

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Leader and Cabinet 9 October 2008
AUTHOR/S: Corporate Manager Health and Environmental
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IMPLEMENTATION OF PHASE TWO OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING RENEWAL STRATEGY – AGREEMENT OF POLICIES (REPORT 2 OF 2 – GRANTS FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY)

Purpose

1. To seek approval on the new policies for implementing phase two of the private sector housing renewal strategy, namely:
 - Issuing grants for certain renewable energy measures.
2. This is a key decision because
 - it is likely to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in all wards of the District
 - it raises new issues of policy, or is made in the course of developing proposals to amend the policy framework, or is a decision taken under powers delegated by the Council to amend an aspect of the policy framework.
 - it is of such significance to a locality, the Council or the services which it provides that the decision-taker is of the opinion that it should be treated as a key decision,

and it was published in the July 2008 Forward Plan.

Background

3. The Council's Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy was approved in July 2007. The strategy was essentially phased. Phase one allowed for the continuation of existing strategies and policies covering grants to vulnerable groups (e.g. Disabled Facility Grants, Home Repairs Assistance, etc), regulatory activities including appropriate education and help and advice and promotion of existing external energy efficiency grants and schemes.
4. Phase two considered the priorities of increasing energy efficiency grants including grants/loans for heating systems not covered by Government schemes and the possibility of renewable energy grants. The Portfolio Holder at that time was concerned to have an appropriate balance of enforcement and grant assistance.
5. Last financial year Cabinet agreed to make available £100k, within the Capital Programme from 2008/09 onwards, for the provision of grants and/or loans to implement phase two of the action plan from the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy.

Considerations

6. New policies are needed in order to offer:

- Loans for properties with Category 1 hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System and Grants for replacement boilers (contained in report one) and
- Grants for renewable energy measures (contained in this report).

This report outlines the proposed policies for grants for renewable energy measures.

7. It is proposed to offer two renewable energy grants:

- Solar hot water heating, and
- Solar PV

It is not proposed to offer grants for ground source heat pumps or small scale wind turbines at the present time as; solar technology would offer a better investment for the Council, the grants are more likely to be taken up by our residents, there are no issues with land take or noise disturbance to neighbours and there are local and national installers capable of fitting solar technology.

8. These grants will help to reduce CO₂ emissions from the domestic heating sector and help residents in fuel poverty. It will also contribute to the National indicator NI186 - Per capita CO₂ emissions in the LA area, now part of the Cambridgeshire LAA.

9. This section of the report outlines the proposed method and eligibility criteria for awarding the grant.

10. It is proposed to run both grants along similar lines and criteria to grants offered by the Home Improvement Agency (HIA), it is further proposed that these grants are administered by the Health and Environmental Services Department, not the HIA.

11. It is proposed to restrict the grants to residents who meet the following eligibility criteria:

(a) **Tenure**

The resident (the term 'resident' includes the applicant's spouse, or partner, if they are living with the applicant) must be either a homeowner, (this includes part ownership such as equity share or co-owner who lives elsewhere), or a private tenant, (subject to maintenance responsibilities laid down in any tenancy agreement).

(b) **Length of residency**

The resident must have lived in the property for at least 2 years (although if the reason for moving was to care for someone or to be cared for this requirement can be waived).

(c) **Maximum amount of grant**

The maximum award for each grant is:

- (i) £1500 for solar hot water heating
- (ii) £2000 for solar PV

(d) **Energy efficiency measures already installed where appropriate**

The applicant's home should be as energy efficient as possible before the grant can be considered. The property must have had loft insulation to the recommended depth of 270mm/10.5 inches and cavity wall insulation fitted, where appropriate.

(e) **Suitability for solar**

The property must be suitable for solar hot water heating and/or solar PV to be fitted, i.e. the building must be south facing, and planning permission where appropriate must have been granted prior to the award of the grant.

(f) **Solar hot water heating type**

The grant will be given for either evacuated tube or flat plate solar hot water heating systems.

12. To summarise the grants to be offered are:

- Solar hot water heating grant
- Solar PV grant

Options

13. All the grants outlined in paragraph 7 above are discretionary and are subject to available funding. They are to be offered on a “first come first serve” basis. The finance is limited to £100k per year.

14. Cabinet has the option of approving none, all or some of the grant policies with their respective eligibility criteria listed in paragraphs 7 to 11 above.

Implications

15. If the Council does not offer the grants and therefore does not implement phase two of the Councils Private Sector Housing Renewal strategy (PSHRS) it means it would be failing to implement the wider Housing Strategy as the PSHRS forms a subsection within the main Housing Strategy.

16. Financial	£100k already improved and within existing budgets. It is proposed to be flexible with the £100k to allow for monies to be spent where the demand is greater.
Legal	None
Staffing	Within existing resources of Health and Environmental Services
Risk Management	Risk of an under spend if grants are not taken up within the financial year. (Risk to be controlled by effective publicity and working with partners to increase the uptake of the scheme).
Equal Opportunities	The grants for renewables are open to all.

Consultations

17. The following organisations/officer were consulted and have agreed with the policies laid out in this report:

- East Anglia Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre (EAESTAC)
- Home Improvement Agency
- The Strategic Sustainability Officer within the Council

Effect on Corporate Objectives and Service Priorities

18.

Work in partnership to manage growth to benefit everyone in South Cambridgeshire now and in the future

The implementation of phase two of the PSHRS contributes to service objectives of working in partnership with local organisations and the wider community to safeguard and improve public health and enhance the quality of life of citizens generally and for those disadvantaged specifically. The policies will assist in reducing levels of fuel poverty in the District.

Deliver high quality services that represent best value and are accessible to all our community

Private sector housing is a theme that is common to all the corporate objectives and service priorities. The renewal strategy has effects on home ownership, affordable housing, independent living, partnerships, and village life and helps to ensure every resident has access to safe and decent housing.

Enhance quality of life and build a sustainable South Cambridgeshire where everyone is proud to live and work

Implementing phase two of the PSHRS helps to achieve the Councils aims strategic objectives and priorities contained in the Cambridgeshire LAA and emerging South Cambridgeshire Community Strategy, namely:

- Promoting independence for older people and reducing falls in older people
- Meeting housing need through adaptations to existing housing in established communities
- Seeking to minimise climate change through promoting low energy future and minimising waste

Conclusions/Summary

19. The report asks Cabinet to agree the policies needed to offer grants for solar technologies. The main policies to be agreed relate to:
- The eligibility criteria for each grant,
 - The maximum amount offered for each grant, and
 - The appropriate department who will be administering the grants.

Recommendations

20. Cabinet is asked to agree:
- a. To the introduction of Renewable Energy Grants for solar hot water heating and solar P.V. and the eligibility criteria for the renewable technology grant set out paragraph 11 (a to f) above.
 - b. Environmental Services administer the Renewable Energy Grants.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: South Cambridgeshire Private Sector Housing Strategy

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