



WM HECA Forum Steering Group

Minutes – 3rd October 2006

Present: Tom Winckley, Wolverhampton City Council
Harry Fitch, Herefordshire Council
Denise Bradley-Lloyd, Herefordshire Council
Robin Dunlevy, Solihull MBC
Chris Winter, Borough of Telford & Wrekin
Graham Jones, South Shropshire DC (Chair)
Rachel Ford, WEEAC
Alun Bragg, Stoke on Trent City Council

1) Apologies

Apologies received from Neil Morton (Birmingham), Lynnette Jones (Wyre Forest) and Keith Bennett (Hestia).

2) Minutes of last meeting

All actions completed. Accepted as an accurate record.

Steering Group minutes are available on the UK HECA website www.hecafora.com. Members may also download the minutes of UK HECA Executive meetings.

3) Steering Group membership

Chair:

GJ explained his role as Chair and would welcome expressions of interest or informal discussions with any HECA Officers willing to consider taking his place. GJ has Chaired the Forum for three years now and whilst currently sharing meeting responsibility with the Vice Chair (NM), would like to stand down in the near future.

Expression of interest received from Herefordshire Council. RF indicated that Officers in the WEEAC area may also be interested in the role.

GJ would be happy to discuss the Chair role and its commitments with any interested Officers. Please contact GJ via telephone or email (details available on www.hecafora.com).

Steering Group:

EC mentioned that Cannock Chase and South Staffordshire Council's have recently appointed full time HECA Officers and these Officers may be interested in joining the steering group.

GJ suggested that there is a possibility of a restructure of Local Government in Shropshire and if this were to happen, a single representative for the County would, in due course, emerge.

Opportunity to join the steering group to be highlighted in minutes and minutes to be made available to all HECA Officers. **Action: EC**

4) Finances

Local Support Programme funding:

EC explained that the Energy Saving Trust has pulled funding for its Local Support Programme network and have also had to make significant cuts to other programme activity. This is due to a change in VAT policy by HM Revenue & Customs. The policy change has been backdated to 1st April and leaves the Trust with a £5.1m deficit in funding for 2006-07. Activities of other EST funding programmes have also been affected, including the Energy Efficiency Partnership for Homes.

The Local Support Programme managed by WEEAC will continue until 31st March 2007 as funding has been secured through existing partnership arrangements.

The Local Support Programme managed by Hestia will close on 31st October 2006, however, Hestia will be maintaining a strategic function within the company and staff will be available to support LSP type activities (strategy development, events, partnerships etc.). The Sustainable Housing Partnership (SHOPAR) will be unaffected by these changes and Hestia also would like to continue to support the WM HECA Forum, however funding support, particularly for organising the annual conference, will need to be considered.

Options discussed

- Using funding generated from purchases of the HEON mapping toolkit (LAs have another opportunity to purchase West Midlands toolkit in November 2006). Fund is currently at £750 (£250 per LA to purchase the toolkit).
- Approaching energy supplier sponsors for more funding for conference and/or an annual Forum sponsorship arrangement (further detail in 5, below).
- Splitting LA SHOPAR membership e.g. with £100 from SHOPAR fees going into WM HECA Forum.

EC to discuss SHOPAR option with members at the forthcoming private sector housing group meeting, date tbc. **Action: EC**

HEON mapping toolkit:

EC requested quotes from existing users of the HEON toolkit in order to help promote it to other Forum members. This will help generate additional funds for Forum activities e.g. publications, events etc. **Action: existing Toolkit users**

5) Planning issues

Sponsorship:

EC has been contacted by the new regional coordinator at npower, Mark Langford, who has offered sponsorship support to the 2007 conference.

GJ and EC attended a meeting with npower in November 2005 regarding Forum wide sponsorship but internal changes in staff meant that they couldn't take the discussions any further at the time. However the steering group agreed this should be explored once again, but that more than one energy supplier should be approached. EC to contact at least three major suppliers with proposals and circulate feedback to steering group. **Action: EC**

For the 2007 conference, steering group agreed that £5,000 would be an appropriate amount to approach suppliers for. This would cover both event and organisation costs.

2007 conference:

RF has been in discussions with Stratford upon Avon District Council, who have provisionally offered to host the 2007 conference. They are currently looking for appropriate venues. The

Council has also offered to organise a tour around the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, which will be closing for major refurbishment in April 2007.

Conference dates were agreed at the last meeting but in light of the Theatre closing on 20th April, the steering group would be happy to consider alternative dates in the week commencing 16th April. RF to coordinate with Council and feed back to steering group.

Action: RF

Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council are also willing to consider hosting a future conference.

6) UK HECA Forum update

HECA Executive met in September 2006, Vice Chair NM attended on behalf of the West Midlands.

Bruce Pittingale resigned as Chair earlier this year; the new UK Chair is Oliver Myers, London Borough of Camden.

Next UK conference to be held in Northern Ireland. HECA Executive is looking at ways in which delegates can travel in a more sustainable way.

The Executive is seeking feedback on the initial consultation on EEC3. See 7, below for more information on the region's response.

HECA Executive to request another meeting with EAGA regarding client contributions and the prices charged by Warm Front contractors in comparison to local firms. All issues or comments to be forwarded to EC. These will then be sent onto the UK Executive for discussion with EAGA and Defra.

Action: All

Both Herefordshire Council and WEEAC have written to their local MP requesting that this issue be raised with Defra. Members of the Wolverhampton Affordable Warmth Action Group also signed a joint letter to EAGA and a representative will be attending their next meeting.

EC to include AOBs regarding Warm Front in comments forwarded to the HECA Executive.

Action: EC

UK HECA Review:

Defra have now started a formal consultation on the role of HECA. GJ to attend a meeting of Forum Chairs in London on the 12th October.

Comments about HECA have been collected over the last 18 months through surveys and direct discussions. GJ will be taking these comments to the meeting, however if Officers would like to add to these, please contact GJ ASAP.

Action: All

GJ will feed back to the steering group at its next meeting.

7) Any other business

EEC3 consultation:

The initial consultation, to 23rd October, is to seek early views on the shape and focus of the full consultation in 2007. A consultation event is taking place on 6th October and the HECA Forums will be represented.

No comments have been received from members on this initial consultation. The steering group agreed to not formally respond at this stage, but wait for the full consultation in 2007. EC to communicate this to Helen Atkins. **Action: EC**

GIS Ltd:

Herefordshire Council contacted EC regarding a company called GIS who have been contacting residents in their area and offering referrals to Warm Front. Residents were concerned with the validity of their offer and contacted the Council.

GIS Ltd are an independent agency, based in Southend on Sea, who broker referrals between installers and EAGA. They purchase household contact databases and contact residents to offer grant aided insulation and heating measures.

Practical Help have forwarded on details of discussions held on their online messaging board in 2004. Concerns have been raised by local authorities and EEACs about their sales techniques.

EC to circulate message board comments to all members but with a guidance note that if residents contact the Council with any concerns about GIS, to contact their local Trading Standards. The information provided by Practical Help was done so in good faith and should not be used as evidence against the company. **Action: EC**

8) Date of next meeting

Tuesday 6 February 2007, 10am at Hestia's Jewellery Quarter offices.