

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

HOUSING COMMITTEE – 28 March 2001

ENERGY ADVICE UNIT: UPDATE REPORT

Report by Director of Homes and Technical Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update members on recent developments in the implementation of the Council's response to its obligations under the terms of the Home Energy Conservation Act, 1995 (HECA).

2. BACKGROUND

As an Energy Conservation Authority, the Council is fully committed to implementing the requirements of HECA and in order to support the aims and objectives of this Act, must be seen to put in place measures which will improve the energy efficiency of housing within this Authority (both public and private sector).

The report gives details of:

- a) HECAction (Warm Homes)
- b) Second HECAction bid
- c) Energy Advice Programme
- d) The Wise Group East Ayrshire
- e) Funding from British Gas Trading

3. GENERALLY

3.1 HECAction

The launch of the HECAction Programme (Warm Homes) took place on 22 August 2000.

This programme, for condensing boilers and heating improvements, is managed by the South West Scotland Energy Efficiency Advice Centre. Meetings are held monthly by the steering committee which has a representative from South Ayrshire, North Ayrshire, East Ayrshire and Dumfries and Galloway Councils.

As at 15 February 2001 the number of £250 grants (only) committed is 51. The number of grants and £1000 interest free loans is 77.

3.2 Second HECAction Bid

A second HECAction bid has been successful. This is one of only three successful bids in Scotland. However the funding of £100,000 from HECAction is subject to the Energy Savings Trust's agreement of a more detailed business plan. There are provisional plans for an awards ceremony at the House of Commons in July 2001.

As part of a consortium a bid was submitted to work in partnership with Ayrshire and Arran Primary Care NHS Trust to give grants for insulation works to private householders suffering from respiratory and heart diseases. Low temperatures exacerbate these diseases and Ayrshire is one of the worst areas in the country for excess winter deaths. Simple measures such as insulation could help alleviate the health problems of the occupants.

Homeowners will be referred onto the scheme by a health professional (District Nurse, Health Visitor or GP) through the network of Local Health Care Co-operatives run by the NHS Trust. The owners will be requested to pay a contribution of £70 for cavity wall insulation, £35 for loft insulation and £30 for draughtproofing unless they are eligible to have the works carried out for free under the government's Warm Deal Scheme. Council tenants referred by the health professionals will have the work carried out by the relevant local authority. Insulation works carried out in East Ayrshire Council housing stock will be funded under the energy efficiency measures carried out by The Wise Group.

3.3 Energy Advice Programme

The Energy Advice Unit continues to visit the majority of new tenants, in order to advise them on the use of their respective heating systems. In addition, we are working closely with the appointed Network Installers, who are allocated funds for the provision of insulation measures to homes that are in receipt of a qualifying benefit within this Authority.

The Unit continues to promote Warm Deal and have this year taken the opportunity, in partnership with Eaga, the governing body for Warm Deal, and East Ayrshire Council's Benefits Section, to send inserts out with residents council tax rebate letters. The letters promote the eligibility of these residents to have insulation measures done to the value of the Warm Deal Grant, which is £500.

3.4 The Wise Group East Ayrshire

A total of 95 trainees started with the Wise Group East Ayrshire this year and 38 have successfully gained permanent employment. As at 23 February there are 54 trainees at the depot, with 8 more due to start in March.

Due to this training/employment success, it has been a challenge to keep trained teams on the insulation programme since many trainees have moved onto full-time work. The situation has been addressed by vigorous recruitment, training and diversification of insulation measures.

Home security continues to be very successful, with the elderly being particularly pleased with this measure.

Energy Advice continues to be valued by East Ayrshire householders.

3.5 GRANT FROM BRITISH GAS TRADING

A submission detailing the cavity wall insulation completed by East Ayrshire Council from 1 April 2000 until 31 October 2000 was made to British Gas Trading and we were successful in gaining a grant for 50% of the cost of cavity wall insulation completed during this period. The £73,569 received has been allocated to do further cavity wall insulation within our own stock.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

It is anticipated that with the further recruitment and diversification measures the £550,000 allocated in the approved housing capital programme 2000/2001 for the Wise Group East Ayrshire will be fully expended in carrying out energy efficiency/security measures.

The European Social Fund, Enterprise Ayrshire, New Deal monies and the Scottish Executive Development Office has provided additional funding of £486,000 for training purposes.

5. LEGAL AUTHORITY/IMPLICATIONS

Implements the Home Energy Conservation Act, 1995.

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Implements the Council's Energy Management Policy.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended

1. that East Ayrshire Council accept as part of the consortium, the £100,000 award from HECAction
2. and that members note the content of this report.

James Lavery
Director of Homes and Technical Services
5 March 2001
JL/GACJ/GM/IDG

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

Any person wishing further information on this report should contact George Malone, Principal Engineer (Tel: 01563 555233)

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AGENDA