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OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

Report of: Environment Scrutiny Committee

To: Executive Board

Date: 18th December 2006 **Item No:**

Title of Report : Environment Scrutiny Committee Recommendations on the Wind Turbine Options

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To report the recommendations of Environment Scrutiny Committee following their discussions on the Wind Turbine options.

Key decision: No

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Alan Armitage

Scrutiny Responsibility: Environment Scrutiny Committee

Ward(s) affected: All

Report Approved by: Councillor Sid Phelps, Chair Environment Scrutiny Committee, Sarah Fogden, Finance and Asset Management, Emma Griffiths, Legal Services.

Policy Framework:

Recommendation(s): The Executive Board is asked to respond to the Scrutiny Committee's recommendations:

1. If it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations outlined

2. If it agrees when will the recommendations be implemented and who will take the lead

3. If it disagrees why

4. If more information is required from other officers when that will be considered

1. Environment Scrutiny Committee Minutes

62. WIND TURBINES

John Kulasek confirmed that he was liaising with Thames Valley Energy to research the suitability of a number of sites.

Members commented in relation to the need to make progress with the project.

Resolved to inform the Executive Board that

a). the Committee endorses recommendations a-c in the report;

b). officers should be encouraged to explore low risk schemes to the Council, such as those offered by companies such as Ecotricity, who will manage a wind turbine project and absorb the risk.

2. Background

2.1 The Environment Scrutiny Committee considered the Wind Turbine Update report that had originally been included on the Executive Board agenda for the meeting on 6th November 2006. The report was not considered by the Executive Board at that time to allow Environment Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to discuss the report and pass on their comments to Executive Board.

2.2 The committee did not support the proposal to put the project on hold until cost/benefits are proven and the planning position more certain; members were keen that investigative work continues into the three options listed in the update report – investigate the site options for a major turbine development; investigate investment into existing/proposed wind farms; consider smaller scale, building mounted turbines.

2.3 In addition to supporting recommendations a-c in the update report, Environment Scrutiny Committee also felt that officers should be instructed to look into services provided by companies such as, Ecotricity. The Chair of Environment Scrutiny Committee explained that in some cases private companies would manage a project of this nature, absorbing the risk that would otherwise be met by the Council.

3. Recommendations

3.1 The Environment Scrutiny Committee recommended the following:

- The Committee endorsed recommendations a-c in the report entitled “Wind Turbine Update Report”.
- Officers should be encouraged to explore low risk schemes to the Council, such as those offered by companies such as Ecotricity, who will manage a wind turbine project and absorb the risk.

4. Comments from the Strategic Director (Mark Luntley)

4.1 The Strategic Director made the following comments:

4.2 Building and operating a wind turbine is and not a simple task; indeed, it is a specialist undertaking. The Asset Management Team is currently working on a number of important projects and do not have the capacity to take on more work. If members choose to proceed with the wind turbine project then either extra resource need to be brought in or other work has to slip.

4.3 There are also a number of key difficulties:

- Ordering turbines - waiting times are currently running at two years from order to delivery, particularly for one or two turbines. Turbine costs are also around 40% higher than they were 18 months ago.
- Planning permission – This can take many years to secure.
- The complexity of doing this work – For example, the Westmill scheme near Shrivenham needed a year's worth of wind data and a number of other guarantees before the scheme was able to get off the ground.

5. Comments from the Portfolio Holder (Councillor Alan Armitage)

5.1 The portfolio holder was happy to support the Scrutiny Committee recommendations.

Name and Contact Details of Report Author:

Andrew Davies, Scrutiny Officer, on behalf of the Environment Scrutiny Committee.

Background Papers:

Report to Executive Board and Environment Scrutiny Committee – Wind Turbine Update.