

To: City Executive Board

Date: 15 October 2015

Report of: Housing Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee)

Title of Report: Arrangements to facilitate the fitting of solar panels on council-owned housing stock

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present recommendations from the Housing Panel on the Arrangements to facilitate the fitting of solar panels on council-owned housing stock decision

Key decision? No

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor Linda Smith

Executive lead member: Councillor Mike Rowley, Board Member for Housing

Policy Framework: Sustainability Strategy, Low Carbon Oxford, Housing Asset Management Strategy

Recommendation of the Housing Panel to the City Executive Board:

That the City Executive Board states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendation set out in the body of this report.

Introduction

1. The Housing Panel pre-scrutinised the Arrangements to facilitate the fitting of solar panels on council-owned housing stock decision at its public meeting on 8 October 2015. The Panel would like to thank Martin Shaw for presenting this report and answering questions.

Summary of the discussion

2. The Property Services Manager introduced the report which requests project approval to fit solar panels on some of the Council's housing stock. The Panel heard that feed in tariffs would reduce dramatically in the New Year but that the Low Carbon Hub was exploring ideas to make the best of the situation and find a viable model for proceeding with this scheme. The arrangements would need to be clear that any risk would be borne by the Hub. The Panel heard

that the proposals would not benefit the Council directly but would assist some Council tenants through reduced fuel bills and would contribute to the wider low carbon agenda.

3. The Panel noted regret that a previous scheme had been cancelled several years ago and that the current report set out a better approach to the fitting of solar panels on Council-owned housing stock. The Panel asked questions about timescales, tenants' consent, the financial model of the Hub and the Council's own financial investments in solar panels.
4. In response to a question, the Panel heard that some properties had been lined up and could potentially be fitted before the level of the feed in tariff was reduced.

Recommendation – That the City Council should make every effort to enter into a viable agreement with the Low Carbon Hub as soon as possible in order to maximise the available benefits of fitting solar panels on Council-owned housing stock.

Suggested CEB response provided by the Board Member for Housing

I agree with the recommendation and indeed officers are already looking at ways of working with the Low Carbon Hub to help install PV panels on Council homes.

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