**Executive Member Report to the Council**
**29 November 2023**

**AGENDA ITEM 5(d)**

# CABINET MEMBER FOR CLIMATE CHANGE - COUNCILLOR JANE HUGO

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Portfolio areas of responsibility:

- Climate change
- Energy and environment
- Flood and water management
- Coastal defence schemes and sea water quality
- Strategic waste management
- Parks and green environment
- Life Events (including cemeteries and crematorium, registrars and Coroner's support)

## Introduction

The cabinet member will present the report to Council and report on any key issues.

## Theme 1 - Renewable energy

On 26 June 2019 the Council approved a Climate Change emergency declaration which aims to make the Council's activities net-zero carbon by 2030 and achieve 100% clean energy across the Council's full range of functions by 2030.

In October 2021 and April 2022, UK Government released the Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener and the British Energy Security Strategy. Both emphasised the need to accelerate deployment of renewable energy generation to put the UK on the path to zero and provide greater energy and price security. Energy markets have shown unprecedented price increases and volatility in 2022, with supply uncertainties and increased risk keeping prices above pre-pandemic levels. If the Council is to achieve its carbon emission targets, increasing the deployment of renewables is essential in tackling emissions and Blackpool is an excellent location to explore renewable power sources such as wind, tidal and solar.

With the sun providing enough daily energy to power the world 10,000 times over, solar power is a globally abundant resource. There is currently 14GW of solar capacity in the UK split between large scale projects to smaller scale rooftop solar. Officers are starting to deploy solar panels across the Council's estate, with the potential for an initial phase of roof mounted solar on a number of buildings including Palatine Leisure Centre, Moor Park Health and Leisure Centre, Starr Gate Tram Depot, Sandcastle and Layton Depot. Work will complete in the next few weeks to install solar power at the Winter Gardens, with panels capable of generating around 5% of the building's requirement, delivering a potential saving of £1.2 million over 25 years and likely to pay for the cost of installation in less than 4 years.

The review of assets also identified a fantastic and exciting opportunity which could make a significant contribution to Blackpool's renewable energy ambitions through the potential for a ground-based solar farm at Blackpool airport. The potential £14.2m scheme, which would not affect the operation of the airport, would generate some 18.7 million kilowatt hours of renewable electricity per annum, equivalent to the demand of 6,000 average UK homes or 75% of the Council's annual electricity requirement. The proposal is currently in detailed economic technical appraisal.

The UK has the best wind resource in Europe and work continues to review the Council's estate for locations to add to the Council's current turbines. Due to the urban makeup and health and safety constraints sites are limited but opportunities continue to be explored. The development of off shore wind farms locally could allow the Council to take renewable energy directly. Discussions are on-going with the Council's energy suppliers and the developers to understand the costs and supplier needs.

The UK is estimated to have around half of the potential wave and tidal resource in Europe and with one of the highest tidal ranges in the UK, the Fylde could be a suitable location. There is currently work ongoing to develop a scheme on the Fylde estuary, although projects have struggled due to the financial model in place for such schemes. Other projects under development and consideration include using heat from data centres in heat networks and ways of storing surplus energy in batteries to address "intermittency" (the change in the amount of power which can be produced by renewables due to changing weather conditions).

The Council has recently seen the deployment of its first low carbon/ Net zero heating retrofit project at the Grange community centre, comprising air source heat pump and roof mounted solar. The @thegrange renewables project is an excellent opportunity using renewable energy technologies in a community centre environment, reducing carbon dioxide emissions and energy costs, assisting the local community and putting the Council on the path to sustainable heating solutions and the decarbonisation of heat. The system is performing well and in the first 4 months of operation the solar system met the full electrical requirements of the building. The solar system should generate enough electricity to power the heating system over the year.

This model is now being deployed at the Shared Prosperity Fund funded Palatine Library – Eco Hub Project. Electricity North West has now confirmed the requirements for the heat pump power supply and work is due to get underway shortly.

## Theme 2 - Update on Electric Vehicle Charging

Although the UK Government has pushed back the ending of petrol and diesel car sales to 2035, the Zero Emission Vehicle mandate placed on car manufacturers still requires 80% of new vehicles sold by 2030 to be battery-powered electric vehicles. Sales and leases of pure electric vehicles in Blackpool remain comparatively low, with 574 registered in the town as at October 2023. This is mirrored by a low number of publicly-available charging facilities. Latest figures

show that there are only 22 public chargers per 100,000 people in the borough, with 76% of devices provided directly by the Council through Local Transport Plan funding.

In order to meet its targets, the UK Government has recognised the need to increase provision of charging facilities aimed at the domestic market. As a result, it has established the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure fund to provide facilities for people without off-street parking to charge their vehicles. The fund provides financial support to the Council so that staff can work with private charge point providers on providing more chargers locally. The majority of devices need to be "fast" chargers which replenish batteries over 4-8 hours, which is a similar speed to that achieved by domestic chargers and which are typically used overnight.

The Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure support body, working on behalf of the Office of Zero Emission Vehicles, has assessed Blackpool to be amongst the first group of Councils ready to progress their funding applications. Officers will now make a further submission by 30 November setting out the Council's plans for funding. Subject to approval, this could result in a contract being awarded to the successful charge point operator in September 2024.

At its meeting on 7 November 2023, Executive approved a submission based on an approach referred to as the "Residential Charging Sites" model. The key priorities of the model are:

- To deliver sufficient chargers which enable 100% of residents without off-street parking to access a charger within a 5 minute walk;
- In line with the consultation on the Council's Electric Vehicle Strategy, to minimise the cost of charging to users, including options such as discounted off-peak charging;
- To use existing car park sites where possible, starting with Council sites, and prioritising a rollout to places where there is evidence of a desire to adopt electric vehicles;
- To explore the use of carparks at other community facilities such as health facilities, schools, church and private car parks. These would be delivered through the appointed Charge Point Operator in discussion with the relevant organisation;
- To consider other options where existing car park sites cannot be obtained, such as: the use of rapid chargers at a preferential rate; ways of safely enabling charging over a footway; or promotion of a domestic charger-sharing scheme offered via various phone apps.

The Residential Charging Sites charging model is different to "on-street charging" models favoured by the Office of Zero Emission Vehicles, where chargers are provided outside houses between existing parking bays and spaces, on footways, or via street lights. Due to low electric vehicle take-up levels in Blackpool currently, and the parking issues this would cause in areas already at parking capacity, the Council intends to avoid providing on-street chargers wherever possible during the lifespan of the current Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy (2023-2027). Sites which may be considered for installations are ones where chargers could be installed without displacing any overnight residential parking – for example, where there are wide roads with residential properties on one side – but only where there is no other space available off-street. Whilst guidance suggests that the government is expecting to fund Councils to deliver an on-

street model, the approach currently represents the best balance between supporting the agenda and pragmatism that balances Blackpool residents' needs, including non-electric vehicle drivers.

Even without Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure funding, the Council expects the number of public chargers in Blackpool to pass 100 next year, mostly through Council provision but with some private installations. The funding would significantly increase the pace of delivery. The exact numbers of chargers to be provided will not be available until after the tender process, with the ability to meet the Council's target for provision a key criteria for the award of a contract. The Council is also keen to use the relationship with the appointed charge point operator to explore the delivery of more "rapid" charging sites (which can replenish batteries much more quickly than "fast" devices) in key locations in the town.

## General questions / comments

Councillors will have the opportunity to raise questions / comments on any matter in the Cabinet Member's portfolio.