

Minutes: London Fuel Poverty Partnership

Date: 23 May 2018

Time: 10.00 – 12.00

Location: Energy Networks Association, 4 More London Riverside, London. SE1 2AU

Attendees:

Shirley Rodrigues, Mayor's Office (Co-chair) - SR
Matthew Ryder, Mayor's Office (Co-chair) - MR
Martin O'Brien, Association of Local Energy Officers London - MOB
Dr Joanne Wade, Association for the Conservation of Energy - JW
Victoria MacGregor, Citizens Advice - VMc
Ben Golding, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy - BG
Lawrence Slade, Energy UK - LS
Hannah Slater, Generation Rent - HS
Cllr Claudia Webbe, London Councils - CW
Andy Hearn, London Fire Brigade - AH
Adam Scorer, National Energy Action - AS
Dermot Nolan, Ofgem - DN
Anthony Pygram, Ofgem - AP
Samantha Watkin, Residential Landlords Association - SW
Dr Mari Martiskainen, Sussex Energy Group, University of Sussex - MM
GLA officers: John Kolm-Murray (JKM), James Hardy (JH), George Simms (GS), Dan Drillsma-Milgrom (DDM)

Apologies:

Julian Critchlow, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
Audrey Gallacher, Energy UK
Sarah McClinton, London Association of Directors of Adult Social Services
Ruth Davison, National Housing Federation
Prof Yvonne Doyle, Public Health England
Andrew Goodacre, Residential Landlords Association

1. Welcome and introductions

- 1.1 SR noted that this is first meeting of the Fuel Poverty Partnership. This is a commitment that the Mayor has made to help tackle Fuel Poverty and acknowledged that it was great to have such a good representation from the organisations around London and beyond.
- 1.2 MR confirmed that the quality and fairness is within his remit and he/his team also sits on the Economics Fairness Group that has been set up by the Mayor. Fuel poverty aligns with that group's remit.

2. The Mayor's vision for tackling fuel poverty in London

- 2.1 SR noted that there are three key actions within the FPAP:

1. maximising the income of Londoners of those on fuel poverty so that they are able to afford fuel bills and to support local advice and referrals services so that we can reach these Londoners and support them
 2. improve the energy efficiency of London homes to make them more affordable to heat
 3. ensure fairer energy tariffs are available to Londoners, to this end the Mayor is setting up a new energy company for London.
- 2.2 In summary, SR noted that the new partnership is about how we might bring everyone together to coordinate effort and how to address fuel poverty in London. SR and MR would therefore look to the group for advice and input to inform the Mayor on how to take forward actions on fuel poverty.

3. Overview of current Energy for Londoners programmes

- 3.1 JH summarised the Mayor's £34m Energy for Londoners Programme. GS presented an overview of the Warmer Homes Programme and JKM presented on the Fuel Poverty Support Fund.
- 3.2 AH asked whether smart meters were fitted as part of the Warmer Homes programme. GS advised that these were not and were the responsibility of energy suppliers. SR said that the Mayor has a manifesto commitment to promote smart meter rollout to help cut energy bills for Londoners. LS briefly informed the Partnership of smart meter rollout plans and that he would be happy to advise further on health and safety issues and facilitate a detailed briefing on smart meters generally.
ACTION: LS to provide comment on health and safety issues around smart meter installations.
ACTION: LS to facilitate a detailed briefing on smart meters.
- 3.3 AS asked about evaluation of the fuel poverty programmes. GS explained that we are keen to quantify the health and economic benefits and the GLA Environment and Health teams will be working together to understand impacts. JH stated that with the Retrofit Coordinator model, it will also be possible to get information about jobs created, SMEs in London, and the benefit.
- 3.4 BG asked about the funding for energy efficiency improvements. GS explained that with limited funding available we had to strike a balance between doing as much as we can per house and helping as many people as we can. The grant set at £4,000 will normally allow a new central heating system or a mixture of insulation and remedial work. Many of the homes have severe dampness issues to be remedied first.
- 3.5 HS asked whether we would be collecting details on the tenure and demographics of households assisted by the advice and referral network, and whether this would be made public. SR advised that we want to be as transparent as we can and we will review when we have sufficient data and taking account of GDPR etc.
- 3.6 MM asked whether the Fuel Poverty Support Fund is solely for local authorities or local authorities working with NGOs. JKM said that local authorities are taking different approaches. For example, Islington is doing most directly and just subcontracting some of the home visits, whereas other boroughs are commissioning third sector organisations to do much of the frontline work. SR stated that we are testing approaches.

- 3.7 CW welcomed the scale and scope of the fuel poverty programmes and asked whether electrically heated blocks and prepayment meters would be addressed. SR said that we should be careful not to over expand the scope of the Fuel Poverty Partnership and there are other groups such as the boroughs' private rented sector partnership addressing related challenges. VMc cautioned that some customers value prepayment meters so they should not be ruled out altogether.

4. Members' key priorities

Each member was asked to say one key thing that they could bring to the Partnership and one thing that they would ask of the members.

AH: **London Fire Brigade**

What we can bring: 102 fire stations across London that could help with getting messages out there, a commitment to open fire stations to the community.

What we would ask: information sharing, a single point of contact for referrals.

JW: **Association for the Conservation of Energy**

What we can bring: conduit to industry, insights from elsewhere in the UK and in Europe.

What we would ask: if stakeholders can proactively share info about what we are doing, not just between panel members to GLA but to all members.

