

Meeting: SOUTHPORT AREA COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 01 April 2009

Title of Report: Southport Housewarmers Pilot Scheme

Report of: Mike McSorley

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This report contains	Yes	No
CONFIDENTIAL Information/		√
EXEMPT information by virtue of paragraph(s).....of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 (If information <u>is</u> marked exempt, the Public Interest Test must be applied and favour the exclusion of the information from the press and public).		√
Is the decision on this report DELEGATED?	√	

Purpose of Report

To provide members with details of the Southport Housewarmers scheme and seek support for a further rollout this year.

Recommendation(s)

1. That members consider and accept the report findings.
2. That the area committee consider providing the funding of £1,500 to roll out the programme to the remaining wards in the next financial year.
3. The report be commended to other area committees to encourage similar programmes should those areas choose.

Corporate Objective Monitoring

<u>Corporate Objective</u>		<u>Positive Impact</u>	<u>Neutral Impact</u>	<u>Negative Impact</u>
1.	Creating a Learning Community	√		
2.	Creating Safe Communities	√		
3.	Jobs and Prosperity	√		
4.	Improving Health and Well-Being	√		
5.	Environmental Sustainability	√		
6.	Creating Inclusive Communities	√		
7.	Improving the Quality of Council Services and Strengthening local Democracy	√		
8.	Children and Young People	√		

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Financial Implications

<u>CAPITAL EXPENDITURE</u>	2006/ 2007 £	2007/ 2008 £	2008/ 2009 £	2009/ 2010 £
Gross Increase in Capital Expenditure				
Funded by:				
Sefton Capital Resources				
Specific Capital Resources				
<u>REVENUE IMPLICATIONS</u>				
Gross Increase in Revenue Expenditure				
Funded by:				
Sefton funded Resources				
Funded from External Resources				
Does the External Funding have an expiry date? Y/N	When?			
How will the service be funded post expiry?				

The project was funded by the Southport Area committee and cost £3,400 to deliver.

Departments consulted in the preparation of this Report:

List of background papers relied upon in the preparation of this Report

None.

1.0 BACKGROUND - CEEF (Community Energy Efficiency Fund) PROJECT

- 1.1 In 2007 DEFRA (the Department of the Environment Food and Rural Affairs) ran the Community Energy Efficiency Fund (CEEF) a £6.9 million programme across England to promote the take up of grant schemes for energy efficiency and fuel poverty improvements.
- 1.2 As part of that programme Sefton was able to submit a joint bid with Wirral Council to run a scheme in some of the most vulnerable areas. Wirral led the bid and was the accountable body, securing £36,000 from DEFRA. Sefton Council's contribution was in-kind and consisted mainly of officer time and co-ordination.
- 1.3 The scheme targeted 5,777 homes across the 2 Local Authority areas from November 2007 to March 2008. They were broken down into Lower Layer Super Output Areas in Liscard and Seacombe in Wirral, and defined community areas in Sefton (L21 area). The homes were part of a door-to-door campaign which were enhanced with a community event in each Council area.

- 1.4 The campaign began with a mailout to each home, followed very soon after by a CEEF funded Community Advisor knocking on the door. If the householder was out, a postcard detailing the local event and giving a freephone number for energy efficiency advice was given. Some homes were re-visited if the residents were out on the first call. The event in Wirral, which was an evening drop-in session, saw 15 householders attend. The event in Sefton, which joined in with a Community action group Fun Day, had over 60 householders visit the Community Advisors.
- 1.5 From the data collected from the householders, a database was formed. Information requested by the householder was sent out and referrals into schemes were made where requested.
- 1.6 Residents who did not request direct referral into a scheme but did indicate, for example, that they have less than the required amount of insulation, received the option to be referred into a scheme, in writing.
- 1.7 The actual number of householders answering the door was exceptionally low - less than 13%. Of this, less than half were willing to give personal details or participate in the scheme, resulting in an overall response rate of 6%.

1.8 Summary of outputs from the 2008 CEEF campaign

Output	Households	Value
Warm Front referrals	43	£43,731
EEC referrals (utility funded insulation)	125	£15,625
Gas central heating (Wirral only)	3	£900
Benefit take-up referrals	70	£21,848 p a
Employment opportunities created	8	Not measured
Number of face to face assessments	347	N/A
Other outputs (CFLs, energy efficiency advice, supplier and tariff advice, Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service Referrals)	1,103	£1,520
Total levered sum for first year		£83,624

2 BACKGROUND - Existing levels of Energy Efficiency activity in the Southport area

From the experience already gained and local knowledge the Energy team knew that action directed in the Southport area was historically limited by activities such as Neighbourhood Renewal Fund boundaries. Opportunities for energy efficiency improvements within these areas were greatly reduced, due to the long running campaign. Most of the programme (known as Sefton Energy Action Reaching Cold Homes SEARCH) had targeted households containing people with health conditions exacerbated by, or particularly susceptible to, cold and damp homes.

