

Meeting: Integrated Housing Board

Date: 21 September 2009

Report Title: Affordable Warmth Strategy 2009 - 2019

Report of: Rosie Green, Housing Strategy and Partnerships Manager, Strategic and Community Housing Service

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Integrated Housing Board of Haringey's new Affordable Warmth Strategy, its action plan and the consultation report.

The report outlines the approach taken to develop this strategy and agree the action plan.

Summary

The IHB have led on the delivery of this strategy and agreed at its last meeting in May that a multi-partnership approach should be used to develop this Affordable Warmth Strategy. We were very pleased to have representatives from the Haringey Forum for Older People on the strategy project group as this has led to a more robust and meaningful strategy.

The IHB requested that the strategy to be completed for this meeting on 21st September 2009 thus enabling it to be launched before the onset of winter.

The 4 key priorities identified are:

- Engage with people to improve awareness and understanding of fuel poverty
- Increase the energy efficiency of housing across Haringey
- Maximise resources and opportunities for tackling fuel poverty
- Make the links to other related strategies such as the Greenest Borough

The action plan has been developed by the strategy working group. Currently there are some gaps in timescales, responsibilities and outcomes. This group have agreed that these need further consideration and discussion and therefore the plan will be completed at the first meeting of the implementation group meeting in October.

Legal/Financial Implications

None identified.

Recommendations

- i. That the IHB note the outcomes from the consultation process.
- ii. That the IHB approve the Affordable Warmth Strategy and Action Plan.
- iii. That the IHB monitor the deliver of the action plan.

Consultation Feedback

The paper attached at Appendix 1 provides the feedback received through the consultation process. This was from 15 June to 4 September 2009. The paper outlines the consultation approach taken and the range of individuals and organisations who were involved in the process.

The main outcomes from the consultation were:

- The need for clear information via a 'one stop shop approach' as there is so much available and it is confusing
- To develop the multi-partnership approach to deliver the action plan as this issue can not just the responsibility of one organisation alone
- Clear links with other strategies. For example the Council's Climate Change team identified that this strategy had the potential to meet their objectives for promoting energy efficiency. The strategy therefore was revised to incorporate their requirements, thus eliminating the need for another strategy. Through collaborative working we can deliver the identified actions.

Equalities Impact assessment

An EIA is currently being developed and will be presented to the next meeting of the IHB on 26 November 2009.

Monitoring of the Strategy

There will be an annual review of the strategy and action plan which will be presented to the IHB for approval.

There is another report on this meeting's agenda for the IHB to consider how it wants to monitor and receive performance reports on the Housing Strategy 2009-2019 sub-strategies. Therefore the monitoring of this strategy will comply with the decision taken.

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Appendix 1

Haringey's Affordable Warmth Strategy 2009-19

Consultation feedback

Consultation carried out between 15 June and 4 September 2009

1. Introduction

This document reports on the results of the consultation process and results for Haringey's Affordable Warmth Strategy which was held between 15th June and 4th September

We all want to have a warm house that we can afford to heat. For many households in the Borough this is difficult to achieve. There are many reasons for this, including lack of insulation and efficient heating systems, to people not claiming benefits that they are entitled to and rising energy costs. The Affordable Warmth strategy sets out plans for how the council and its partners plan to tackle fuel poverty and promote energy efficiency in a manner that is consistent and effective and to improve living conditions for all residents in Haringey.

To deliver this our key aims are:

1. Engage with people to improve awareness and understanding of fuel poverty
2. Increase the energy efficiency of Haringey's housing
3. Maximise resources and opportunities for tackling fuel poverty
4. Make the links to other related strategies (such as Haringey's Greenest Borough Strategy)

2. Consultation methods and materials

In order to communicate the content of the strategy and provide different methods for people to feedback, a number of consultation materials and communication techniques were used.

A multi partnership group commented on and guided the consultation work, amongst other work. This ensured we would reach residents effectively. A webpage which detailed the purpose of the strategy and consultation work and was put on the Haringey Council webpage. An article on Affordable Warmth and the consultation appeared in Haringey People and Home Zone magazines.

Approximately 100 community and voluntary groups (concerned with issues such as housing, poverty, faith, information, family etc.) were sent the strategy alongside a summary version and guidance questions. Posters and flyers advertising the consultation were distributed by Neighbourhood Managers and put up in public spaces (libraries, Customer Service Centres, Community Centres, and the Green Fair etc.) and taken to forums and meetings.

