



Committee on Fuel Poverty

Minutes of Committee on Fuel Poverty (CFP) Meeting, 8th June 2016

1. All members of the Committee were present: Tom Wright (Chair), Alice Maynard, Jenny Saunders, Paul Massara, David Blakemore and Lawrence Slade. From DECC, the Sponsor and Secretariat were present.

Minutes of last meeting and actions

2. The minutes of the meeting on 23rd March 2016 had been agreed by email and published on the CFP web pages on 26th April.

3. 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.

4. Members noted that Jeremy Nesbitt, Managing Director of National Grid Affordable Warmth Solutions, who had attended the last meeting to discuss off-gas grid issues, had responded to the invitation to put forward proposals regarding future input on off-gas grid issues to the CFP. Mr Nesbitt had proposed that a new working group would focus on the following:

- a) advise the CFP on the creation of a special interest group, off-gas grid (OGG) customers, explore the size and scope of such a group and any sub-groups (e.g. rural, urban, park home residents), understand their demographics and identify the scale of investment needed to future “energy-proof” their homes;
- b) revisit and review the policy landscape summary for OGG customers and how the 2020 milestone can be met for this group; present options to the CFP;
- c) review and refine the development of the OGG database; implement commercially viable improvements that will lead to better targeting of future investments.

5. Members were grateful for Mr Nesbitt’s advice and agreed that he should be invited to take forward his proposals.

Conflicts of Interests

6. Members were reminded of the requirement to ensure that their entries to the register of members’ interests were up to date. It was agreed that if a member’s business or charity holds a position on a fuel poverty agenda topic being debated, they will state this upfront. No other potential conflicts of interest specific to the meeting’s agenda were declared.

Vulnerability

7. Members had undertaken work to establish the CFP's approach to vulnerability, bearing in mind that one of the guiding principles set out in the Government's fuel poverty strategy was for vulnerability to be reflected in policy decisions. The CFP's view was that vulnerability should not necessarily be seen as an attribute of an individual, but rather a circumstance, or conjunction of circumstances, that combine with an individual's characteristics to render them vulnerable. As such, vulnerability would run as a theme across its work. It could use the approach to undertake a vulnerability impact assessment on any proposals.

Update on DECC Issues and Consultations

8. The Committee discussed with DECC officials updates on the implementation of the fuel poverty strategy, recent and forthcoming consultations, team restructuring within DECC, an update on the Central Heating Fund and details of the proposals to make the Renewable Heat Incentive more accessible to those less able to pay. Members asked for further data on the potential mixes of measures, and associated timelines, needed to achieve the 2020 milestone. DECC noted the potential impact that forthcoming fuel poverty statistics could have on these.

9. Members stressed the importance of being able to provide views effectively on future supplier obligations. Members discussed the extent of the need for matching ECO funding, and that work had been proposed to monitor how much funding was needed to ensure projects went ahead. For the future supplier obligations, it would be important to ensure that success would not be jeopardised by the need for contributions from clients towards the cost of the works.

Stakeholder meetings

10. The Committee discussed recent and forthcoming meetings with stakeholders. Members had received valuable input from a good range of stakeholders. They felt it important to continue to obtain input and discussed means of ensuring this, including possibilities for stakeholder communications and using short surveys. The Committee also felt that it was important to seek early feedback from stakeholder groups on options that the Committee were considering to deliver the fuel poverty milestones and target.

11. Partly in view of its size and capacity limitations, the Committee noted the importance of obtaining in-depth, structured external input on key subjects. Members discussed whether there might be value in establishing a small number of other working groups, alongside the one proposed for off-gas grid issues. Potential subject areas could be flagged in the forthcoming report.

12. Members noted the importance of discussions with counterparts and officials in the rest of the UK. This was to ensure learning from others, plus recognising that schemes such as ECO and Warm Home Discount were GB-wide schemes, so proposals for changes would have impacts beyond the CFP's geographical remit.

Report production

13. The Committee discussed plans to publish its first report in September and agreed to meet for at least two workshops to progress the report.

Dates of 2016 CFP Meetings

- 12/7/16
- 15/9/16
- 17/11/16