

REPORT TO ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

COMMUNITY ENERGY GENERATION



Report Reference ET-23-19
Meeting Date 5th February 2024
Agenda Item 7
Prepared by Town Clerk

1.0 BACKGROUND

Cllr Russell attended a briefing for local councils on community energy generation and the slides from the presentation have been circulated.

Community Energy Projects (CEPs) are locally led initiatives which generate electricity for the local network, providing power to homes and businesses. They can be used to provide affordable energy to communities, tackle climate change and generate income for local investment.

Most locally, there is a successful hydroelectricity scheme in Congleton (Dane Valley Community Energy Ltd) which powers the equivalent of 60 homes, generating 250MWh per year. The most common schemes involve photovoltaic panels (solar panels) to generate electricity, other schemes include onshore wind (more challenging due to planning constraints) and local heat networks.

CEPs are not small projects and naturally require significant planning and investment. A scheme in Congleton is currently in the process of raising £500,000 for plans to install PVs on existing rooftops. A common funding model is the issue of community shares which offer a return on investment and ensure community ownership, there is also some funding for feasibility studies and delivery available.

2.0 PROGRESSION OF A SCHEME FOR KNUTSFORD

A CEP would contribute to the delivery of Objective E2 of the council's strategic plan (development and implementation of a community climate emergency action plan). This is currently identified for commencement in the 2025/26 civic year. The council does not presently have resource to explore a scheme in the forthcoming civic year.

It is therefore suggested that furtherance of a CEP be explored as part of the development of a community climate emergency action plan.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the committee:

- a) notes the information and success of community energy projects
- b) agrees in principle support to the emergence of any community energy project in Knutsford
- c) refers the information and idea of establishing a community energy project to the working group to be formed in the 2025/26 civic year