A number of forums and meetings were attended to speak about the strategy and gather feedback: Community Link Forum, Home for Haringey tenant event, Haringey Forum for Older People.

A half-day consultation event was held on 22 July, with presentations and workshops based on the priorities in the strategy. In attendance were representatives from residents' associations and environmental organisations, representatives from the Haringey Forum for Older People, Registered Social Landlords, the Council's Environmental Resources service, Housing Associations, Housing Trusts and Elected Members. This provided detailed feedback on the content of the strategy, what needs to be expanded on, what was missing and how we can ensure the strategy reaches residents effectively.

3. Feedback

Overall messages

Feedback confirmed that whilst ensuring grants reach residents is important the strategy needs to consider all types of houses and tenants in the borough. It was also suggested that the strategy incorporate buildings used by community and social groups.

It was identified that there is confusion about what information and schemes are available, and to whom. Furthermore, we need to find out the information needs of all different types of tenants in different tenures, from owner-occupiers (from a socio-economic range) to specific groups of people such as the Orthodox Jewish Community. Information and key messages should be consistent and reliable.

Communicating information effectively is important, with feedback suggesting that we need a multi-method approach which moves beyond the standard 'leaflet' approach. This would include peer-to-peer communication, utilising existing channels of communication and developing new ones (within and outside of the Council) and placing adverts in public places.

Haringey's Environmental Resources team felt the strategy should be broadened to include promoting energy efficiency thus linking these two key areas together in one document. This has now been completed and agreed with the Climate Change team.

All comments and feedback was qualitative. These have been organised into themes and not according to the four priorities (although these were used to guide the consultation). The themes are:

Information

Participants discussed the need for language to be plain, culturally sensitive and appropriate for the audiences. Messages should accurately reflect what is available to residents.

There was consensus that basic, consistent information should be produced which would appeal to *all* residents, regardless of socio-economic status. This

should stress that all residents are entitled to decent advice/support and, in particular circumstances, financial assistance.

Example of this basic information:

What can be done?

What are the benefits?

Paying for changes?

Further information could then be targeted at particular audiences, which would focus on available grants, where you can get advice on making your home more energy efficient and the money saving/green aspects of making changes etc.

Feedback stressed that we need to find out the quality of information energy suppliers provide and utilise it effectively.

Communication

Once consistent and understandable messages have been produced these need to be communicated effectively. The Council needs to do some work to identify key groups (e.g. private and social landlords, Orthodox Jewish community, immigrants, owner-occupiers, affluent residents and disabled residents) and their information needs – this information would be used to develop appropriate messages and advertising campaigns.

Participants recommended that there be a one single point of contact with clear communication between staff and the public. This would ideally merge information on affordable warmth, debt advice and a list of recommended insulation/boiler suppliers etc. Community groups and agencies as well as individuals need to be able to access clear and consistent information.

It had been suggested that since there has been a leaflet overload in the borough we try to keep these to a minimum. Peer-to-peer communication was seen as vital, with the following people identified as well placed to do this work:

- Affordable Warmth champions
- Resident Associations
- Residents who have had work done on their properties
- Community groups
- Service staff who visit homes (social workers, repair people etc.)
- Energy representatives in Council departments and partner organisations
- Unemployed residents and graduates could be used as advocates and act as advice givers
- Targeting children as they are proven to be effective at communicating ideas to families

Places to advertise information and promote the work included: libraries, supermarket notice boards, GP surgeries buses, tubes, area assemblies, Councillor surgeries, neighbourhood managers, job centres, sent with council letters, door-knocking (this could be in-tandem with other environmental campaigns), gas bills, council tax.

Training

It was stressed that all staff/volunteers etc. need to understand key messages and schemes available before they can talk to residents. This has training implications across the borough.

Training would need to be tailored to the type of person (customer service centre worker, community volunteer, school teacher, social worker etc.) delivering the information and their target audience.

Making homes more energy efficient

The Council needs to work with organisations which supply and manage homes (private and social renting as well as temporary accommodation) to come to agreement on service levels which should be reached.

Working with companies who supply energy was identified as an essential action, with bulk-buying of energy and implementation of effective innovative technologies being two suggestions.

Targeting those homes where a good SAP rating (the method for measuring energy efficiency) is hard to achieve was seen as important.

Links to other strategies

The strategy needs to link to other related plans and strategies. The consultation process has identified the links and the action plan will establish how this strategy will contribute to these key actions.