



Belfast City Council

Report to: Health and Environmental Services Committee

Subject: **Continued Funding for Northern Ireland Energy Agency**

Date: 4th February, 2009

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Relevant Background Information.

Belfast Energy Agency.

Since 1994, this Committee has agreed to part-fund the work of the Northern Ireland Energy Agency (formerly known as the Belfast Energy Advice Centre). The most recent decision, taken in November 2004, agreed annual funding of £7,000 for a period of three years up until the end of the financial year 2007/2008.

The Northern Ireland Energy Agency is supported by a consortium of public and private sector organisations including the Energy Savings Trust, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Belfast City Council. The Agency is administered and managed by the Bryson Group (formerly Bryson House).

The Belfast branch of the Agency is one of 52 such agencies situated across the UK, with two other branches based in Northern Ireland. Aimed primarily at the domestic housing sector (privately owned and rented), they provide advice and information on insulation, draught proofing, heating, energy labelling, grants and energy efficiency installers. The Agency carries out home visits to provide energy advice focussing on heating controls and reducing energy bills.

The Agency also undertakes a number of outreach activities that include talks to community groups and schools and various promotional events involving business groups and other statutory partners.

Summary of Energy Agency activity in the Belfast area over the past three years.

- **Freephone Advice Contacts** - from April 2005 to March 2008, there were 52,155 engagements with householders.
- **School's energy efficiency programme** - from April 2005 to March 2008, the Energy Agency visited 60 schools (12.5% of the total visited).
- **School's waste programme** - from April 2005 to March 2008, the Energy Agency visited 442 schools (124 in 07/08).
- **Home visits** - from April 2006 to September 2008, the Energy Agency carried out 2097 home visits.
- **Outreach Activities** - 18 other community outreach events over a 3 year period.

Belfast City Council Air Quality Action Plan.

The Council's Air Quality Action plan, published in May 2006, amongst many other actions, requires the delivery of a range of marketing and education initiatives that will heighten awareness of the causes of air pollution amongst the public. In relation to sustainable energy promotion which will help to reduce air pollution, the Action Plan includes a specific provision to work in partnership with the Energy Agency and to provide ongoing financial support. This Action Plan is applicable until the end of 2010, however a review of the impact of the Air Quality Action Plan is required during 2010 and work on this will begin in the next financial year 2009/2010.

Key Issues

This report proposes continued funding for the Energy Agency this current financial year (2008/2009) and for the financial year 2009/2010.

During development of the Council's Corporate Plan 2008-2011, Elected Members were invited to highlight priority action areas to be addressed within the plan. Under the theme of environmental sustainability, Elected Members identified addressing climate change for the City as an environmental priority alongside managing the City's waste. Accordingly, Council subsequently adopted a key objective of assisting in reducing the City's impact on climate change. It is considered that greater engagement with the Northern Ireland Energy Agency would be one way of assisting the Council to begin to address this commitment.

It is also proposed that as a condition of continued funding, Belfast City Council requires the Agency to provide an account of the impact it is having and that it agrees to ensure that energy conservation initiatives are appropriately prioritised and targeted to Belfast residents.

Resource Implications

Financial.

Provision for £7,000 grant aid was—_made within the revenue estimates for the 2008/2009 financial year.

Provision for the same amount of funding has also been included within the draft 2009/2010 Revenue Estimates.

Human Resources.

None

Asset and other implications.

None

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to agree:

1. To the continued provision of funding to the Northern Ireland Energy Agency at a rate of £7,000 per annum for the financial years 2008/2009 and 2009/2010; and
2. That this funding be subject to a review of the impact of Northern Ireland Energy Agency's energy conservation initiatives within Belfast, to be carried out in the next financial year, along with commitment to ensuring that future energy conservation initiatives contribute towards the delivery of Belfast's Air Quality Action Plan and the Council's corporate plan in respect of climate change.