

**CAMBRIDGESHIRE RENEWABLES INFRASTRUCTURE FRAMEWORK (CRIF)  
AND CAMBRIDGESHIRE COMMUNITY ENERGY FUND (CEF)  
(Report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being))**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 At its meeting held on 13th March 2012, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) considered the report by the Heads of Environmental Management and of Planning Services entitled Cambridgeshire Renewables Infrastructure Framework (CRIF) and Cambridgeshire Community Energy Fund (CEF).

**2. THE PANEL'S DISCUSSIONS**

- 2.1 The Panel has received a presentation from the Head of Environmental Management on the CRIF and the CEF. Members found this to be particularly useful as it enabled them to clarify a number of matters relating to what is a complex, technical subject.
- 2.2 Members have welcomed the news that solar panels have been installed at Eastfield House. These will provide the Council with electricity for use by itself and others and with a significant return on its investment.
- 2.3 It is recognised that developers are likely to challenge the inclusion of renewable energy policies in the new Local Plan. It is, however, accepted that the Council needs to have in place policy provisions to ensure that CEF income is retained locally.
- 2.4 The Panel has discussed in detail planning aspects of the CRIF and CEF. There is some concern that applications for development that have high levels of renewable features will be looked on more favourably than others. It is recognised that such development will have to meet other planning requirements. Members are nevertheless of the view that the removal of the requirement for planning permission to be obtained for the installation of renewable features is having a detrimental effect on the appearance of some properties.
- 2.5 With specific reference to wind power, it is suggested that the Council should try to influence where wind turbines are located. Wind farms work better in some locations than in others. However, currently applications for wind farms are driven by financial considerations. Under the new National Planning Policy Framework the Council would be able to specify the areas where wind farms are more suitable. In making this recommendation it is recognised that there is no upper limit that can be imposed on the amount of wind turbines in an area.
- 2.6 Huntingdonshire at present is dependent on wind and photovoltaic power for its renewable sources of energy. These do not provide a constant source of energy. It will be necessary to make use of the full range of other options for renewables to fill the gaps. Having recently visited Waterbeach Waste Management Park, the Panel recommends that the options should include deriving energy from waste.

- 2.7 The CEF presents commercial opportunities both for public sector organisations and commercial businesses. It is significantly cheaper to install renewable measures during construction than retrofit existing properties. For these reasons the Panel endorses the proposals in the report by the Heads of Environmental Management and of Planning Services. A key question will be developer contribution rates. They should not be set at such a level that developers only provide on-site renewable measures.
- 2.8 Given that Huntingdonshire has the greatest renewable potential in Cambridgeshire, it is possible that the District could be a net beneficiary of CEF funds.
- 2.9 There is the possibility that the CEF could require considerable management and monitoring. The Panel recommends the Cabinet controls the arrangements that are put in place for these purposes to ensure they do not proliferate.
- 2.10 As has been said, the CRIF and CEF is a complex, technical subject. The Panel strongly recommends that a clear communication strategy is developed for it. This should comprise simplified messages and stress the cost savings that can be obtained from renewables rather than carbon emissions. It might also make reference to energy conservation as this appears to be missing from current documents.

### **3. CONCLUSION**

- 3.1 On the basis of these discussions, the Panel recommends the Cabinet to:
- note the work undertaken, formally sign off the CRIF / CEF projects and to endorse the future approach to energy and renewables outlined in the report;
  - delegate authority to the Managing Directors to carry forward work on energy and renewables in the District, to deliver the best possible outcomes for Business, the Community and Public Sector, within the Framework of the CRIF, and
  - note that the Managing Directors will consider the merits of setting up a CEF as outlined in the report.

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**Background Documents** - Reports and Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) held on 13th March 2012.