

CABINET – 15TH SEPTEMBER 2022

Report of the Strategic Director – Commercial and Economic Development Lead Member: Councillor Jonathan Morgan

Part A

ITEM 9 FEASIBILITY STUDIES FOR CARBON REDUCTION

Purpose of Report

This report requests that the budget initially agreed for Solar Feasibility be expanded in its scope to include feasibility work for any measure to reduce or offset carbon.

Recommendations

1. That Cabinet approves wider use of the £150,000 budget allocated for solar feasibility studies to undertake wider carbon reduction/offsetting feasibility studies.
2. That authority for the same be delegated to the Strategic Director – Commercial and Economic Development to commission work.

Reasons

1. To understand the Council's options and ability to significantly reduce carbon emissions in the move to net zero
2. To allow for the timely completion of studies such that that any following phases of a project can be planned and submitted for scrutiny and approval.

Policy Justification and Previous Decisions

In June 2019, Charnwood Borough Council committed to achieving carbon neutrality for the Council's own operations by 2030. This builds on the success of our 2015-2020 Carbon Management Plan, which saw us reduce our carbon footprint by 37% between 2012 and 2018. Since then, our footprint has fallen by a further 3%.

The Council's Carbon Neutral Plan, approved at Cabinet on the 16th September 2021, sets out a series of actions (also approved) to move the Council further towards its carbon neutral target.

On 10 February 2022, Cabinet approved the use of up to £150,000 to undertake solar feasibility work.

The level of spend required to undertake these studies is above the Key Decision threshold in the Council's constitution and therefore requires Cabinet approval to spend.

The budget will be taken from the Carbon Neutral Action Fund, approved and allocated in the Council's Capital plan.

Implementation Timetable including Future Decisions and Scrutiny

The decision will come into effect immediately (subject to Call-in).

Following this decision, future reports will come before Cabinet to determine the direction forward and will be open to Scrutiny.

Report Implications

The following implications have been identified for this report.

Financial Implications

The Carbon Neutral Action Fund forms part of the approved Capital Plan.

Risk Management

The risks associated with the decision Cabinet is asked to make and proposed actions to mitigate those risks are set out in the table below.

Risk Identified	Likelihood	Impact	Overall Risk	Risk Management Actions Planned
Surveys return results that are financially unfavourable	Unlikely (2)	Serious (3)	Moderate (6)	Officers will investigate if external funding or partnership opportunities exist.
The budget identified is insufficient to thoroughly understand the potential.	Unlikely (2)	Significant (2)	Low (4)	There is a significant contingency built into the figure for approval. The money need not be spent if not warranted but must be available if needed. The nominated individuals will manage this process as it happens, and robust procurement routes will be used.

Equality and Diversity

No implications

Crime and Disorder

No implications

Sustainability

This decision forms part of the adopted Carbon Neutral Plan

Key Decision: Yes

Background Papers: None

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Part B

Background

1. The Council's Carbon Neutral Plan was approved by Cabinet on the 16th September 2021.
2. The two major contributors to the Council's carbon footprint are Buildings (15%) and Transport (84%). Reductions in emissions with both areas will take time as the council investigates the options for future accommodation and adoption of green technologies for our fleet as they emerge.
3. Carbon offsetting, in the form of renewable energy installations, provides the best opportunity to significantly reduce the Council's carbon footprint in the shorter term and is one of the main 3 challenges outlined in the Carbon Neutral Plan.
4. At a meeting of Cabinet on 10 February 2022, Cabinet approved a budget of up to £150,000 to undertake solar feasibility work. The majority of this spend was intended to produce feasibility work in support of the development of solar farms on Council-owned land.
5. In beginning this work, officers sought advice to better understand the ability of the National Grid to take electricity generated from such an installation. Western Power has advised that the Grid has reached the limit on the amount of generation that can be added to the network until upstream reinforcements are carried out. The reinforcements are planned beyond 2030 and the National Grid has not advised any firm timescales for this work.
6. As such, none of the budget allocated was spent before this information came to light.
7. Despite this setback, other elements of the Carbon Neutral Plan should be investigated to determine the Council's ability to invest in those other measures sustainably. These could be measures to reduce carbon in buildings and transport as well as alternative offsetting initiatives.
8. Therefore, it is requested that the budget initially agreed for Solar Feasibility be expanded in its scope to include feasibility work for any measure to reduce or offset carbon.