



WM HECA Forum Steering Group

Minutes – 7 June 2005

Present: Ellie Cooper, Hestia (Secretariat)
Graham Jones, South Shropshire DC (Chair)
John Burns, Birmingham City Council
Karen Gilliatt, Stafford Borough Council
Keith Bennett, Hestia (Secretary)
Les Craggs, Oswestry Borough Council
Chris Winter, Borough of Telford & Wrekin
Tracy Troiolo, Warwickshire EEAC

1) Apologies

Received from Neil Morton and Stuart Davies.

2) Minutes of last meeting

Accepted as an accurate record.

3) Financial position and budget

Situation unchanged since last meeting. Nothing further to report.

4) Steering Group membership

Stuart Davies will be leaving Herefordshire Council at the end of June and therefore there will be a space available on the WM HECA Steering Group.

GJ and the Steering Group (SG) would like to take this opportunity to thank Stuart for his continued involvement and support over the past few years and wish him all the best in his new role and in the future.

GJ asked for it to be emphasised that sitting on the HECA SG is not a time-consuming role and that meetings are mainly in order to plan the conference and feedback to the UK HECA Executive. The SG would like to invite all interested HECA Officers to contact EC and attend the next meeting.

EC to ensure all WM HECA Officers receive copy of minutes and to highlight this opportunity.
Action: EC

5) Planning issues

10th Conference

Feedback from delegates was very positive and the Chair and SG were very pleased with the event and venue. The Chair once again thanked the conference sponsors Coventry City Council and London Energy.

Feedback on the practical case study workshops was particularly positive and a number of delegates have since mentioned that they found these very useful and would welcome similar workshops at the next conference.

11th Conference

Local authority sponsor:

LA sponsors are approached in order to cover venue costs. Was suggested that a smaller local authority was approached this coming year - conference costs can be kept to a minimum, particularly if exhibitors are asked to contribute. The final cost to Coventry City Council for example was less than £500.

Exhibitors were quite happy to contribute £100-200 for the 10th conference. Conference management and organisational costs are generally £1000-2000 but are underwritten by Hestia.

Conference venue

- Few places west of Telford were thought suitable. Ludlow Town FC has hosted some regional events but venue space is limited and also there are issues of travel (do not want to discourage people from attending)
- Stafford centre fairly limited choice
- Black Country Museum in Dudley was suggested as an interesting venue
- The Motorcycle Museum in Solihull also may have good day delegate rates once reopened after the fire
- Stoke on Trent was mentioned in the planning for the 10th conference and the Civic Centre could be a potentially good venue
- Hams Hall in North Warwickshire was also identified - may be a way of involving BMW?

EC and KB to speak to possible LA sponsors and feedback to SG.

Action: EC/KB

Alternatively, it was suggested that a fuel utility could be approached for the full sponsorship amount. Contributions have historically been up to a maximum of £2000.

West Midlands HECA Forum Chair

GJ mentioned he would be stepping down as chair of the WM HECA Forum at the next conference. GJ mentioned that he has devoted a fair amount of time to travelling to UK meetings over the past couple of years and feels he is unable to continue to dedicate this much time to work outside of South Shropshire.

The Chair's responsibilities are as follows:

- Chairing Steering Group meetings (currently two per year before/after conference)
- Chairing regional annual conference (April)
- Attending UK HECA Executive meetings (four/five meetings per year)

GJ would therefore like WM HECA Officers to consider the opportunity to be Chair of the Forum and is happy to talk through what is involved with any interested parties.

Action: All WM HECA Officers

An alternative suggestion was that GJ remain Chair but other SG members support his attendance at UK meetings. Providing individuals agree to attend more than half of the total number of meetings, GJ would consider continuing to chair the forum.

EC to ensure all WM HECA Officers are aware of the opportunity for a new Chair to be appointed following the next conference when minutes are set out.

Action: EC

6) The Future of the West Midlands HECA Forum

There are concerns about the lack of funding to support regional HECA Forums.

In comparison to some regions which have only the HECA Forum to attend, the West Midlands appears a little fragmented, having a number of sub-regional partnerships operating alongside the HECA Forum e.g. SHOPAR, SHEF and the North Staffordshire Forum.

Whilst it was suggested that these Forums could be integrated, overall, SG members felt that having partnerships which operate on a more local level is actually a strength. The regional tie in to the HECA forum is very important however, as are links with regional agencies such as AWM, the Regional Assembly etc.

SG members agreed that the Forum should seek to strengthen its presence in the West Midlands whilst continuing its close links with sub-regional partnerships, and explore opportunities for sub regional project work. The importance of involving smaller (and possibly more rural) local authorities was also emphasised.

SG queried whether funding support could be provided by the regional agencies, via the Regional Energy Office. Also, whether the Government Office were now in a position to once again support the HECA Forum and the conference e.g. via the provision of meeting room space.

