

Key Decision Required:	No	In the Forward Plan:	No
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CABINET

4 JULY 2014

REFERENCE FROM CORPORATE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

A.1 SOLAR FARMS AND THE EMERGING LOCAL PLAN

(Report prepared by Jon Barber)

BACKGROUND

At its meeting held on 13 May 2014, the Rural Projects Panel discussed the issue of solar farms within the context of the emerging Local Plan and decided to request that the Corporate Management Committee comment to Cabinet and the Local Plan Committee that this Council should be taking a robust, comprehensive approach to renewable energy within the emerging Local Plan and, in particular, in pursuit of the following principles in relation to solar farms:

- (1) That solar farms should always be preferred on 'brownfield' or poor quality land and should only be permitted on 'best value' (i.e. Grade 1, 2 or 3a) land if the applicant has clearly demonstrated that a sequential test has been followed;
- (2) That Tendring District Council and Essex County Council should encourage applications for solar farms on their own estates, on industrial areas and on public utility owned land; and
- (3) That there should be guidance on preventing 'clustering' of solar farms in rural parishes or in close proximity to private property not part of the application.

The Corporate Management Committee at its meeting held on 16 June 2014 considered that request.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS / COMMENTS TO CABINET

Cabinet is now asked to consider the recommendations of the Corporate Management Committee and determine its response if any:

It is **RECOMMENDED** to **CABINET** that Cabinet and the Local Plan Committee ensure that this Council takes a robust, comprehensive approach to renewable energy within the emerging Local Plan and, in particular, in pursuit of the following principles in relation to solar farms:

- (1) That solar farms should always be preferred on 'brownfield' or poor quality land and should only be permitted on 'best value' (i.e. Grade 1, 2 or 3a) land if the applicant has clearly demonstrated that a sequential test has been followed;
- (2) That Tendring District Council and Essex County Council should encourage applications for solar farms on their own estates, on industrial areas and on public utility owned land; and

- (3) That there should be guidance on preventing 'clustering' of solar farms in rural parishes or in close proximity to private property not part of the application and that such developments be at least a minimum of 250m from any dwelling or property.

PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S COMMENTS / RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET

Comments will be provided directly at the meeting.

APPENDICES

Appendix – Note 7 of the meeting of the Rural Projects Panel held on 13 May 2014.

APPENDIX

HELD ON 13 MAY 2014 AT 7.00 P.M. IN ROOM 34, COUNCIL OFFICES, WEELEY

Present: Councillors Nicholls (Chairman), V E Guglielmi, Powell, Simons, and Mr Robert Taylor (Chairman of the Tendring District Association of Local Councils).

Also Present: Councillor Patten (item 7) and Councillor Terry Cuthbert (Vice-Chairman of Frating Parish Council) (items 5 and 6).

In Attendance: Business Manager (Jon Barber), Research and Projects Officer (Elizabeth Ridout) and Senior Democratic Services Officer (Ian Ford).

7. SOLAR FARMS – POLICY UPDATE

The Panel received a detailed briefing note prepared on behalf of the Chairman of the Panel which gave a policy update on the principle of development (including the Government's aspirations contained in the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy PLA5 of the emerging Tendring District Local Plan Proposed Submission Draft [November 2012]) and the renewable energy and planning policy context.

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Councillor Patten and invited him to address the Panel on his concerns in respect of the growing number of planning applications for large-scale solar energy farms on green-field sites in rural parishes and the need for Tendring District Council to take some action to address this.

Following discussion by the Panel the following action was agreed:

Action Point: That this Panel requests the Corporate Management Committee to comment to Cabinet and the Local Plan Committee that this Council should be taking a robust, comprehensive approach to renewable energy within the emerging Local Plan and, in particular, in pursuit of the following principles in relation to solar farms:

- (1) That solar farms should always be preferred on 'brownfield' or poor quality land and should only be permitted on 'best value' (i.e. Grade 1, 2 or 3a) land if the applicant has clearly demonstrated that a sequential test has been followed;
- (2) That Tendring District Council and Essex County Council should encourage applications for solar farms on their own estates, on industrial areas and on public utility owned land; and
- (3) That there should be guidance on preventing 'clustering' of solar farms in rural parishes or in close proximity to private property not part of the application.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Patten for his attendance.