2.1 Existing data sets

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The table summarises the data we have about properties in the Southport area. SAP (Standard Assessment Procedure) is the government energy efficiency measurement based on a scale 0-100, where 100 is the most efficient. If a property's SAP is below 35 there is a greater than 75% chance that the occupier will be in fuel poverty, anything above 65 is good and 85 is approximately the level of current building regulations.

Ward Name	No. of Records	Sample	%	Average SAP	< SAP 30
Ainsdale	5354	995	18.58	53.5	2.1%
Birkdale	4830	510	10.56	46.0	8.2%
Cambridge	6243	580	9.29	49.6	3.8%
Dukes	6203	311	5.01	43.0	8.0%
Kew	5092	454	8.92	42.2	8.5%
Meols	5317	676	12.71	48.8	3.8%
Norwood	6198	716	11.55	45.7	6.1%

- 2.2 As part of the 2007 private sector stock condition survey the following data was identified in the Southport Area (based on the old area committees).

Area Name	% in fuel poverty	No. of fuel poor households	Average SAP	% below SAP 35
Southport South	11.1	1,687	53.8	4.4
Southport North	15.4	1,800	59.6	5.1
Southport East	11.0	1,152	50.0	7.5
Sefton Average*	11.1	N/A	56.3	3.0

* based on 98,226 private sector homes (excludes social housing)

2.3 Warmfront and take up

Recent data from Eaga, the agency charged with the delivery of the main Government programme, shows the take up across the different wards of the type of grants. The scheme has been running since 2001.

