



Committee on Fuel Poverty

Minutes of Committee on Fuel Poverty (CFP) Meeting, 7th December 2016

1. All members of the Committee were present: Alice Maynard, Jenny Saunders, Paul Massara, David Blakemore and Lawrence Slade. From BEIS, the Sponsor and Secretariat were present, plus an official for the session on ECO. Dr Peter Bonfield attended to discuss the “Each Home Counts” review.

2. Members wished to record their thanks for Jenny Saunders acting as meeting Chair in the period leading up to David Blakemore’s recent appointment as Chairman.

Minutes of last meeting and actions

3. The minutes of the meeting on 19th October had been agreed by email and published on the CFP web pages on 14th November.

4. The majority of actions from the last meeting had been completed and Members were content that remaining actions from the last meeting were being progressed.

Members’ Interests

5. No potential conflicts of interest specific to the meeting’s agenda were declared.

Each Home Counts Review

6. Dr Peter Bonfield attended to discuss the independent review of consumer advice, protection, standards and enforcement for home energy efficiency and renewable energy measures in the United Kingdom which he was commissioned to lead. CFP was reminded that the objective of the Review is to ensure there is a robust and effective quality and standards framework in place to properly support and protect consumers when they install energy efficiency and renewable energy measures in their homes, and in instances where such installations go wrong.

7. It was noted that, from the CFP’s report on initial positions, the Review seemed particularly relevant to Recommendation 15 (on the importance and different facets of energy advice and ensuring adequate resources are in place for high quality services, offered in a bespoke way, that result in meaningful outcomes for fuel poor households). There were numerous developments which could help across the sector, but consumer confidence would be necessary if the benefits from these were to be maximised, ensuring householders realise the potential benefits of energy efficiency installations and their effective use.

8. Members were interested in how they could help to ensure effective implementation of the review recommendations. Dr Bonfield asked for the Committee to support the report - as far as possible and appropriate - and act as an independent and critical friend with the move onto implementation.

ECO and future obligations

9. Members were provided with an update on progress towards publishing the Government's response to the recent ECO consultation. The Committee reiterated some of their main concerns, such as the risk of the Government's manifesto commitment to insulating one million homes detracting from ECO focussing on fuel poverty objectives, the need for alignment with the principles in the fuel poverty strategy, and the risks of suppliers over-delivering in the current phase and what impacts this could have on the next phase.

10. There was also discussion of the scope for improving the data on the efficiency of delivery by suppliers and costs of identifying eligible households. BEIS was considering how it could obtain further data without adding unreasonably to administrative burdens and was considering survey sampling.

11. It was agreed that members would continue to have regular engagement with officials on ECO.

Autumn statement

12. Members noted that the Chancellor's Autumn Statement did not include any specific provision for tackling fuel poverty. It was agreed that the CFP should invite Treasury officials to a Committee meeting, with the focus of the discussion being on Recommendation 1 from the CFP's report.

Standing items

13. Members provided updates on their workstreams and recent stakeholder meetings; reviewed current correspondence and plans for future stakeholder meetings. They also discussed ways of working, to ensure that individuals were supported by others in their workstreams.

14. On the housing workstream, members discussed recent engagement with the Association of Local Energy Officers and comments received on difficulties with the enforcement of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System. Members considered opportunities to take forward for obtaining better data on the position.

Other business

15. Members discussed the Government's recent focus on the section of the population described as "just about managing", how this group might be defined and potential impacts on fuel poverty of targeting support on them.

16. Members also noted the recent initiatives by the London Assembly regarding fuel poverty and energy efficiency.

Dates of future CFP Meetings

17. Agreed dates for future CFP meetings are:

- 1st February 2017
- 5th April 2017
- 8th June 2017