

Scottish Fuel Poverty Advisory Panel

Minutes of Meeting on Tuesday 27th June 2023

Venue: AQ5, Glasgow

Time: 09:45 - 17:30

Type: in-person

ATTENDEES:

Panel: Matthew Cole (Chair), Kirsten Jenkins, Alister Steele, Fraser Stewart

Apologises: Margaret Corrigan

Scottish Government: Naeem Bhatti (Head of Fuel Poverty and Housing Standards Unit, Better Homes), Douglas Armstrong (Fuel Poverty Strategy Team Leader), Zachary Thompson (Assistant Statistician, Housing, Homelessness & Regeneration Analysis), Adam Krawczyk (Head of Housing, Homelessness & Regeneration Analysis) and Annie Howden (Heat Strategy and Programme Team Leader)

Secretariat: Philippa Brosnan, Fran Eatwell-Thomas & Patricia Melvin

Observer: Maleeha Zeeshan (Social Security Scotland)

AGENDA ITEM 1: Welcome

Matthew Cole welcomed everyone to the meeting. Matt noted the busy agenda,

AGENDA ITEM 2: Routine Papers and updates

The Panel reviewed and signed off the Minutes from the meeting on 6th June 2023.

Fran Eatwell-Roberts talked the Panel through the dashboard; key activities and achievements since the last meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 3: Exploring SG Fuel Poverty definition in detail

Fran, Adam Krawczyk and Zachary Thompson spoke about the new and old Fuel poverty definition. They described the differences between the Scottish definition and the other UK administrations – and how they are measured. Adam and Zac also spoke about the results of the 2021 Housing Condition Survey. The Housing Condition Survey collects the data needed to estimate Scotland's rates of Fuel Poverty. The 2021 survey methodology was impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Its results are classed as Experimental Statistics and are not comparable with other year's results. The next set of Official Statistics collected by the 2022 Housing Condition survey will be released by Jan 22.

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Annie Howden, Heat Strategy and Programme Team Leader, then joined the conversation and described the approach to creating a framework to help monitor the Heat in Buildings' Strategy. Their approach is aligned to that used by the Climate Change Committee - a framework which they will report against annually based on a theory of change, describing how planned interventions are expected to deliver the Heat in buildings' outcomes and including indicators. The Panel were very interested to hear from Annie about their strategy monitoring plans and the possibilities for learning which the Scottish Government, supported by the Panel, have for using this learning to inform the development of a monitoring and evaluation framework for the Fuel Poverty Strategy.

This agenda item concluded with a discussion of different modelling options which could underpin a monitoring and evaluation framework for the Fuel Poverty Strategy.

AGENDA ITEM 4: Sign off Fuel Poverty definition and Fuel Rationing Blogs

The Panel reviewed and signed off the Fuel Poverty Rationing and definition blogs, written by Kirsten Jenkins and Fran, and approved their publication on the Panel's website.

AGENDA ITEM 5: Final sign-off and agreement to send Strategy recommendations to Ministers

Matt talked about the final version of the Fuel Poverty Strategy recommendations, making sure that the Panel were happy for these to be signed off. The Panel agreed the final version and that they should be sent to the Ms Martin, Minister for Energy and the Environment, after Matt's introductory meeting with her on the 28th of June 2023. Matt thanked Philippa and the Panel for all their time and effort spent getting these to the final stages.

AGENDA ITEM 6: Final Sign-off of revised Framework Agreement & noting of next steps

The Panel agreed with the majority of the draft Framework agreement, they were being asked to ratify. There were some small changes to be made to the wording, but they were content to sign off subject to these changes being made. Philippa will make these changes and then pass to the Sponsor Team for them to seek Ministerial agreement and sign off.

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AGENDA ITEM 7: Strategic Priorities and development of work plan

The Panel spent some time reflecting on their vision and mission what this means for their strategic priorities and their draft work plan. These ideas will be written up for further discussion and agreement at the next meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 8: Social Tariff

The UK Government plan to issue a consultation on social tariffs. Matt spoke about Social Tariffs: it's known to be high on government agenda. Supporting the development of a social tariff also features in both the Panel's initial advice to Ministers and its recommendations on the Fuel Poverty Strategy. The Panel discussed their thoughts on social tariff principles and agreed to do some further work on these before the next Panel meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 9: OfGem Talk

In his capacity as Just Transition lead for Regen, Fraser is giving a talk to Ofgem Retail team on just transition. He tested his thinking with the Panel, as a stakeholder group with a prominent interest in vulnerable consumers and the move to net zero, and the Panel offered some reflections.

AGENDA ITEM 10: Annual Report

The panel spoke about producing their first annual report. They agreed that the first report should be produced in April / May 2024. This would enable the first report to align with a full financial year, as well as giving the Panel time to focus on their other commitments.

AGENDA ITEM 11: Shadow Panel Member

Philippa raised the option of recruiting a shadow board member and the benefits this could potentially bring to the Panel. One option is to sign up to the UK government Boardroom Apprenticeship Pilot Programme, which aims to broaden the diversity of board/panel members across the public and third sectors by offering shadow opportunities to those with less typical board/panel backgrounds and creating a more diverse cohort for future boards/panel membership across Scotland. The Panel thought this was a really good idea and welcomed it. The Panel also discussed further engagement with the previous Experts by Experience (Poverty and Inequality Commission) members to ensure it continues to give weight to the voice of lived experience. Both these options will be explored by the Secretariat.

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AGENDA ITEM 12: Panel trip to Inverness

Trisha Melvin set out, for the Panel, the options for the next meeting in Inverness. The Panel are keen to make the most from the trip in engaging with local people and organisations while at the same time containing costs. The Panel agreed to go up on the afternoon and stay one night, planning to hold 4 meetings over the afternoon of one day and the morning of the next. The Panel hope to meet with Changeworks, HIHAAW, Highland Council and another local organisation focussed on fuel poverty. This would take place at the end of August either on 29th, 30th, or 31st. Trisha will take forward the planning of the meeting and update the Panel.

AGENDA ITEM 13: AOB

Consumer Scotland

The Panel spoke about the note Consumer Scotland had sent over about a funding concern in the Advice Sector. The Panel is concerned as advice agencies help some of the most vulnerable people in Scotland and could lose talented staff if funding isn't secured. The Panel will have this on the radar and speak to some of the Advice agencies.

Further Research

Kirsten is keen to build on the useful research piece done, in tandem with the Panel, on fuel poverty rationing. She tested what other ideas the Panel currently have in mind as topics for useful to research insights. Social tariffs would always be of great interest but particularly so at the moment given UK Government plans and the current cross-sector reflections on the efficacy of consumer energy support schemes.

AGENDA ITEM 14: Panel reflection

The wealth of information and quality of conversations especially in the morning session were noted by the Panel. This honed the Panel's understanding of the Fuel Poverty Definition. Matt drew the meeting to a close, thanking everyone for attending.

The next Panel meeting will be end of 30th and 31st of August in Inverness.