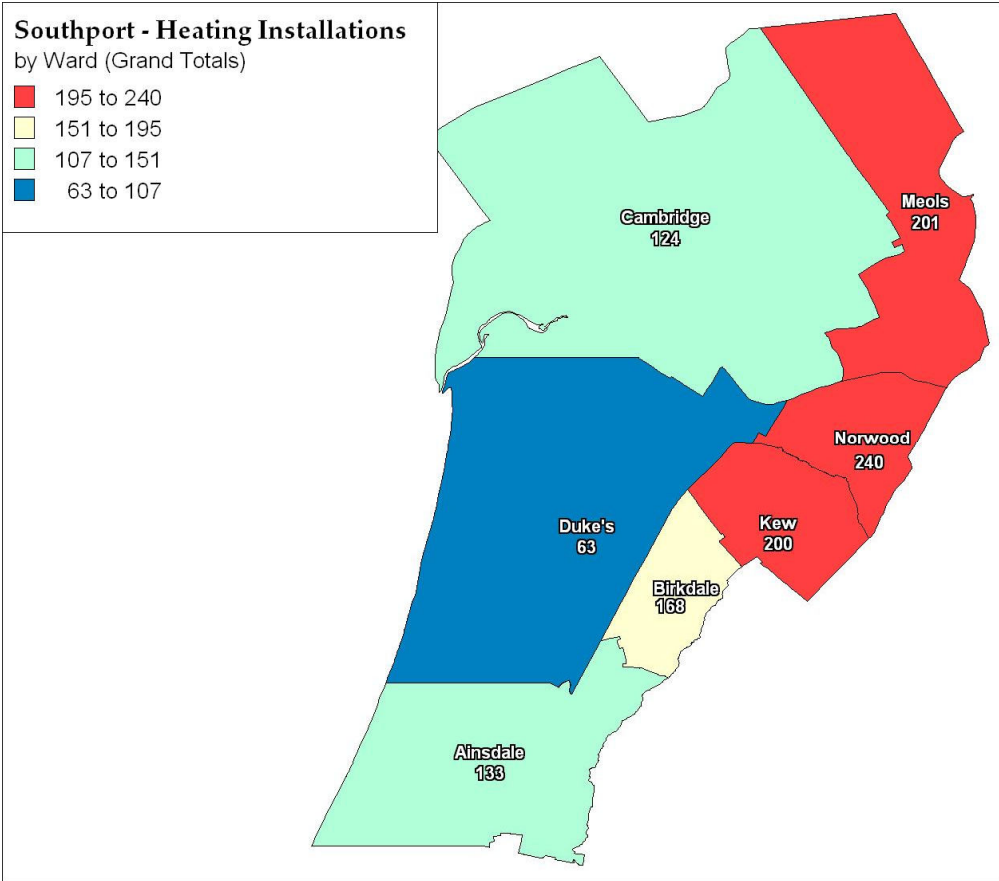


Figure 2.1 -Total number of heating installations or repairs since 2001

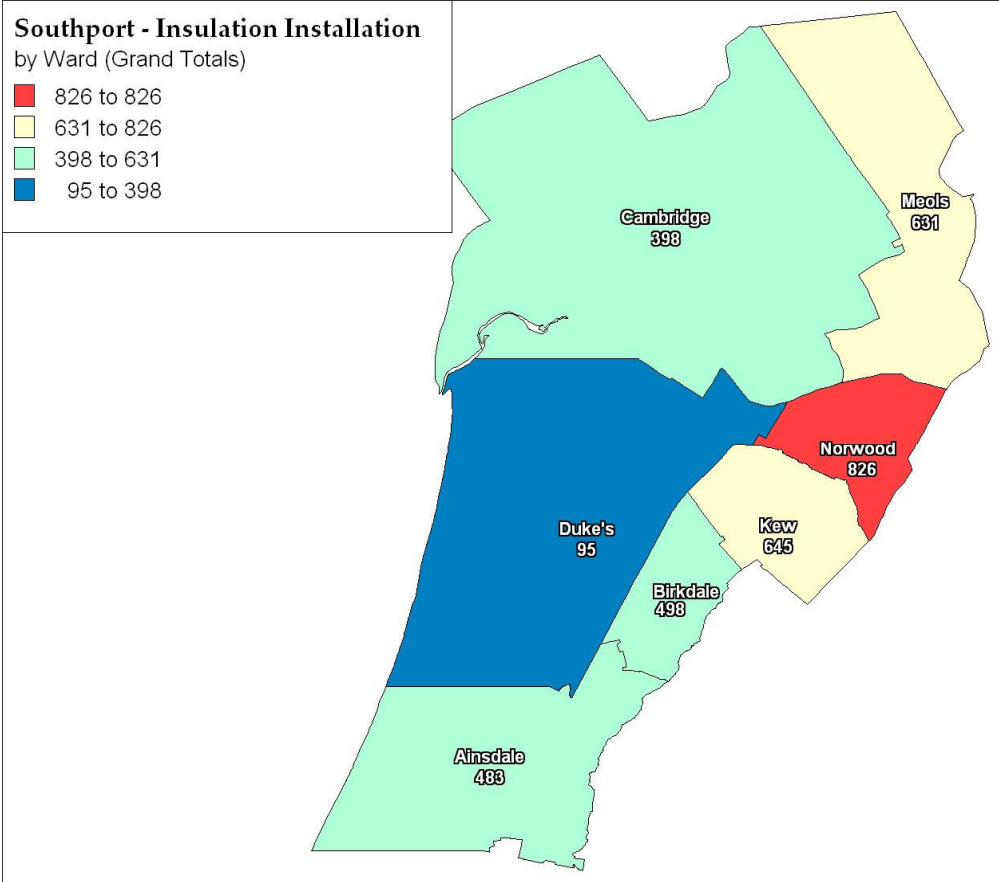


Figure 2.2 – Total number of insulation works since 2001

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3 SOUTHPORT HOUSEWARMERS 2008/09

Given the financial climate and rising fuel costs the energy team at the Council were approached by Councillor Shaw of Birkdale ward to see if ward area funding could be used to help residents reduce their energy bills. With the benefit of the CEEF programme already undertaken it was proposed that a similar programme be administered in the Birkdale ward. The premise was that local Councillors apply their knowledge to direct energy advisors to those streets with a higher proportion of vulnerable groups least able to afford the rising costs.

3.1 Phase 1 Birkdale and Kew

In October, 2008, funds from this committee were secured to proceed with the scheme. The initial Southport Housewarmers Scheme identified circa 2,500 properties that might benefit most effectively from an intensive area programme. The scheme waited a couple of weeks to get going in order to integrate a subsidised insulation funding scheme for maximum benefit for the residents. As such due to the Christmas period the scheme was split into two phases as effective engagement over the Christmas period is very difficult. Properties in Kew and Birkdale were targeted at the end of November / beginning of December 2008. Cambridge and Norwood wards were planned for January 2009.

3.2 Roll-out

A number of streets were chosen based on prior local knowledge of their property type, age, tenure and probability of uptake of measures. In November all of the privately owned/rented properties in the identified streets were given a letter explaining when and how the Community Advisors would operate. The letter explained that the Advisors would bring free impartial energy efficiency advice to the householders' doorstep. They would offer access to grant and other information after asking some relevant questions, as well as offering a free energy report on the property and giving a goodie bag on the doorstep.

