

**Wiltshire Council**

**Cabinet**

**14 July 2020**

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**Question from Bill Jarvis**

**Agenda Items 8 – Update on Councils Response to the Climate Emergency**

**To Cllr Richard Clewer, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Heritage, Arts & Tourism, Housing and Communities; and Cllr Pauline Church, Cabinet Member for Finance, Procurement and Commercial Investment;**

**Statement**

This item provides many examples of where you are working towards a greener future and there are many activities within the report that look extremely positive.

Of particular note are the new council housing proposals, the cycleway developments and rail infrastructure. Thank you for this.

Regarding that report, there are a number of issues that would benefit from some clarification however. I will highlight 3.

**Para 4, 45 and 49**

In item 4, you highlight a commitment made by the council to providing a Carbon/Renewables audit for the county and your intent to report against that baseline every 6 months.

In item 45 you state that your joint council effort will deliver a tool that measure **the council's** levels of carbon emissions

In item 49, you state that you are in discussion with Southampton University with a view to collaboration.

**Question 1**

Can you confirm that you will provide a baseline for the county and report against it

**Response**

Two initial baselines for the county were presented to [Cabinet](#) on 8 October 2019 (see paras 30-34). The first was developed using the SCATTER tool and the second was taken from the government's national statistics published by the Department for

Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. Both these baselines rely on data which is published annually and has a considerable time lag in its publication, therefore it is currently not feasible to report against them six monthly. We will report on them again in our next update report.

Although these initial baselines are far from perfect, they do give a good indication of the main sources of greenhouse gases in Wiltshire and can therefore help inform the key areas where action is required. It is our intention to refine these baselines, however due to the financial constraints the council is under, we need to balance this with the imperative to take meaningful action to tackle emissions.

## **Question 2**

Can you also confirm whether the collaboration with S'ton Uni will enable the baseline to be created. If not, how do you intend to address this issue?

## **Response**

We are exploring a number of areas for collaboration with Southampton University and will be able to update more at a future date.

## **Para 12 and 43 - Growing the economy: Highly skilled jobs (Employment) and working with partners**

**Para 12** highlights Penso Power's delivery of 100mw battery storage facility in the County and your working proactively with them.

Penso Power obtained land, applied for planning permission, financed (with partners), engaged contractors and suppliers for delivery, construction and operation and is carrying the usual commercial risks for such a project.

## **Question 3**

Please can you advise how you worked proactively with them to deliver all of this and what direct benefit to Wiltshire County there will be?

## **Response:**

Wiltshire Council's Inward Investment lead has an ongoing dialogue with Penso Power and the Department of International Trade who are very interested in this project. Prior to the pandemic there was talk of a ministerial visit to the site.

Wiltshire Council planners provided advice when needed and Penso fed back that the process of obtaining planning permission was well within their expectations.

The benefit to the local economy is mainly through the construction phase. At its peak, up to 100 contractors will be working on the site, many staying locally and contributing to the local economy. It is anticipated work will continue for a further 6-9 months which will include the installation of the extra 50MW of capacity. The principle benefit of sites such as this one is to ensure there is enough capacity in the National Grid during periods of peak demand as we move further from our reliance on fossil fuel electricity generation towards more sustainable forms of electricity generation.

#### **Question 4**

Using this and the recent South Somerset battery storage (where returns are forecast at between 7 and 12%) as examples, does your new company Stone Circle Energy group have any plans to provide similar facilities on land, such as council owned farms?

If innovative finance such as the new Community Municipal investment bond (being launched at present by West Berkshire Council) were used, it would give local people the opportunity to benefit from such green provision.

Additionally, making this site an energy park would enable solar, wind and hydrogen generation to be co-located and attract private companies, wider grant funding and probable institutional investors.

#### **Response:**

The Council will be pursuing a number of initiatives to support its aspiration to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030. Where projects will involve trading the Council will seek to support Stone Circle Energy company to undertake such activity as it does not have the statutory powers to trade itself.

#### **Para 52 and 53 - Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Climate Emergency Task Group)**

Reports and recommendation from the Task Group are still awaited.

#### **Question 5:**

When can we expect to see them and how is Cabinet going to address these recommendations in the light of the updating of the Business Plan?

#### **Response:**

The Global Warming & Climate Emergency Task Group has been looking at a wide range of issues and themes in relation to Wiltshire becoming carbon neutral by 2030. It has developed a long list of recommendations by pro-actively working with Council officers and external experts; helping to shape policy. Initial draft recommendations will be presented to a public meeting of the Environment Select Committee in the autumn; endorsed recommendations being referred to the Executive for response. Further recommendations will be available at a later date.