

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

KENT UTILITIES ENGAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Kent Utilities Engagement Sub-Committee held in the Medway Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 18 September 2019.

PRESENT: Mr M A C Balfour (Chairman), Mr A M Ridgers (Vice-Chairman), Mr A Booth, Mr I S Chittenden, Mr D Farrell, Mr H Rayner and Mr J Wright

ALSO PRESENT: Mr M D Payne and Mr M Whiting

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs A Taylor (Scrutiny Research Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

40. Declarations of Interests by Members in items on the Agenda for this Meeting

(Item 3)

There were no interests declared.

41. Apologies and Substitutes

(Item 2)

Apologies had been received from Mr David Brazier.

42. Minutes from the meeting held on 1 April 2019

(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 1 April 2019 were a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

43. Major Energy Generation Opportunities for KCC

(Item 5)

1. Carolyn introduced Daire Casey who worked as Business development manager (Energy) for West Sussex County Council.
2. Mr Casey was responsible for 'your energy sussex' which identified what worked in terms of energy and joined up bids for funding etc.
3. Mr Carey set out the benefits of sites that, from a horticultural perspective, had little value and brownfield sites which were unsuitable for development, these had valuable potential for solar farms for local authorities.
4. Referring to revenue risk it was important to show revenue streams and amounts which were low, medium and high risk to the council. Revenue streams modelled in year 1 would not be the same as in years 5 and 10.

5. When developing the solar farm there had been no sense of community ownership over the project. A fund had been set up for the local parish council, and the council had invested in local schools and local buildings.
6. Referring to another site, the local parish council was aware of a piece of land which they wanted in community ownership; however this couldn't happen for 15-20 years because of methane levels. Referring to community pushback it was explained that the solar farm was a temporary measure, by the time the site was available in terms of methane emissions the council would be looking to remove energy installations.
7. Mr Payne asked how the authority profiled capital and whether this was over 25 years? Mr Casey explained that the view had been taken that 25 years was standard, warranties were up to 25 years so it made sense to take a decision in year 23 over what to do next, there was a plan for one or two refreshes within that period.
8. Mr Rayner asked if the Council's name was used as an operating vehicle or whether it was separate? Also how did the authority borrow, was it through public sector or privately? Mr Casey explained that the County Council did consider setting up a special purpose vehicle but decided against it. The County Council used its own name as the legal owner and operator.
9. Mr Balfour and other Members expressed a desire to visit the solar farm.
10. Steve Baggs and Thad Dell set out some developing opportunities for Solar Farms, they were working hard to identify opportunities in Kent.
11. To progress sites development capital was needed. Mr Dell agreed to circulate a report about biodiversity on solar farms. Mr Chittenden commented on the positive use for sites which were not always useable.
12. Referring to biomass Carolyn McKenzie explained that all options were being looked at. Mr Dell referred to Lancashire County Council which was working on a project with input from Kent Wildlife Trust, using verge cuttings for aerobic digestion.
13. Mr Rayner asked about the mechanics of raising capital, Mr Dell explained that once the cost of grid connection was known the authority would engage pre-application works on the planning side and environmental surveys.
14. Steve Baggs referred to Maidstone Heat Network, the next steps were to determine what appetite there was from partners, 10-15 organisation had already been in contact so the next step was to review potential. The date for potential construction was January 2021 but this was a big project with a lot of risks, however it was potentially groundbreaking in terms of de-carbonising heat for KCC.
15. In response to a question from Mr Booth about where River Medway featured in future plans? Steve Baggs explained that KCC was looking to utilise the river for a water source heat pump.
16. In relation to the pressure on developers to use heat pumps rather than gas boilers Mr Baggs explained that from 2025 new developments would not be allowed

to have fossil fuel boilers. The aim was to de-carbonise as much as possible and future proof.

RESOLVED that Members thank the officers for their presentation and for answering Members' questions.

44. Draft Action Plan

(Item 6)

1. Carolyn explained that the Action Plan pulled work together, actions from this group fitted in with the net zero and energy emissions strategy. It was intended that there would be no gas or fossil fuelled developments by 2025.

2. Member requested a visit to Ebbsfleet or West Sussex to Solar Farm.

3. The Action Plan would be a working document which would be taken to Scrutiny Committee and wider stakeholders, if appropriate via Kent Developers Group and Districts.

RESOLVED that Members note the Draft Action Plan.