

<b>JOINT MEETING OF THE SUSTAINABLE GROWTH &amp; ENVIRONMENT CAPITAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND THE SCRUTINY COMMISSION FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES</b>	<b>Agenda Item No. 4</b>
<b>2 NOVEMBER 2012</b>	<b>Public Report</b>

## Report of the Solicitor to the Council

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### DEVELOPMENT OF GROUND MOUNTED SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC PANELS (SOLAR FARMS) AND WIND TURBINES

#### 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The joint meeting is asked to consider and comment on the Cabinet’s report on the development of ground mounted solar photovoltaic panels (solar farms) and wind turbines prior to the Cabinet’s meeting on Monday 5 November 2012.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To consider and make any appropriate comments and recommendations to the Cabinet.

#### 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At its meeting on 10 July 2012, the Cabinet resolved to:
1. Approve the outline strategy for the development of renewable energy parks at the three council owned agricultural sites identified in para 4.11.1 of the report, to include Ground Mounted Solar PV (solar farms), wind turbines or other types of renewable energy schemes;
  2. Note that the delivery of the outline strategy for the above sites is subject to further due diligence and studies around planning, environmental, technical and financial issues;
  3. Delegate authority to the Executive Director – Strategic Resources in consultation with the Leader of the Council and/or Cabinet Member for Resources to:
    - (i) identify further sites for development in the vicinity of the three sites set out in para 4.11.1 of the report, and carry out appropriate project appraisal studies in relation to them, and if not already in Council ownership to negotiate the acquisition of those sites or interests in them, (subject to further decisions of cabinet or the relevant cabinet member to approve such acquisitions before any commitment is made, as set out in recommendation 4 below);
    - (ii) to award contracts in respect of all sites identified as suitable for renewable energy projects for project appraisal studies and associated professional support;
    - (iii) to extend the current contract with AECOM for project appraisal studies and other preparatory work, if required, (see para 4.7 of the report), as the current financial limit is unlikely to be sufficient to carry out all work preparatory to development on multiple sites;
  4. Note that subject to the outcome of the necessary studies and negotiations a further report will be brought back to Cabinet prior to submitting any planning applications and conclusion of negotiations; and
  5. Approve the use of the Invest to Save budget to deliver the strategy, as outlined in para 4.21 of the report, including the need to ensure updates are included in the next refresh of the MTFs as necessary.

3.2 At the full Council meeting on 10 October 2012, the following motion was passed:

That this Council:

1. Recognises that world is facing an urgent crisis caused by accelerating climate change and, that in the UK Climate Change Act requires our Government to meet ambitious and legally binding targets for reducing CO2 emissions;
2. Welcomes the Coalition Government's commitment to generating 15 % of the UK's energy from renewable sources by 2020, which will necessitate a large scale expansion of a range of renewable technologies including wind and solar energy;
3. Welcomes the Leader of the Council's stated ambition to make Peterborough self sufficient in energy production;
4. Recognises that use of agricultural land for renewable energy purposes will involve difficult decisions balancing different priorities relating to energy and food production; and
5. Requests that Cabinet in consultation with the Sustainable Growth and Environment Capital Scrutiny committee reviews its decision made on 10 July 2012 relating to the use of land on the farm estate for renewable energy purposes, looking in detail at each site proposed and its appropriateness taking into account all relevant factors and seeking to minimise any adverse impacts on those people currently farming the land.

3.3 Informal discussions have been held with members of the Sustainable Growth and Environment Capital Scrutiny Committee to discuss the best way to take the motion forward. Members of the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities also took part in the discussions as its Chairman, Councillor Over, was keen for rural issues not to be overlooked and wished for the Commission to be involved.

The outcome of the discussions was that this joint meeting of the two committees would be held to ensure that both had the same information and that no vital points were missed during scrutiny.

3.4 A copy of the Cabinet report is attached at Appendix 1.

#### **4. IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Any implications will be detailed within the Cabinet report.

#### **5. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

5.1 None