

Bolsover District Council

Meeting of the Executive on 7th October 2024

Review of the Council's Energy Policy for Local Housing

Report of the Chair of Climate Change and Communities Scrutiny Committee

Classification	This report is Public
Contact Officer	Thomas Dunne-Wragg, Scrutiny Officer

PURPOSE/SUMMARY OF REPORT

To present to Executive the completed report for the recent Review of the Council's Energy Policy for Local Housing.

REPORT DETAILS

1. Background

- 1.1 The Climate Change and Communities Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake a Review of Council's Energy Policy for Local Housing as part of the 2023-24 Work Programme.
- 1.2 The issue was initially raised due to the District's requirement of improved energy resilience within the local housing stock as well as concerns over residents being under pressure due to the rising costs of energy adding to the current cost of living crisis.

2. Details of Proposal or Information

2.1 The aim of the review was:

- To ensure that the Council has a clear policy on energy efficiency standards across Council stock and long-term energy resilience across all housing stock within the District.

2.2 The objectives agreed were:

- Clarify the Council's energy policy and minimum energy efficiency standard for:
 - Council Housing
 - New build properties
 - Private rented sector
 - Owner-occupiers (existing private stock)

- Ensure the Council has clear data analysis of its current housing stock to establish current Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) ratings and areas for improvement.
- Analyse existing Local Plan policies in relation to energy efficiency and requirements for new build housing and assess if they support the Council's net zero target.
- Improve public information/education on grants and energy efficiency.
- Ensure there is a clear Council approach to improving energy ratings of private rented sector stock.
- Clarify opportunities for Dragonfly Development Ltd. (DDL) to become a lead local exemplar offering energy improvements to the owner-occupier sector.
- Clarify position/policy in relation to installation of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points for Council Housing (inc. Motability vehicles).

2.3 The key issues identified for investigation were as follows:

- Restrictions placed on energy related grants – impacts ability to upgrade different housing tenures.
- Current impact of energy costs on the cost-of-living crisis and long-term health impact of cold homes/impact on mental health of potential energy bill debts.
- National changes in expected EPC ratings. EPCs are valid for 10 years. Expected changes will impact the private rented sector but place no demands on the Council or homeowners.
- Potential to generate income via DDL offering energy improvements to private sector.

2.4 The Committee met on eight occasions in total and sought evidence by way of:

- Internal enquiries to assess the Council's existing policies and approach towards minimum energy efficiency standards and improving energy ratings.
- An analysis of the current public information/education on grants and energy efficiency.
- An evaluation of the current existing council policies in relation to energy efficiency and requirements for new build housing.
- An analysis of current housing stock data.
- Internal enquiries to assess how DDL and the Council can work together on local projects in the owner-occupier sector.
- An investigation and evaluation of the Council's position/policy in relation to installation of EV charging points.
- Presentation by Derbyshire Building Control Partnership.

2.5 Following the review the Customer Services Scrutiny Committee agreed the following recommendations:

1. That the Council establish a Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES) for all new build property within 3 months. Upon completion of the Housing Stock Condition Survey (estimated April 2025) the Council must establish a strategy for improving energy efficiency within Council Housing Stock.

2. That the Council publishes information regarding grants and energy efficiency on the Council website.
3. That the Council continues to feature educational articles in Intouch magazine and Bolsover TV on energy efficiency grants for homes.
4. That following the Council's appointment of the new Climate Change Officer, opportunities be investigated for realistic ways that the Council and Dragonfly Development Ltd can work together to offer energy improvements to the owner-occupier sector and to assess whether a pragmatic package can be put together to achieve this.
5. That the Council consolidates all existing policies, strategies and plans regarding EV charging stations for Bolsover District into one clear document/ web page article dedicated to the topic of the Council's approach to EV charging points.

Approved by Councillor Anne Clarke, Portfolio Holder for Environment

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 The Committee have put together five recommendations which will assist the Council in improving the Council's energy policy for local housing.
- 3.2 The key findings arising from the review are:
 - That the Council has clear data analysis of current housing stock.
 - That the Council's *Local Plan* policies relating to energy efficiency and requirements support the Council's net zero target.
 - That the Council's recent 2024 *Private Sector Housing Strategy* provides a clear approach to improving energy ratings of private rented sector stock.
 - That it is currently not in the budget or remit to become a lead local exemplar offering energy improvements to the owner-occupier sector, however, research would still be useful to investigate potential opportunities in the future.
 - That it is important that the Council continues to utilise its current methods of communication such as Intouch and Bolsover TV to improve public information/education on grants and energy efficiency.
 - That the Council's website lacks easily accessible detailed information regarding several key areas of energy saving for local housing. These areas include:
 - The Council's energy policy and minimum energy efficiency standard for council housing, new build properties, and the private rented sector.
 - Public information regarding energy saving grants.
 - The Council's existing policies, strategies and plans regarding EV charging stations for Bolsover District as well as any basic information on EV's for residents in general.

4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 4.1 Executive could choose not to endorse the recommendations of the review where they feel the course of action recommended is beyond the delivery capacity of the Authority.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. That Executive endorses the recommendations of the review outlined in section 2.5 of this report and Section 2 of Appendix 1.
2. That for recommendations approved by Executive, monitoring takes place over a twelve-month period via the PERFORM system with an update report to the Customer Services Scrutiny Committee at the end of the monitoring period.

Approved by Councillor Anne Clarke, Portfolio Holder for Environment

IMPLICATIONS.

Finance and Risk: Yes No

Details:

None from this report. Suggested action for the service can be contained within existing budgets.

On behalf of the Section 151 Officer

Legal (including Data Protection): Yes No

Details:

In carrying out scrutiny reviews the Council is exercising its scrutiny powers as laid out in s.21 of the Local Government Act 2000 and subsequent legislation which added/amended these powers

On behalf of the Solicitor to the Council

Environment: Yes No

Details:

The review supports the Corporate Ambition of 'Environment' and the Priority of 'Reducing our carbon footprint whilst supporting and encouraging residents and businesses to do the same by increasing rates of recycling across the District'. The review supports the Corporate Target ENV02. Reduce the District Council's carbon emissions by 100 tonnes per annum.

Staffing: Yes No

Details:

There are no staffing implications from this report.

On behalf of the Head of Paid Service

DECISION INFORMATION

<p>Is the decision a Key Decision? A Key Decision is an executive decision which has a significant impact on two or more District wards or which results in income or expenditure to the Council above the following thresholds:</p> <p>Revenue - £75,000 <input type="checkbox"/> Capital - £150,000 <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Please indicate which threshold applies</i></p>	No
<p>Is the decision subject to Call-In? <i>(Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)</i></p>	No

District Wards Significantly Affected	None
<p>Consultation: Leader / Deputy Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Executive <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SLT <input type="checkbox"/> Relevant Service Manager <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Members <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Details: Yes</p> <p>Details: Relevant Service Manager and Portfolio Holder engaged during the review process.</p>

Links to Council Ambition: Customers, Economy, Environment, Housing.
The review supports the Corporate Ambition of 'Environment'.

DOCUMENT INFORMATION	
Appendix No	Title
1	Review of the Council's Energy Policy for Local Housing

<p>Background Papers <i>(These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Executive you must provide copies of the background papers).</i></p>