3.3 In week commencing 24th November, the advisors started their door-knocking campaign, continuing until 5th December, when the project culminated with a stall at Birkdale Primary School Christmas Fair. All of the homes identified had a canvasser knock at their door. For those homes where there was no reply, a postcard was left, showing details of the event at the Primary School, where they could drop in to see the Advisors.

3.4 Event

The event was very successful due to people attending the school fair who had not made a special journey to meet the advisors, but were nonetheless happy to talk to them whilst there. In previous similar projects it was found that having a stand-alone event attracts very few drop-in visitors. Half of the people who engaged with the Advisors at the event were 'out of area' i.e. not from the targeted addresses, but still local residents that could be assisted anyway.

3.5 An energy efficient kettle was offered as a prize for those people giving names and addresses to the Community Advisors. In return they received energy

efficiency advice, including details of subsidised insulation, and a 'bag for life' goodie bag containing a 'TO DO' list pad, pen and low energy lightbulbs (the same offer as those on the doorstep).

3.6 Response and Referrals

From the first phase, response and referral figures exceeded expectation and encouraged future campaigns. Data on the Birkdale and Kew wards showed that of the 1,446 households contacted, 217 were engaged with (advised about energy issues either on the doorstep, by phone or through the community event). The rate of response from households answering their doors when an Advisor knocked was around 12% (171 households were engaged with). If we add to this the responses at the event (46 further households), the response rate increases to 15%. This was more than double previous experiences in the CEEF programme in Sefton. Full details are found in section 6 of the report for all phases and wards.

- 3.7 A total of 50 households requested a direct referral to an insulation contractor for loft insulation, along with 44 cavity wall insulation referrals (some of these are dual measures at one property). This represents a referral rate of more than 6%, which is very encouraging. 16 Householders asked for a referral for a Benefits health check and 18 wanted to be referred to the Fire Service for smoke alarms/ home fire safety check. 30 householders were interested in being referred to Warm Front.

3.8 Other Findings

During the door-knocking stage it became apparent that some properties have not been able to access insulation schemes due to some of the loft hatches (e.g. in Matlock Road), being too small to enable physical access. This was obviously a barrier both physically and financially. The scheme was able to negotiate a fixed price for increasing the loft hatch size and more often than not include that as part of the subsidised grant funding for loft insulation.

- 3.9 It was discovered that some properties in Stamford Road, which were built at the turn of the 20th century, had cavity wall insulation (CWI) installed. Properties of that age are traditionally not suitable for CWI and many installers had dismissed them as unsuitable without physically checking. We were able to advise householders and installers of the situation.

- 3.10 Due to the initial success of phase 1, additional areas in Birkdale and Meols were identified and constitute phase 3.

4 Phase 2 Cambridge and Norwood

This phase of the scheme began in January 2009 with the letters being delivered by hand w/c 12th Jan. Door-knocking commenced w/c 19th Jan and continued through the following week. Each door that had not been answered in the first week was knocked on for a second time in the following week.

4.1 Event

The door knocking culminated in having an information stand at the Cambridge ward Councillors' surgery on Saturday 31st January. The surgery was

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advertised in the normal way by the Councillors (including local press), as well as the canvasser's postcards. 11 householders were given information, a goody bag and offered the subsidised insulation. Of those present 2 householders completed a home energy check form to get tailored energy reports for their homes.

4.2 Response and Referrals

The response rate from this phase of the campaign was remarkable. The canvassers made contact with 39% of householders in the selected areas of Norwood and Cambridge, not including the 11 that came to the Surgery event. Again, full details are found in section 6 of the report for all phases and wards.

- 4.3 A total of 56 referrals were collected for loft insulation and 44 wanted to be referred for cavity wall insulation. This represents 11% of all of the households contacted by letter and those at the event, although some were dual measures (both types in one household).
- 4.4 Seven householders requested referral for a Benefit Check, a further seven wanted to be referred to Warm Front, and eight householders requested to be referred to the Fire Service for a home safety check.

4.5 Findings

Many of the Cambridge ward householders were already adequately insulated, and of those that were not they were very receptive to have it installed. Only a few people were not interested at all. In Norwood Ward, Wilson and Lawson streets had very recently been canvassed (by Warm Front we believe). This type of activity only offers the one grant and very little else but does explain the low level of Warm Front referrals resulting from this phase of the programme.

