



## Committee on Fuel Poverty

### **Minutes of Committee on Fuel Poverty (CFP) Meeting, 8th March 2018**

1. The Chairman and all members of the Committee were present: David Blakemore (Chair), Alice Maynard, Jenny Saunders, Liz Bisset, Paul Massara and Lawrence Slade. A BEIS colleague attended for a discussion on fuel poverty statistics. Also from BEIS, the Sponsor and Secretariat were present.

#### Minutes of last meeting and actions

2. The minutes of the meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> January were approved and were subsequently published on the CFP web pages on 30<sup>th</sup> January.
3. The majority of actions from the last meeting had been completed and members were content that remaining actions were being progressed.

#### Members' Interests

4. No potential conflicts of interest specific to the meeting's agenda were declared.

#### Alignment with the Clean Growth Strategy

5. The Committee had previously registered their initial positive response to the Government's Clean Growth Strategy. Having had further time to consider the Strategy, members wished to discuss it in more detail.
6. Points noted by members included:
  - There were areas where more detail would be needed, such as on heat: future options for the decarbonisation of heat could have negative impacts on levels of fuel poverty, given the costs likely to be involved. The Committee was likely to want to provide input in this area in future. It was noted that there could be benefit in large scale trials, so that a proper assessment be made of "what works". The role that RHI might play was uncertain, particularly for lower-income households.
  - There were uncertainties around ECO. Members had previously welcomed the fact that the Government had committed in the Strategy to extend support for home energy efficiency improvements through to 2028 at the current level of ECO funding. Even if fully focused on fuel poverty, this still left the overall level of funding too low to achieve the target.
  - Noting that some of the Strategy looked towards technological developments to help provide solutions, CFP broadly agreed that beneficial developments

were likely although there could be no certainty of this. It was also generally the case that higher income households were more likely to have early take up of new technologies, so the fuel poor would be likely to be among later beneficiaries.

- The commitment to Band C for all types of household by 2035 could drive different implementation approaches, such as whole-house and area-based approaches. The Committee would need to stress that this wider, longer term target should not be achieved at the cost of not delivering the fuel poverty strategy commitments.

7. Overall, whilst members saw a lot of opportunities emerging from the Clean Growth Strategy - including in its focus on skills and the industrial strategy - there would be further work to do as more details emerged on how the Strategy would be delivered.

#### Research project

8. The Committee discussed the draft report of the research project that the CFP had commissioned jointly with the Committee on Climate Change (CCC). The project was examining the synergies, tensions and trade-offs that currently exist in household energy policies, along with potential policy changes that could help to increase synergies and reduce the tensions.

9. Members welcomed the draft and felt that the final report would provide helpful evidence. They had a number of specific comments and points to be addressed which would be covered in a follow-up meeting with CSE, prior to the report being finalised.

#### Fuel poverty statistics

10. Members discussed with a BEIS statistician the composition of the next set of fuel poverty statistics, which were likely to be published in June. Members were interested in exploring the scope for further granularity in some of the detailed tables, in particular to provide further breakdowns in some tables to show tenure splits. BEIS agreed to investigate the possibilities, but advised that there were constraints on what could be provided, not least because of small sample sizes for some data sets. The Committee agreed to provide a further note to identify specific areas of interest for additional data.

11. There was also discussion of expected changes in the Reduced Standard Assessment Procedure (RdSAP) to the thermal efficiency of solid and cavity walls. It was noted that previous years' fuel poverty statistics would be revised to take account of the changes, to ensure consistency and to avoid artificial shifts in results across years.

#### Other discussion

12. The Committee intended to respond to the consultation on minimum energy efficiency standards for the private rented sector. Members discussed and agreed

final points for the response, which would include making the case for a £5k cap for landlord contributions, and for this to be exclusive of any ECO funding.

13. Members noted that the Committee had, following an invitation, provided input to current research commissioned by Citizens Advice on tackling fuel poverty. The project was focussed in particular on ECO, both in the short term and through to 2028. Members expressed interested in discussing the project outcomes with Citizens Advice.

14. BEIS officials provided an update on forthcoming consultations on ECO and Warm Home Discount. Depending on the exact timing of the consultations, members agreed on the need to focus on the consultations before the next CFP meeting.

#### Dates of future CFP Meetings

15. Dates for forthcoming meetings are:

- 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2018
- 11<sup>th</sup> July 2018
- 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2018
- 13<sup>th</sup> September 2018
- 7<sup>th</sup> November 2018