
MEETING	HOUSING SCRUTINY BOARD
DATE	6 MARCH 2006
PRESENT	COUNCILLOR JAMIESON-BALL (Chair) COUNCILLOR HORTON (Opposition Spokesperson and Advisory Panel Member), COUNCILLORS BLANCHARD, FAIRCLOUGH, HILL, KIRK and LIVESLEY
IN ATTENDANCE	Honorary Alderman Jack Archer.
APOLOGIES	Pat Holmes, Mildred Grundy (Non-voting co-opted Members)

32. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were invited to declare at this point in the meeting any personal or prejudicial interests they might have in the business on the agenda. No interests were declared.

33. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the last meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Board held on 6 February 2006 be agreed and signed as a correct record subject to the removal of Councillor Blanchard's name from the list of those members present.

34. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Chair advised the Housing Scrutiny Board that there had been no registrations to speak under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

35. HOUSING SCRUTINY BOARD REDUCING CARBON EMISSIONS FROM YORK'S PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING

Members considered a report, which provided an update on the decision, made at the last meeting of the Board to defer further work on the drafting of the final report pending exploration of the following issues

- Any Innovative Schemes which could be applied to York
- Warm Front Road Show – ideas arising
- Possible attendance of an installer of insulation/solar thermal

- How private landlords/the student sector approach thermal efficiencies

Consideration was also given to Annex A, which detailed a scheme introduced by Braintree District Council in conjunction with British Gas, involving the payment of rebates on council tax bills to households that installed cavity wall insulation. Annex B the Student Letting Code of Practice, circulated by email to Members, and Annex C which gave details of grants take up from the Energy Efficiency Advice Centre and the Energy Partnership.

Graham Stephenson, from the Energy Advice Grants Agency Partnership, indicated that the body had been set up in 1990. Since 2000 the Government had asked the body to implement the Warm Front policy. The Partnership had now taken over the North Yorkshire Scheme from Powergen. He indicated that they relied on partners to make the Warm Front scheme work, the better organised the group the better the uptake. He indicated to Members that

- If a specialist target for a mailshot was identified then the Partnership would be prepared to meet the costs involved.
- All the Warm Front printing work was with PMS Printers in York who already had data protection licenses in place and who would ensure that all residents information was destroyed following the mailshot distribution
- Reference to a new scheme in Middlesborough led by a PCT steering group involving health visitors, occupational therapists etc who considered residents thermal comfort and were able to make referrals to the appropriate bodies.

Ruth Abbot, Principal Environmental Health Officer, referred to resource issue problems if Members wished to use the door-to-door approach to increase take up. Data protection problems had been encountered in obtaining details of persons eligible for assistance when preparing mailshots. Notes on energy efficiency measures were circulated to Members.

Ruth Abbott also referred to the Code of Best Practice for York Landlords and Students over which there had previously been no control. It was reported that changes to the Housing Act came into effect on 6 April 2006, which also related to the licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's). It was proposed to introduce an award scheme during 2007/08 for the code of practice. She also referred to talks held each year with York University Students Union, radio, television and press advertising on benefits available to students. She reported that the York Landlords Group were keen to be involved with any energy efficiency measures and wished to improve the private rental sector for which grant aid money had been allocated next year. It was pointed out that York was the only authority in the area, which still provided landlord grants.

Jo Leffler, the EAAC representative from the Energy Advice Centre, confirmed that the Centre was building a working relationship with EAGA. The Advice Centre would support the preparation of a mailshot, including marketing and press campaigns but a start needed to be made on development work. This would involve the designation of a person to act as a HEECA officer to support the setting up a Forum/Steering Group to work in partnership with the CVS, community groups etc. She confirmed that the Advice Centre were now working with Ruth Abbott in relation to the provision of Home Insulation Grants and they hoped to see an increase in take up during the next financial year.

Detailed feedback from Cllr Hills attendance at the Warm Front Road Show was circulated to Members.

Members questioned and commented as follows

- Concern regarding the low take up of Warm Front grants, over the last 4 years York with a 2.4% take up compared with other authorities in North Yorkshire of over 4% and the need to work jointly with bodies to increase this figure
- What support could EAGA give to authorities to improve take up of grants
- Use of the English House Condition survey undertaken every 5 years to assist with the identification of property
- Queried how students not living in rented properties would qualify for energy saving schemes
- Low take up on solar panel systems
- Need to ask each of the agencies what they can provide to improve take up
- Focus marketing appeared to be the key to improving the low take up.

Members were updated that at the last meeting of the Scrutiny Management Committee approval was given to the Housing Scrutiny Boards budget request, in respect of printing and distribution of the 'pilot' leaflet to selected households regarding energy efficiency grants.

- RESOLVED:**
- (i) That the further information/evidence provided in the report and received from the expert witnesses be taken into account in the draft final report and brought back for further consideration to the next meeting.
 - (ii) That the expert witnesses be thanked for their input and attendance at the Scrutiny Board meeting

COUNCILLOR JAMIESON-BALL (in the Chair)

The meeting started at 6.25pm and finished at 7.40pm.