Strategy and accompanying action plan.**

- 3.5 The following response has been provided by the Head of Partnerships:

The recommendation will be formally drawn to the attention of the Leeds Initiative Board at the meeting scheduled for 7th September. Practical arrangements for reporting progress of the Leeds Affordable Warmth strategy and action plan to the Health Improvement Board will be put into place. The contribution of this strategy to the delivery of all city priorities will be considered by all relevant partnerships.

#### Response of the Chair of the Member Development Working Group

- 3.6 Recommendation 7 within the Scrutiny inquiry report states as follows:

##### **Recommendation 7**

**That the Chair of the Member Development Working Group ensures that fuel poverty is included in the development of the public health role of Elected Members through the Member Development Programme and Induction programme in preparation for the new system being operational from April 2013.**

- 3.7 The following response has been provided by the Chair of the Member Development Working Group:

The Member Development Working Group met on 20<sup>th</sup> June and welcomed the recommendation. At the meeting we discussed the draft events programme for Autumn 2012 and agreed that training for Members on fuel poverty should form part of the 'Healthy Leeds' series. ('Healthy Leeds' is an on-going programme supported by the Executive Member for Health and Well-being, which aims to develop the

public health role of Members as well as informing them about changes to the health landscape).

The Working Group will progress this event with the Executive Member for Health and Well-being and the relevant officers, with the aim of running an initial event on Fuel Poverty by end of October 2012.

Response of the Assistant Chief Executive (Customer Access and Performance)

3.8 Recommendation 8 within the Scrutiny inquiry report states as follows:

**Recommendation 8**

**(i) That Area Committees nominate a Fuel Poverty Champion to drive forward local action in addressing fuel poverty problems associated with their particular areas.**

**(ii) That the Area Committee Fuel Poverty Champions liaise with their respective Locality Health and Wellbeing Managers to agree the appointment of one Fuel Poverty Champion from each of the 3 localities onto the Leeds Affordable Warmth Partnership.**

3.9 The Assistant Chief Executive (Customer Access and Performance) is leading on this recommendation and has provided the following formal response:

Recommendation 8

- (i) During discussions at the Area Chairs Forum meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> July it was agreed that the issue of fuel poverty is a major concern for Area Committees and that local action needs to be determined to tackle particular problems at a local level. A review of Area working commenced in June which will look at the role of Area Committees and will include a review of how Area Committees can be enabled to provide a local influence over a range of issues and services. This review will cover the role of Area Committee sub-boards and champions in order to make effective use of members time and influence, and to ensure that robust links are created with officers in council services and partner organisations to enable the roles of champions to be productive and influential. It was therefore agreed that the Area Committee's role in influencing the fuel poverty agenda be included in the review of Area Working, and that appropriate responsibility for an Area Committee champion or sub board would be included in the recommendations of the review.
- (ii) One aspect covered in the Area Working review will be the links between Area Committees, Area Support Teams and Area Leadership Teams with the various Partnerships in Leeds. Consultations will take place with a wide range of stakeholders, including Locality Health and Wellbeing Managers and Partnership Boards. It has been agreed that effective links and representation for Area Committees on the Leeds Affordable Warmth Partnership will be included in the review.

## Response from Ofgem

- 3.10 During the Board's inquiry, a key issue raised was around ensuring that lower income households also received support in finding the most appropriate energy tariff to help reduce the cost of energy.
- 3.11 Whilst acknowledging the commitment made by Ofgem to take action aimed at making it much easier for consumers to identify who is offering the cheapest tariff, the Scrutiny Board was concerned that such action has not yet been taken. It was therefore agreed that the Chair of the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board would write to Ofgem setting out the Board's concerns.
- 3.12 A copy of the letter sent by the Chair of the Scrutiny Board to Ofgem is attached as appendix 4(a). The response provided by Ofgem is also attached as appendix 4(b) and 4(c) for the Board's information.

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

- 4.1.1 The formal responses set out within this report include the views of the relevant Directorate(s) in consultation with the relevant Executive Board Member.
- 4.1.2 Where other internal or external consultation processes have been undertaken with regard to responding to the Scrutiny Board's recommendations, details of this will be referenced against the relevant recommendations.

### **4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration.**

- 4.2.1 Where consideration has been given to the impact on equality areas, as defined in the Council's Equality and Diversity Scheme, this has been referenced against the relevant recommendation. As part of the formal recommendation tracking process, the Scrutiny Board will continue to ensure that due regard has been given to the impact upon equality areas where appropriate.

### **4.3 Council Policies and City Priorities**

- 4.3.1 The scrutiny recommendations are complementary to the priorities of the Affordable Warmth Strategy (2007-2016), City Priority Partnership Plan for Health and Wellbeing and Public Health Outcomes Framework.

### **4.4 Resources and Value for Money**

- 4.4.1 Details of any significant resource and financial implications linked to the Scrutiny recommendations will be referenced against the relevant recommendation.

### **4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

- 4.5.1 This report does not contain any exempt or confidential information.

### **4.6 Risk Management**

- 4.6.1 This report has no risk management implications.

## **5.0 Conclusions**

- 5.1 In April 2012, the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board published a report setting out its findings and recommendations following its inquiry into Fuel Poverty. The purpose of this report is to present the formal response to the Fuel Poverty inquiry recommendations for the Board's consideration.
- 5.2 Any recommendations which have not yet been completed will be included in future recommendation tracking reports to enable the Board to continue monitoring progress.

## **6.0 Recommendations**

- 6.1 Members are asked to consider the formal response to the recommendations arising from the fuel poverty inquiry and decide whether any further scrutiny involvement is required at this stage.

## **7.0 Background papers<sup>1</sup>**

- 7.1 Report of the Director of Public Health and Director of Adult Social Services to the Executive Board – Directors Response to Report by Scrutiny Board (Safer and Stronger Communities) on Fuel Poverty. 20<sup>th</sup> June 2012.

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available for inspection on request for a period of four years following the date of the relevant meeting. Accordingly this list does not include documents containing exempt or confidential information, or any published works. Requests to inspect any background documents should be submitted to the report author.