

Environment Select Committee

A meeting of Environment Select Committee was held on Monday, 16th July, 2012.

Present: Cllr Nigel Cooke (Chairman), Cllr Derrick Brown, Cllr Jean Kirby, Cllr Ray McCall, Cllr Mrs Maureen Rigg, Cllr Mick Womphrey, Cllr Bill Woodhead

Officers: Neil Ellison, Melanie Greenwood, Melanie Howard (DNS); Victoria Cooling (CESC)

Also in attendance: Luanshya Bakes, Angela Corner (Stockton and District Advice and Information Service)

Apologies: Cllr David Wilburn, Cllr David Rose (Cabinet Member for Environment)

1 Evacuation Procedure

The evacuation procedure was noted.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes for signature - 21st May 2012

The minutes of the meeting held on 21st May 2012 were signed in the office of Democratic Services by the Chairman as a correct record.

4 Draft Minutes - 11th June 2012

Consideration was given to the draft minutes of the meeting held on 11th June 2012.

AGREED that the minutes be approved.

5 Scrutiny Review of Affordable Warmth

Members received four presentations on matters related to Affordable Warmth and were as follows:

- Stockton and District Advice and Information Service work regarding fuel debt which included:
 - The services' holistic approach to debt advice, ensuring individuals received advice on all areas not just the issue for which they contacted the service.
 - The number of fuel debt enquiries received annually from 2008/9. There was a reduction in enquiries in 2011/12
 - Fuel debt referrals which led to other advice enquiries
 - Preventative work which aimed to help individuals before they needed help and advice, e.g. the Horizons Money Advice Centre, Financial Capability Training and the Big Energy Week (20th January 2012)
 - Social policy activity carried out by the service

- The impact of cold homes on health and wellbeing:
 - Impacts of cold housing on health and wellbeing included increased risk of death, disease and injuries, impaired mental health and social isolation, adverse effects on children's education, increased demand on health services and social

care.

-There were approximately 27,000 Excess Winter Deaths (EWDs) per year in the UK, with about 70 EWDs each year in Stockton-on-Tees

-Risk factors for early winter deaths included: Being elderly, having an underlying health condition, living in poor housing, living in fuel poverty, living alone, having a learning disability and being very young.

- Approaches to reduce an individual's risk of winter death and improve their resilience during the winter months included: Housing Improvements, reducing fuel poverty; increasing healthier lifestyles, improving the management of long-term conditions, increasing the uptake of flu and pneumonia vaccinations.

-From April 2013 councils would become responsible for strategies to reduce Seasonal Excess Deaths and improve seasonal health and wellbeing within their populations.

-A strategy was under development focusing on preventing seasonal excess deaths and illness. Recommendations from this scrutiny committee would need to be reflected within the delivery plan.

-Private Sector Housing in Stockton-on-Tees

-Characteristics of the private sector housing stock and households

-The decent homes standard outlined

-The number of non-decent homes by area and the cost to remedy non-decency -£42million (£3,900 average cost per household)

-6.7% of private sector dwellings had category 1 hazards. The primary hazard failures were excess cold, falls on level and falls on stairs

-Energy efficiency and thermal comfort

-Comparative costs to NHS and Stockton Council due to excess cold

-Stockton-on-Tees Warm Homes Healthy People Project

-Percentage of homes in Stockton in Fuel Poverty was 20.8%

-The project targeted packages of interventions at those areas where there were high levels of excess winter deaths, high levels of emergency admissions for cold related conditions and areas with poor housing

-Project impact - delivered 760 measures within an 8 week period

-Feedback

-Aims for the future – re-launch of the project in October 12.

The main issues that were discussed were as follows:

-Informing individuals of the importance of keeping their homes warm and managing their bills effectively to enable them to do this

-The Local Authorities role in ensuring private landlords fulfilled their responsibilities to provide a home that met the decent homes standard

-Increasing understanding of the impact of the cold on health and wellbeing and related deaths

-Encouraging professionals to take responsibility for referring clients to the Stockton Warm Homes Healthy People project to help people to stay healthy and well during the winter months.

-The links between mental health and living in cold homes

The Committee requested details of any schemes that would benefit at risk individuals by providing them with fixed, low, monthly fuel payments.

AGREED that the information be noted.

6 Work Programme

Members were advised that the next meeting would be held on 10th September following the August Recess.

The Scrutiny Officer advised that a pack would be sent out to members with the additional relevant information related to the review of Affordable Warmth. However, if Members required any further information they were to contact the Scrutiny officer.

AGREED that:

1. The report be noted.

2. The information pack will be sent out to Members with additional information related to the review of Affordable Warmth, prior to the next meeting.

7 Chairs Update

The Chair had nothing to report.