

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

meeting date: 28 MARCH 2023
title: SOLAR PANELS
submitted by: MARK BEVERIDGE, HEAD OF CULTURAL AND LEISURE SERVICES

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide Committee with a proposal for the installation of PV cells (solar panels) on to Council Buildings.
- 1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities
 - Community Objectives - To ensure a well-managed council providing efficient services, based on identified customer needs.
 - Corporate Priorities - To protect and enhance the existing environmental quality of our area.
 - Other Considerations – The climate change working group have considered this option and are in favour of such an approach.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council provides services from several buildings, some of which are significant consumers of power, both electricity and gas. Whilst the swimming pool and Council offices have some energy efficiency systems installed, no building has solar panels installed.
- 2.2 The use of solar panels is well established technology to help generate electricity for buildings to use, both to reduce the overall cost of operation and contribute to reducing a carbon footprint, because they help to reduce the amount of fossil fuels required.

3 ISSUES

- 3.1 The two buildings with the highest use of electricity are the Council Offices and Ribblesdale Pool. The next in line are the Council depot, platform gallery and the market offices. Though these other buildings are less viable given the likely investment and return. However, as part of the Councils' assessment of suitability, a return on investment will need to be carried out on these to verify their suitability or otherwise, this will also include the public toilets the Council operates.
- 3.2 The museum also has potential; however, it may be subject to planning issues given the proximity to the Castle.
- 3.3 The budget estimate for fitting solar panels to the Council Offices is £45,000 and £93,000 for the swimming pool, based on a price obtained in late 2022. A design and build project is envisaged for any installation. Both have an estimated return on investment time of 3 years together with significant reductions in CO2.
- 3.4 The Climate change working group have been circulated information about the proposal and asked for their support. An update will be provided at the meeting.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 Installation of solar panels for the Council Offices is a sensible and cost effective way of both reducing the cost of operation and the carbon footprint of the Council. Given that a study is planned for the pool, it may be sensible to await the outcome of that before deciding on an investment in panels for that building. However it will be investigated whether an installation of panels on that building could be incorporated in to any future development of the facility, allowing the Council to make an investment sooner and reap both the financial and environmental benefits from a pool installation.

5 RISK ASSESSMENT

- Resources – there is no specific budget for panels on any council building, however an investment in the Council offices and pool could be recovered over several years and therefore would be a candidate for the invest to save fund, which the Council has for this type of capital project. That budget is £250,000, with the savings from such investments being returned to the budget for future projects.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – there is a national framework agreement in place from which to source suppliers of solar panels. A design would need to be drawn up and planning permission sought for the installation.
- Political – none in the context of the report
- Reputation – The importance of reducing the use of fossil fuels is well known and the Council would be making an investment to help both this and the overall cost of operation of the Council offices.
- Equality and Diversity – none in the context of this report

6. RECOMMENDATION THAT COMMITTEE

- 6.1 Approve a scheme for the installation of solar panels on the Council Offices and pool if suitable.
- 6.2 Approve the installation cost be met from the Councils invest to save fund.

Mark Beveridge
Head of Cultural and Leisure Services

BACKGROUND PAPERS None
For further information please ask for Mark Beveridge 01200 425111