KB and EC to explore opportunities via links with regional agencies and see how the group could develop its strategic links within the region. **Action: KB/EC**

7) UK HECA Forum update

National Constitution

The UK HECA has now set itself up as a legal body (a company limited by guarantee) in order that it can directly manage its finances, rather than continuing to operate from a local authority (Leicester City Council).

The company is called the **Home Energy Conservation Association**, the name chosen in order to steer away from HECA terminology and embrace the wider home energy agenda. The UK HECA Steering Group has been renamed the **HECA Executive**.

Bruce Pittingale (UK Chair) has been asked to join the Energy Institute's member's panel in order to provide a direct link and point of contact between the Institute and HECA Forum members.

EST funding

At the last HECA Executive meeting, EST made it clear that a phased withdrawal from providing regional funding was always planned.

However, funding for the UK HECA Executive is still planned for 2005-06 with possibly a reduced budget. The Home Energy Conservation Association currently employs 3 full time staff.

Generic job descriptions and HECA qualification

Little progress to report. Update expected at forthcoming meeting, 16 June.

HECA website and regional pages

Regional pages for each HECA Forum have now been launched on the UK HECA website www.hecafora.com. The WM forum can place whatever they choose on these pages (including minutes, useful reports, links etc). Information just needs to be sent to the HEC Association.

EC to ensure all current and relevant information is uploaded onto this new regional web page, and that all WM HECA Officers are alerted when it is available. Information to be uploaded includes: minutes from meetings, conference presentations/feedback, WM HECA Forum brochure (2003), map of LAs in regional plus local contact details and links/contact details for sub-regional partnerships.

Action: EC

Video conferencing HECA Executive meetings

Graham raised the possibility of video conferencing as an alternative way of hosting UK HECA Executive meetings. However, this was not felt to be suitable and therefore meetings will continue to tour the UK over the course of the year.

8) Any other business

HEAT

Graham Jones mentioned that he had been contacted by Enact, the organisation that manages the national HEAT scheme, about their contacting all local authorities in the West Midlands. Enact were looking for endorsement from the WM HECA forum.

SG agreed that Graham Jones should reply to Enacts request with the response that the forum will not endorse any one scheme, but that Enact can contact whoever they wish, as individual local authorities should be able to access a free market.

Action: GJ

EnergyWise

There are various external offerings causing pressure on the sub-regional EnergyWise scheme (namely the HEAT project). Tamworth, Walsall and Shrewsbury & Atcham have all signed to a 2-year contract and a number of other LAs are holding discussion with the scheme managers, Enact.

The unique feature of HEAT is that it offers a blanket mail out via Royal Mail door-to-door. Hestia is developing EnergyWise in order to provide exactly the same support - a free of charge blanket mail out service. However, there are a number of added benefits:

- EnergyWise is a local scheme with local installer links and contacts
- Local installers will be used to carry out work
- The scheme can directly link into a wide variety of other LA and resident support services via the four regional EEACs
- The scheme can establish links to other home improvement schemes operated in the region e.g. fire safety, security
- The mailing will be offered on a rolling basis in order to reflect current best value. This way, EnergyWise can ensure householders receive the best prevailing rates
- EnergyWise will signpost those eligible for free measures to other relevant local schemes

Hestia is confident that local installer partners will welcome the suggestions. All local authorities in the West Midlands will be offered this EnergyWise free mailing service.

Private sector non-decency & the ODPM Ready Reckoner

A recent follow-up House Condition Survey commissioned by South Shropshire has alerted them to a potentially significant difference between the numbers of private sector non-decent homes considered vulnerable, than suggested by the ODPM's Ready Reckoner.

The HCS identified that there may be as many as six times more vulnerable non-decent private sector homes in South Shropshire. Graham Jones wanted to alert this as a potential issue for others undertaking or considering a follow-up HCS and emphasise that Benefits is a crucial data set (providing real time figures) that should be integrated into the HCS process.

It is recognised that LAs are struggling to monitor improvements in non-decency in the private sector. Bridgnorth are soon to host a visit from one of the Beacon Councils in order for the Shropshire authorities and the Borough of Telford & Wrekin to learn more about the approach they have taken.

Warm Front was mentioned as a means through which private sector vulnerable properties will be made 'decent'. It is anticipated that Warm Front will contribute 20-25% of the overall target.

Oswestry mentioned that as part of the canvassing Domestic & General are undertaking in their area, the local authority has requested that the surveyor carries out a 'mini' HCS. This project is being managed by Hestia.

Hestia web based 'tool' for local authorities

Hestia is developing a web-based service for local authorities in order to upload, manage and generate reports on all data collated via surveys of any kind.

The service will not be Hestia branded, beyond the initial login page and a local authority partner will have exclusive access to their data and offer login's to as many LA staff as appropriate.

The service will be business process management, not software focussed. The service could be used as a means through which improvements in non-decent housing stock could be monitored.

Demonstrations of the service will be available after next week (w/c 13 June). Please contact Keith Bennett if you would like to receive more information.

9) Date of next meeting

Tuesday 6 September, 10am. Venue to be confirmed.