

**CABINET RESPONSE TO : CALLED-IN DECISION REFERRAL: WIND FARM
DEVELOPMENT ON COUNTY FARMS ESTATE**

To: Cabinet

Date: 25th October 2011

From: Nicholas Dawe, LGSS Director of Finance

Electoral division(s): Chatteris, Haddenham / Sutton (Covney), Norman Cross (Farcet) and Littleport

Forward Plan ref: Not applicable **Key decision:** No

Purpose: Cabinet response to the recommendations made by the Enterprise, Growth and Community Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee following the called in decision referral: Wind Farm development on the County Farms Estate.

Recommendation: Cabinet is recommended:

- a) To thank the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for its recommendations.
- b) To agree to reconfirm its original decision to defer wind farm developments on the County Farms Estate.
- c) To agree that the preparation of guidance for a case by case approach to single and small clusters of small turbines / wind farm proposals brought forward by County Council farm estate tenants should be delegated to the LGSS Director of Finance and the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance who will consult with the Cambridgeshire Local Planning Authorities.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Cabinet decision on the 6th September deferred implementation of the February 2011 Cabinet decision to progress with wind farm development on the Council's Farms Estate.
- 1.2 This decision was called in by Councillors Bell, Bourke and Whitebread for further consideration by the Enterprise, Growth, and Community Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.3 The Committee has made the following recommendations to Cabinet:

"That Cabinet should reconsider its decision to defer wind farm development and instead:

 - Assess potential wind farm developments on the County Farms Estate on a case by case basis.
 - Develop guidance to support decision making about wind farm developments on the County Farms Estate".

2. RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Cabinet recognise that wind turbine development can be an emotive issue and that facts are often disputed. Many of the proposed and existing windfarm developments are in the Fens where the sparser population means more space, but this space is filling up.
- 2.2 Most wind farm development has been by large developers but because of Feed in Tariffs (FIT's) more individual landowners are erecting smaller turbines singly or in groups of up to three either on farms or industrial units.
- 2.3 FIT's have created a commercial opportunity for rural businesses as utility companies are obliged by the Government to pay for electricity generated, even if used on the farm, in addition to any surplus energy sold to the grid. A 25m tall turbine with an 11kW capacity will also generate sufficient electricity for typical farm use.
- 2.4 Most of the local Planning Authorities have wind farm policy guidelines in place – Fenland, Hunts DC, or in preparation – East Cambs.
- 2.5 These consider amongst other things the cumulative impact of wind farm sites and consider single or small turbine groups to have less impact but generally make no comment regarding the size of turbines.
- 2.6 Large turbines are commonly 120m to 130m to the blade tip. Ely Cathedral is 80m tall. Recent Council tenant proposals have been for a 67m turbine at Chatteris and a cluster of three 15m turbines at Elm. Well known single turbines at Swaffham and Woodgreen are 43m tall. The turbine at the Smartlife centre, in Cambridge is approximately 12m tall.
- 2.7 Cabinet remain of the opinion that large scale wind farm developments should be deferred on the Council's Farms Estate.

- 2.8** A case by case approach is recommended for small scale developments of single or small clusters of small turbines within the framework provided by the Local Planning Authority wind farm policies.
- 2.9** The Cambridgeshire Renewables Infrastructure Framework (CRIF) project is looking in depth at the renewable and low carbon energy opportunities in Cambridgeshire to identify a menu of opportunities in the county to help plug the energy supply gap that is currently predicted for 2019 onwards. This will also inform the Council's approach.
- 2.10** Preparation of guidance (including a typically acceptable turbine height and local consultation arrangements) for a case by case approach will be delegated to the LGSS Director of Finance and the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance who will consult with the Cambridgeshire Local Planning Authorities.

3. ALIGNMENT WITH PRIORITIES AND WAYS OF WORKING

3.1 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people when they need it most

There are no significant implications for this priority.

3.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives in their communities

There are no significant implications for this priority

3.3 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all

There are no significant implications for this priority.

3.4 Ways of Working

There are no significant implications for this priority

4.0 SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Resource and Performance Implications

It is acknowledged that the potential income stream will be reduced by restricting the scale and number of potential turbines on the Council's property.

4.2 Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications

There are no significant implications for any of the prompt questions within this category.

4.3 Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no significant implications for any of the prompt questions within this category

4.4 Engagement and Consultation

There are no significant implications for any of the prompt questions within this category

Source Documents	Location
Scrutiny report included on this Cabinet agenda	Room 114