

ITEM 11 – MOTIONS FROM COUNCIL ASSEMBLY APRIL 8 2009

Appendix 7 - Fuel Poverty Bill - Comments of the Strategic Director Environment & Housing.

It is noted that the Fuel Poverty Bill did not succeed. The overall aim of the Bill in promoting the eradication of fuel poverty by increasing the energy efficiency of domestic premises; identifying households in or at risk of fuel poverty and targeting assistance to households in or at risk of fuel poverty is in line with existing Council policy objectives.

The Council already works to tackle fuel poverty. For example:-

- Southwark Council is required under NI 187 to take an annual survey of the percentage of low income households (measured by receipt of Council Tax Benefit) occupying 1) a dwelling with SAP rating less than 35 (band F) and 2) a dwelling with SAP rating over 65 (band D).
- The Council works with its partners to promote existing programmes to tackle fuel poverty and to promote these directly to households at risk of fuel poverty or vulnerable to the negative impacts of fuel poverty.
- The Council runs a number of grant and support schemes whose overall objectives are to help bring residents out of fuel poverty by increasing the energy efficiency of vulnerable people's homes, and to help maximise income levels of households by helping them identify benefits that they are entitled to.
- The Council supports the aim of getting energy suppliers to offer vulnerable households social tariffs so that they are not exposed to high energy prices. A household is defined as being in fuel poverty if they have to spend 10% or more of their income on domestic fuel bills. This is therefore dependent on the energy efficiency of their home (insulation levels, heating system efficiency and efficiency of appliances etc), energy prices and income levels. At the moment, energy prices are dropping but so are income levels.
- The Council, as part of the South East London Housing Partnership, manages a thermal comfort scheme providing heating, loft, cavity and solid wall insulation and solar water heating to vulnerable households. We continually review opportunities to engage with energy suppliers and generators to ensure Southwark benefits from the finance available to improve domestic energy efficiency and tackle fuel poverty. The council will continue to undertake measures to attempt to reduce the number of its residents living in fuel poverty.