

Draft Minute from Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee - 21 January 2019

6. PORTSOKEN COMMUNITY ENERGY PROPOSAL

Members received a briefing note which provided information on the proposal to establish the City of London's first community-owned solar power station in Portsoken Ward, on the Middlesex Street Estate.

Members noted that the proposal was being led by a group of Portsoken residents, working in partnership with Repowering London; a not-for-profit organisation with a strong track record of delivering five award winning community energy projects on social housing estates. Members noted that the partnership had successfully secured funding from the Mayor of London's 'London Community Energy Fund' and they were required to pre-register for the scheme before the 31st of March 2019. Members also received a presentation on the proposal, delivered by the Co-founder and CEO of Repowering.

During the presentation and questions, the following points were noted:

1. The panels would be fitted to roofs which are due to be resurfaced as part of the current Major Works Improvement Programme and, whilst the scheme could still go ahead, there would be cost implications if the solar panels were fitted ahead of the roof works. Furthermore, the issue of routine maintenance of the roofs would also need to be taken into consideration.
2. Members noted the approximate size of the solar panels and the feasibility study would confirm the actual number that could be installed.
3. The scheme would offer local employment opportunities both during installation and potentially for longer term appointments within the Co-op and/or on other projects.
4. There is potential for other financial support beyond the Mayor's fund; i.e. donations and carbon offset funding, along with the community share capital. The price of electricity is always rising but market forces would indicate exact prices.
5. There were some solar panels on Golden Lane's Community Centre and the payback period, when compared to double glazing, was very low.
6. Repowering used standard templates for leases with other local authorities, which were of similar long terms, negotiated to meet their circumstances. Members asked if the templates and heads of terms could be shared as part of the next report.
7. Portsoken Energy would generate the Co-op and formal service agreement. The Co-op would own the panels and have statutory responsibility for meter readings; billing etc, supported by Repowering.
8. The proposal should be presented to the City Corporation's Energy (Officer) Board and Members noted that, given its very high expenditure in this area, the

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City Corporation achieved very large economies of scale with current arrangements. However, given the scope and size of this project, it is unlikely to impact on the work of the Energy Board.

9. In previous projects, the majority of share offers had been for a minimum investment of £250.00, with a few contributing larger amounts. It was just £1.00 to join the Co-op but this would be for membership only with no return. The Co-op would have a governance structure and annual general meeting. Under Co-op rules, no individual could apply for more than a third of the total share value and all members would have equal status.
10. The schemes were marketed on social and environmental benefits, not financial. Whilst returns were not guaranteed, there would be provision every year for returning capital. Members would not be personally liable and the Co-op would be registered as a corporate entity, with an asset lock in the event of insolvency.
11. Shares were not transferable but are refundable and, in the event of death of a shareholder, they could appoint a nominee at the point of application. The funds were invested with the Co-op Bank, with a possibility of future investments in other trusted, ethical institutions. In order to protect those who needed to withdraw funds promptly, there would be no long-term, locked-in investments.
12. Whilst investments beyond the residents of an estate were welcome, internal targets were generally for 20% of an estate. Members noted that Vauxhall was at 25%.

In concluding, the Chairman acknowledged Members enthusiasm for this project as it promoted both renewable energy and the spirit of community involvement and partnership working. The Chairman thanked Repowering London for an exciting and innovative presentation.

In order to progress the proposal, Members and officers noted the deadline of the end of March 2019, for the works to be commissioned for March 2020. Officers would therefore need to be mindful of the various Committee cycles; likely to include the Energy Board, the Community and Children's Services Committee, Planning and Transportation Committee, Procurement Sub Committee, Policy and Resources Committee and possibly the Court of Common Council. The Chairman of the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee asked to see a progress report at the next meeting.

RESOLVED, that – the briefing note and plans for progressing the proposal be noted.