

## Members' Library Service Request Form

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Document Title	Scottish Government Consultation on a Fuel Poverty Strategy for Scotland

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Authorised By	Douglas Proudfoot
Designation	Head of Development
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**REPORT TO:** Members' Library Service

**MEETING DATE:**

**BY:** Head of Service (Development)

**SUBJECT:** Scottish Government Consultation on a Fuel Poverty Strategy for Scotland

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## **1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To advise members of the proposals being consulted on by the Scottish Government, to create a comprehensive strategy to deliver reductions in fuel poverty. The Fuel Poverty Strategy will feed into the development of a new Warm Homes Bill to be introduced in 2018.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report and the Council's response to the proposals set out in the Consultation Paper. A link to the response can be accessed at 7.1 of this report.

## **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Scottish Government published a consultation on 9 November 2017 on a **Fuel Poverty Strategy for Scotland**. This is available at <https://consult.gov.scot/better-homes-division/fuel-poverty/>

The Consultation seeks views on an approach that brings together actions from across Government and across society, to create a comprehensive strategy to deliver reductions in fuel poverty. It also seeks views on how progress should be monitored against targets which will be enshrined in legislation and how our aim to tackle fuel poverty effectively is best translated into an appropriate statutory framework.

The Consultation sets out a proposed new definition of fuel poverty, based on the widely held view that the current definition is no longer fit for purpose. The new definition will include an income threshold based on 90% of the UK Minimum Income Standard (after subtracting housing, fuel and childcare costs) and the 10% fuel cost to income ratio will be established on an 'after housing costs' basis.

The consultation sets out proposals in relation to the following key areas:

- The importance of partnership working, noting our collective responsibility as a society to address fuel poverty.
- The introduction of a new fuel poverty target and views on setting this in legislation. It explores how progress can be measured through various indicators and how progress can be monitored, evaluated and reported on.
- Establishing a new Fuel Poverty Advisory Panel and a Partnership Forum to replace the existing Fuel Poverty Forum
- Taking an outcomes-focussed approach that aligns with principles recommended by the Scottish Fuel Poverty Strategic Working Group and Scottish Rural Fuel Poverty Task Force.

3.2 The Council's response welcomes the proposed new definition of fuel poverty for Scotland. Evidence suggests that using 'after housing costs' as opposed to 'before housing costs' provides a more accurate reflection of households in fuel poverty. This approach is considered to more effectively target those likely to be experiencing adverse outcomes associated with fuel poverty i.e. being unable to heat the home to a comfortable level; impacts on the physical condition of the dwelling such as damp and mould; financial difficulties and indicators of poor health and wellbeing.

The Council recognises that eradicating fuel poverty is critical to making Scotland fairer. Given this, the proposal to set a new statutory target to eradicate fuel poverty in the Warm Homes Bill is commended. The Consultation sets out corresponding sub-targets and interim milestones to 2030, to be monitored on a non-statutory basis. While these provide a clear pathway towards meeting the overall target and are welcomed in principle, the Council views that the proposed timeframe, milestones and levels, could be more ambitious, particularly in relation to sub-target *'the overall fuel poverty rate will be less than 10% by 2040'*. It is considered *'the overall fuel poverty rate will be less than 10% by 2030'* would be a more appropriate and achievable sub-target to aspire to.

## **4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no policy implications directly arising from the Consultation.
- 4.2 The Consultation responses will be used to develop the fuel poverty strategy, prior to the introduction of the Warm Homes Bill to the Scottish Parliament in 2018.

4.3 The Council is currently consulting on a new draft East Lothian Local Housing Strategy for the period 2018-23. This will take account of any new duties or powers arising from the Consultation.

## **5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

5.1 The subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy.

5.2 The Scottish Government has carried out an Interim Equality Impact Assessment Record which forms part of the Consultation. This can be accessed at the following link:

<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/11/5497>

## **6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

1.1 Financial – None

1.2 Personnel - None

1.3 Other - None

## **7 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

7.1 The East Lothian Council response can be accessed at the following link:

[https://consult.gov.scot/better-homes-division/fuel-poverty/consultation/my\\_response?user\\_id=ANON-JX62-7JF9-A&key=6d5f583a8e2f07081f21e6f16cde44b8592d5867](https://consult.gov.scot/better-homes-division/fuel-poverty/consultation/my_response?user_id=ANON-JX62-7JF9-A&key=6d5f583a8e2f07081f21e6f16cde44b8592d5867)

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