

ONE LEISURE PV SOLAR INSTALLS

4.0 Overview and Scrutiny Comments

- 4.2 The Panel discussed the One Leisure PV Solar Installs Report at its meeting on 7th November 2024.
- 4.3 Following questions from Councillor Shaw, the Panel heard that the export had not currently been included due to the connection times of UK Power Networks, the aim was to install the system and then a decision on how to manage any generated surplus could be looked at on a case by case basis. The Panel also heard that the designs were based on half hourly data for each centre, based on this there was an anticipated return of over 75%.
- 4.4 Councillor Lowe expressed concern over the usage of lithium and queried alternative methods of battery storage, she also enquired about the recyclability of the panels at the end of their lifespan. The concerns around lithium were observed and the Panel heard that further detail on the recyclability would be sought and reported back to the Panel at a later date.
- 4.5 Councillor Hassall expressed concern over the bundling within the report with the return at the St Ives site expected to be 12 years against the other sites at 8 years, concern was expressed that this would affect the SALIX recycling fund. Councillor Hassall further suggested that the £52,000 for the St Ives site may be better used to provide battery storage for the other three sites. The Panel were assured that the project would be funded by Council reserves and that the project was anticipated to have an excellent payback. It was noted that due to the nature of energy consumption at leisure centres, there would be a much different usage when compared to a residential property, and that the designs proposed would make the best use of the available array as possible. Furthermore, it was noted that to proceed with the project across all four sites would massively reduce overhead and that there would be significant financial and environmental benefits through the implementation of the scheme. The Panel were advised that an annual return of 12.1% was anticipated.
- 4.6 Councillor Bywater observed that the siting of the panels within the rooves of the centres would be a much better location than taking up valuable agricultural land, it was also suggested that the Panel would like to see the progress of the project as it developed and after 12 months of implementation.
- 4.7 It was noted, following a query from Councillor Shaw, that energy usage at the St Ives site was more sporadic than the other three sites due to the services provided there.
- 4.8 In response to a question from Councillor Lowe, the Panel heard that there had already been successful installs of solar panels across the council's estate,

including Eastfield House and One Leisure and that this was part of the first stage of introducing renewable energy generation.

- 4.9 The Panel were advised, following a question from Councillor Mokbul, that a solar canopy was due to be installed in the carpark at One Leisure St Ives Indoor following funding from Sport England. It was noted that the steelworks for this type of project doubled the payback period.
- 4.10 Councillor Tevlin expressed disappointment that government funding was not available for the project, the Panel heard that by progressing opportunities to decarbonise where they presented was preferable to waiting for funding. It was also noted that significant savings on utilities and carbon emissions would be made by implementing the project.
- 4.11 The Panel heard, following a question from Councillor Shaw, that subject to the approval of the project, it was hoped to progress using the supplier already secured for the St Ives canopy work which would allow the work to proceed quickly. It was noted that this supplier was based in Northampton but that work was underway to look at the procurement procedure for the Council and how this could positively impact local businesses. Councillor Shaw proposed to add an additional recommendation to the Cabinet report, this recommendation was seconded by Councillor Mokbul and the Panel voted in favour, with one Councillor abstaining, of forwarding the proposed recommendation to the Cabinet;
- 3) to agree to apply greater weight to tender applicants from within the district.
- 4.12 Following the discussion and the Panels support of the project, Councillor Shaw proposed to add an additional recommendation to the Cabinet report, this recommendation was seconded by Councillor Lowe and the Panel voted unanimously in favour of forwarding the proposed recommendation to the Cabinet;
- 4) that the Panel encourage Cabinet to proceed with Option 2 outlined within the report.
- 4.13 Following the discussion, the Panel were informed that their comments would be added to the Cabinet report in order for Cabinet to make a decision upon the recommendations within the report, and additionally, the Panel request that the Cabinet consider adding the following recommendations to their report;
- 3) to agree to apply greater weight to tender applicants from within the district.
- 4) that the Panel encourage Cabinet to proceed with Option 2 outlined within the report.