



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Fuel Stamps Scheme
Date:	21 st March 2014
Reporting Officer:	S Wylie, Director of Health and Environmental Services, Ext 3260
Contact Officer:	M McAtackney, Departmental Business and Resource Manager, Ext 3300

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Following a successful pilot of the Fuel Stamps scheme the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agreed to the roll out of the scheme across the Belfast City Council area at its meeting on 8 May 2009. Since then the Committee has approved contributions to the scheme under the provisions of section 115 of the Local Government Act (NI) 1972, now known as section 37 of the Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011.
1.2	A significant number of households in Belfast are currently in fuel poverty and as such the scheme helps people, particularly older people, budget for expensive winter oil bills by way of purchasing £5 savings stamps from local shops, garages, credit unions and some local Council facilities.
1.3	At the end of January 2014, 207,362 stamps totalling £1,036,810 have been sold to the public through the Fuel Stamps scheme.

2	Key Issues
2.1	The annual cost of the scheme for 2013/14 and 2014/15 is £7,600 which includes administration, printing and promotion costs. The cost of the scheme can be met from the Environmental Health Service budget; however given the nature of the expenditure it requires approval from Committee under section 37 of the Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011 to incur the expenditure.
2.2	The Act permits the Council to make any payment for any purpose which in its opinion is in the interests of and will bring direct benefit to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the Council;• the District or any part of its District; or• the inhabitants of its District or any part of its District.
2.3	The Fuel Stamps scheme brings a direct benefit to the Council and the inhabitants of Belfast and if agreed, it is considered that the benefit obtained would be commensurate with the payment made.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	<u>Financial</u> The annual cost of the Fuel Stamps scheme is £7,600 and it can be funded from the Environmental Health Service budget.
3.2	<u>Human Resources</u> None.
3.3	<u>Asset and Other Implications</u> None.

4	Equality Implications
4.1	None.

5	Recommendation
5.1	The Committee is requested to grant approval under Section 37 Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011 to incur the annual cost of £7,600 for the Fuel Stamps scheme; it being the opinion of the Committee that the expenditure would be in the interest of, and would be of direct benefit to, the District and the inhabitants of the District, with the Committee being satisfied that the direct benefit so accruing would be commensurate with the payment to be made.

6	Key to Abbreviations
	None.

7	Documents attached
	None.