SW: **Residential Landlords Association**

What we can bring: represent around 30,000 private landlords, contribute to providing data feeding to the rogue landlords database.

What we would ask: a designated pot of funds separate from the affordable warmth schemes normally provided by energy suppliers so that tenants in the PRS who aren't on benefits would qualify and have access to funds to tackle fuel poverty in their homes.

BG: **Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy**

What we can bring: we can advise on direction and policies to support the aims of this partnership.

What we would ask: to create an ideas channel that can be used to share and implement elsewhere, evidence and data of impact.

AP: **Ofgem**

What we can bring: to start dialogue over the energy company - every company can make mistakes but we need to make sure that customers can be looked after by the regulator.

What we would ask: ensuring that there is price differential with the introduction of smart meters and that prices will be more competitive and easier for people to switch suppliers.

VMcG: **Citizens Advice**

What we can bring: insights from our local system including consumers surveys, telephone and web chat e.g. insights about the most common problems with energy companies, can also share any other issues with the smart meters roll out, a conduit to local Citizen Advice Bureaux for information sharing.

What we would ask: keen to learn about the outcomes of innovative approaches that you are taking to feed into our national policies.

- LS: **Energy UK**
What we can bring: conduit into many suppliers, involved in energy obligations on the suppliers from the start so we can bring a lot of knowledge from that to this group, happy to share info, knowledge and consultations from the Committee on Fuel Poverty.
What we would ask: be ambitious, but also inject an element of realism - only a limited amount of cash available so how can we maximise ECO and other finance in a way that protects the consumer? The Committee on Fuel Poverty has been working on the idea of a national landlord database as a way of tracking energy performance of houses nationwide.
- HS: **Generation Rent**
What we can bring: network of private renters, and information sharing.
What we would ask: to be holistic on thinking about fuel poverty, including income maximisation and health.
- MOB: **Association of Local Energy Officers London**
What we can bring: our forum of London boroughs can act as a single point of contact to make things simpler.
What we would ask: to wave the flag for local authorities and try to get across the opportunity that local authorities have to join things up on the ground in their locality.
- DN: **Ofgem**
What we can bring: knowledge of the set of powers to affect those that are in vulnerable situations - this will help to bring the ability to make decisions and to make this information available to this group.
What we would ask: in own opinion fuel poverty is best addressed by focusing on energy efficiency in the private rental sector.
- MM: **Sussex Energy Group**
What we can bring: Sussex Energy Group has over 50 years of experience backed up by a network of professors, researchers and PhD students, can make this research available to this forum.
What we would ask: need to ensure that the outcome of this programme is an evaluation to confirm the benefit e.g. whether retrofitting leads to overheating, if the people living in these homes find it more comfortable and how they impact the wider emissions within London and the goal of it being zero carbon by 2050, that the group visit some of the initiatives and projects that are happening in London.
- CW: **London Councils**
What we can bring: Islington's experience of delivering innovative heat networks, also experience of setting up a municipal energy company.
What we would ask: Visit Islington to see practical initiatives.
- AS: **National Energy Action**
What we can bring: we have a subsidiary that does retrofit, it is not for profit and it works with SMEs and sole traders - we have learnt a lot about what technologies are possible
What we would ask: with reference to the severe weather conditions last March, we collectively missed the opportunity to coordinate actions and drive up referrals, going forward my plea would be prepared and ready for the cold weather spell.

SR thanked Partnership members for these contributions and advised that GLA officers will contact members to take forward the points raised.

4 Terms of reference

- 4.1 Terms of Reference had been circulated in advance and no comments were raised. If anyone has any further queries on the Terms of Reference then they should email.
ACTION: ALL to raise any points in respect of the ToR by correspondence.

5 Local fuel poverty programmes

- 5.1 MOB presented on Local Fuel Poverty Programmes for Lewisham Council to demonstrate the value of local approaches, particularly those funded by the Mayor's Fuel Poverty Support Fund.

6 Income Maximisation

- 6.1 MR advised that we used the term income maximisation in two different ways. One way is how Londoners can better access benefit and welfare entitlement. The other is how people can get better value from the income that they have in term of energy needs.
- 6.2 AS presented on income maximisation within the first of the above definitions. NEA's own subsidiary Warm Zones, between 2015 and 2017 secured £6 million per year in additional welfare benefits for around 1,500 households and in some cases, up to £10,000 per household. A panel member requested if that paper could be circulated.
- 6.3 There was a discussion about how DWP and other government departments could share data with utility companies for example assisting a price cap on energy for people who are perceived as vulnerable and are on benefits.

ACTION: AS to provide paper on income maximisation for circulation.

7 Agree work plan 2018

- 7.1 SR presented the Draft Work Plan. There was a request that AS could share some more information about the Winter Fuel Poverty Campaign at the September meeting.
- 7.2 AS suggested to give some thoughts whether it would be of value to break up into smaller working groups to agree the scope and to action specific areas.
- 7.3 It was also suggested that the GLA share the outcomes, objectives and KPIs for the Fuel Poverty Action Plan at the next meeting.

ACTION: AS to present on the winter fuel poverty campaign at the September meeting.

ACTION: GLA to arrange working groups to consider key issues.

ACTION: GLA to share outcomes, objectives and KPIs of final Fuel Poverty Action Plan at next Partnership meeting.

8 AOB

- 8.1 None raised. SR thanked everyone for their input and contribution.

ACTION: GLA to circulate draft minutes of the meeting