5 Phase 3 Additional Birkdale area

The additional Birkdale ward area was made up of 866 households, a large proportion of which were either social housing or 'right to buy' properties. The canvassers hand delivered the letters week commencing 9th February 2009, followed by door-knocking week commencing 16th February. Due to capacity of the community advisors it was not possible to do Meols in the financial year 2008/09 and it will be programmed into the next financial year.

5.1 Response and Referrals

Once again response rates were good, 23% of doors knocked on were answered. From these opened doors the canvassers were able to get 30 referrals, a 15% conversion rate. Again, full details are found in section 6 of the report for all phases and wards.

- 5.2 In this particular area of Birkdale, being an area of high social housing and quite possibly higher benefit uptake, only 2 people wanted a benefit health check. We were pleased that 15% of the doors answered were interested in having insulation installed under the scheme, as Warm Front had been targeting that area, and as there is a high proportion of social housing it would have been considered not a particularly good area to target.

5.3 Overall Points of Note

Areas of mixed housing have a lower take-up rate and are not necessarily a cost-effective target. They are also heavily targeted by Warm Front generally and specific mailshots e.g. Council Tax benefit. The Fire Service had already been round most homes offering their Home Safety Check and free smoke alarm fitting.

- 5.4 Stand-alone events are not well attended so it is highly recommended that events are only staged when there is already a community/public event taking place that can be stepped into.

6 Value for money

At this time we are unable to provide final levels of investment this programme has created because of the time lag that some of the grant streams involved can take to deliver. The Council do not normally receive data until the following financial year. However we can apply reasonable estimates based on borough wide averages and known costs. It is fair to say some of this activity might have happened at some stage in the future but based on historical rates we can be pretty sure that we had had a significant impact in some areas. For example the additional 30 Warmfront grants for the Birkdale ward represents a 15% increase in activity for two weeks in that ward compared to the total for the last 8 years.

- 6.1 The table below shows the leverage and costs for each ward and phase.

Area	Phase	Allocation	Actual cost	Investment levered
Birkdale	1	£950	£827	£26,313.63
Kew	1	£700	£619	£27,645.67
Norwood	2	£800	£641	£22,434.30
Cambridge	2	£500	£268	£11,810.77
Birkdale	3	£900	£866	£8,748.00
Meols	3	£995	*	
Total		£4,845	£3,221	£96,952.37

*To be undertaken in 2009/10

- 6.2 The table below shows the outputs from the schemes and relative investment in each area.

Abbreviations

Mailed- Number of properties that had a letter sent to them and subsequently called at for a Face to face interview.

Face to face – Interview with households to determine best form of assistance. Investment based on low energy lightbulbs given.

Survey – Short series of questions to pinpoint areas of most interest

HECs- Expanded and detailed survey on households energy issues leading to a tailored report and indicative Energy Performance certificate.

LI – Households referred for loft insulation.

CWI - Households referred for cavity wall insulation.

WBC – Households referred for welfare benefits check.

CFS - Households referred to community fire service for safety check and smoke alarm fitting.

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WF- Households referred to the Warm front scheme, a grant offering up to £2,700 worth of heating and insulation work for those on certain benefits.

	Birkdale	Kew	Event	Totals	Cambridge	Norwood	Event	Totals	Birkdale (additional)	Totals	Investment expected
Mailed	827	619	0	1,446	268	641	0	909	866	3,221	N/A
Face to face	110	61	46	217	155	189	11	355	201	773	£1,546
Survey	69	43	47	159	66	64	11	141	38	338	£5,746
HECs	8	3	2	13	0	1	2	3		16	£544
LI	19	17	14	50	14	36	6	56	13	119	£23,800
CWI	16	13	15	44	13	28	3	44	17	105	£31,500
WBC	8	7	1	16	2	5	0	7	0	23	£2,070
CFS	6	9	3	18	5	3	0	8	3	29	N/A
WF	7	11	12	30	2	5	0	7	0	37	£31,746.
											£96,952

We also distributed in excess of 700 low energy lightbulbs to households in those areas.

7 Future plans

It is envisaged that the relative success of the scheme compared to the costs are worth promoting to other areas and as long as the costs to implement and quantity of work is limited to a similar level (about 5 wards with 500-1,000 properties) we can expect similar results. Each ward should aim to identify areas of 500-1,000 properties and charges will be based on approximately £1 per target property. Therefore to accommodate the remaining wards (Birkdale and Dukes as provisions for Meols have already been made) into the scheme would approximately cost £1,500.

8 Recommendations

- 8.1 That members consider and accept the report findings.
- 8.2 That the area committee consider providing the funding of £1,500 to roll out the programme to the remaining wards in the next financial year.
- 8.3 The report be commended to other area committees to encourage similar programmes should those areas choose.

SEFTON M.B.C.