



Committee on Fuel Poverty

Minutes of Committee on Fuel Poverty (CFP) virtual meeting: November 09/11/2021

1. The Chair and all members of the Committee were present: David Blakemore (Chair), Paul Massara, Jenny Saunders and Anu Singh. Invited guests in attendance were the BEIS sponsor and BEIS officials.

Members Interests

2. Paul Massara is now Chair of Green Frog Power, there is no conflict of interest.
3. No other new interests were declared.

Minutes of Last Meeting and actions

4. Minutes from September meeting were agreed.

Action Log

5. Most actions from the last meeting had been completed and the rest were being progressed.

Stakeholder Engagement

6. The Committee discussed recent engagement with stakeholders, including a full day workshop organised by the National Infrastructure Commission. A panel of commissioners and academics at Birmingham University led a discussion on Local Heat. There was in-depth conversation on policy, regulation and access to finance. Attendees had concerns on the scaling up of projects and funding models.
7. The Committee noted a conversation with Utility Week to discuss the recently published CFP annual report.

Annual Report Debrief

8. A discussion took place on what went well from the annual report and lessons learned. Members assessed the process of writing the report and the level of media engagement post-report publication.



Committee on Fuel Poverty

9. There was a discussion on the press capabilities of the Committee and the role of media and engagement in furthering their fuel poverty agenda. The Committee also discussed the importance of briefing opposition parties about their recommendations.
10. The Committee noted from previous reports that recommendations can be high level and so not specific enough to give clear direction for action.

BEIS Policy Update

11. BEIS officials noted the Heat and Buildings Strategy and Net Zero Strategy publication as two recent and key items of work. The Committee discussed the need to now focus on the implementation phase of both strategies.
12. BEIS officials gave an update on current gas price rises. The Committee discussed the importance of the fuel poverty strategy fabric first guiding principle if high gas prices persist.
13. The Committee discussed the role of bill rebates in tackling fuel poverty and the potential in the future for bill rebate money to be moved into capital spend energy efficiency programmes. The Committee noted that there is a place in the short term for rebates and that would not want bill rebates removed from those most in need.
14. The Committee discussed the need for an assessment of local area delivery models as these featured prominently in the Heat and Buildings and Net Zero strategies.
15. Committee members asked BEIS officials for an update on the Private Rented Sector Minimum Energy Efficiency Metric. Officials outlined that those conversations are ongoing and are focused on ensuring deliverability of the standards.
16. The Committee discussed a change to their current recommendations on the Winter Fuel Payment. Members outlined how the payment could be altered so



Committee on Fuel Poverty

recipients were encouraged to use it towards low carbon or energy efficiency measures.

Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund - Presentation

17. The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund team gave some background on changes to the programme since they last met with the Committee in May.
18. The Government launched Wave 1 of the SHDF in August 2021. It will provide up to £160m funding in financial year 21/22, delivering up to January 2023. In the Heat and Buildings Strategy and Net Zero Strategy, it was announced that £800m has been committed for the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund as part of the 2021 Spending Review process.
19. The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund team outlined the interplay between the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund and the Decent Homes Standard (DHS). The DHS is currently undergoing review by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The Heat and Buildings Strategy made a commitment to consider setting new minimum energy performance standards in social housing, and to consult the sector before setting such a standard.
20. Wave 1 of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund took a worst first, fabric first, lowest regrets approach. In contrast to the demonstrator project, wave 1 will not focus on carrying out high complexity, deep retrofits, but will still offer the opportunity for the worst performing social homes to be upgraded. The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund team are cascading learning between each wave and embedding best practice. The Committee are supportive of this approach.
21. The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund team outlined the value and location of bids. The value of bids was broadly in line with the levels of eligible housing in each region. For example, regions with high value of grant requests coincided with a high incidence of below EPC C social homes in those areas.
22. The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund team also outlined the current progress on delivery of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Demonstrator.



Committee on Fuel Poverty

23. The Committee raised a question on the potential for encouraging larger housing associations to work with smaller ones via an uplift factor. The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund team are keen to encourage greater partnership between housing associations, whilst also recognising the importance of maintaining independence for smaller housing associations. The Committee further outlined there are strong skills within housing associations and that they would be beneficial to utilise in the delivery of the scheme.
24. The Committee noted that the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund may be able to play an important function in priming the market for further energy efficiency schemes in other tenure sectors.
25. The Committee discussed the importance of knowing the number of properties still in need of decarbonisation and the impact on bills for those households following the completion of Wave 2.

Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund – CFP Views

26. The Committee are overall pleased with progress made in this scheme. They are supportive of the waved scheme design, noting the importance of the embedded learning as it progresses. They are also impressed with the level of targeting and the prioritisation of the worst insulated homes first.
27. The Committee discussed the need for more action from the housing sector and that it would be beneficial to have a non-government communications strategy outlining the benefits of decarbonisation.

Forward Look and Handover planning

28. The Committee discussed the handover process for the incoming new CFP Chair and members.
29. The Committee discussed the distinction between systems based and process recommendations.



Committee on Fuel Poverty

AOB

30. A discussion took place on potential dates for 2022 meetings.

31. Forthcoming CFP meetings scheduled are:

- Tuesday 14 December 2021 (shortened)