



ADUR & WORTHING  
COUNCILS

Adur District Council Leader  
Worthing Borough Council Leader  
Date: 31 July 2020  
Decision Ref. JAW/007/20-21  
Decision to be taken on or after  
10 August 2020

Key Decision: No

Ward(s) Affected: All

## **Solar Together Sussex Project - supporting local residents to decarbonise their homes**

### **Report by the Director for Digital & Resources**

#### **Executive Summary**

##### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1. This report seeks approval to support the Solar Together Sussex programme in collaboration with West Sussex County Council, iChoosr and other Sussex local authorities.
- 1.2. Solar Together Sussex will be a Sussex wide, not for profit, solar photovoltaic (PV) group buying scheme to enable local residents to buy high quality, quality assured, discount rate solar PV for their homes. Schemes have been successfully delivered in other parts of England, including London, Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex, saving thousands of tonnes of carbon.
- 1.3. The councils committed in January 2019 to achieving 100% clean energy by 2050 under the UK100 Cities Pledge and declared Climate Emergency in July 2019. Carbon emissions from homes are the single largest source of carbon emissions in Adur and Worthing, representing 38% CO2 annually.
- 1.4. Solar Together Sussex will commence summer 2020, delivering hundreds of domestic PV installations from December 2020-May 2021. The scheme will be open to all local homeowners and provide them with the confidence to proceed with a quality assured product at reduced cost whilst reducing their energy bills and home carbon footprint.

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. That members give:
  - 2.1.1. Approval to collaborate with West Sussex Council and iChoosr on the Solar Together Sussex Programme;
  - 2.1.2. Approval to enter into the Collaboration Agreement with West Sussex County Council (delegated to the Director of Digital & Resources);
  - 2.1.3. Approval to send a direct mail to residents on the Solar Together programme (example and proposed letter attached at appendix 1 and 2);
  - 2.1.4. Approval for the Leaders of Worthing Borough and Adur District Council to send direct mail letters in their names; and
  - 2.1.5. Approval to use the Council logo in the direct mail letters.
- 2.2. That members note the use of an estimated £5K budget for direct mailouts from within existing budgetary provision.

## **3. Context**

- 3.1. In January 2019, Adur District and Worthing Borough Council pledged to achieve 100% clean energy in Adur and Worthing by 2050. To achieve 100% clean energy, or carbon neutrality, Adur & Worthing will need to be supplied by a range of clean and renewable energy sources. The councils have delivered clean energy on their own estate through the installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) panels on the roofs of Portland House (40kW), the Shoreham Centre (20kW) and supporting installation on Splashpoint Leisure Centre (100kW).
- 3.2. In Adur and Worthing the greatest proportion of carbon emissions are associated with energy used in homes (38% or 260 kilo tonnes annually).
- 3.3. This report presents the opportunity for the councils to assist local residents to install solar PV<sup>1</sup> on the roofs of their own homes through the 'Solar Together' project, a solar group buying approach. This would help residents afford and install renewable energy technology to reduce energy bills, provide free renewable energy for home use, reduce home carbon emissions and assist in the decarbonisation of the national grid. The purchase of battery storage is

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<sup>1</sup> More information on Domestic Solar PV is available on the [Energy Saving Trust website](#).

also available through the scheme to enable homeowners to use a greater proportion of the generated renewable electricity.

- 3.4. The development of the scheme has been delayed due to COVID pandemic and West Sussex now aims to progress quickly in time for an autumn auction.
- 3.5. The [Solar Together programme](#) is a unique offer, managed by [iChoosr](#) and with local council backing, helps residents to access a quality assured renewable energy investment at a discounted rate enabled through a bulk buying contract. The scheme is delivered on a not for profit basis.
- 3.6. Solar Together schemes have been successfully delivered in Norfolk, Suffolk, London and Essex. More recently schemes have been set up in Devon, Manchester, Hampshire and Kent. Through these schemes, from 2018-19, 17,000 solar panels have been installed, delivering 5MW of clean zero carbon electricity, and an estimated 35,464 tonnes of lifetime CO2 emissions reduction.
- 3.7. iChoosr were invited by Adur & Worthing Councils in 2019 to introduce the Solar Together scheme at Worthing Town Hall, to a group of officers working across East and West Sussex and Brighton & Hove on the Climate Emergency agenda. Following this meeting, West Sussex County Council offered to lead a Sussex wide Solar Together scheme under the Your Energy Sussex Partnership ([YES](#)).
- 3.8. The programme will be called **Solar Together Sussex**. Other councils that have confirmed intention to participate in the scheme include: Arun DC, Brighton & Hove CC, Chichester DC, Crawley BC, Eastbourne BC, Horsham DC, Lewes DC, Rother DC, Wealden DC.
- 3.9. The delivery of this programme aligns with the following council commitments:

Adopted council commitments		
Platforms for our Places (2019) Platform 3 – Tackling Climate Change and Supporting our Natural Environment	3.3 Transitioning to clean, smart, secure and affordable energy	3.3.2 Investigate options for a solar farm, and additional options for widespread solar PV, including a resident group-buying programme
Sustainable AW Refresh 2019	Transitioning to Clean Secure affordable energy	Deliver a solar PV programme to residents in partnership with WSCC, YES, iChoosr and county LAs.

#### 4. The Solar Together Programme

- 4.1. The Scheme will be set up and managed by iChoosr through an online platform, allowing 3rd party suppliers to bid for a contract for the installation and provision of solar PV and battery storage equipment ordered by Residents.
- 4.2. The targets for the Solar Together Sussex programme are to:
- 4.2.1. send a minimum of 100,000 direct mails to residents in Sussex
  - 4.2.2. receive a minimum of 4,000 registrations in response to the mailout and promotion by participating councils
  - 4.2.3. achieve a minimum of 800 installations
  - 4.2.4. achieve a minimum of 793 tonnes carbon reduction in year one.
- 4.3. The indicative timeline for the Solar Together Sussex is as follows :

Indicative timeline for the Solar Together Sussex programme	
August	All participating councils sign the Inter Authority Collaboration Agreement with West Sussex County Council
	West Sussex CC sign a contract with iChoosr for the Sussex Solar Together programme.
	Communications Strategy agreed. Local branding to be added to a Sussex Solar Together website, posters, leaflets etc.
	Direct Mail letters from all councils finalised (see appendix 1 for an example letter and appendix 2 for proposed text)
September	Direct Mail letters printed, and sent out (by WSCC). These will contain logos of both the local council and the county council. They will be signed by a member or officer of the local council with text agreed by them.
	All councils promote the programme in their area
October	Decision phase by customer's 6 week period from late October to early December
December	Installations from mid December to end May 2021

- 4.4. Further programmes could follow the initial autumn 2020 campaign, likely to be at 6 monthly intervals.
- 4.5. The customer journey is described in the 'How it Works' leaflet targeted at residents is (example attached at appendix 3).

<b>Customer Journey</b>	
Registration	By the customer with no obligation to buy
Auction	Undertaken by iChoosr where solar installers bid for the quality insured installation contract
Personal Recommendation	An initial draft quote for the installation of solar PV and/or battery storage
Decision to proceed	Within 6 weeks of receiving the recommendation
Provision of deposit	By customer: £150 conditionally refundable
Survey	Survey of the roof for PV installations. Assessment of customer electricity usage patterns for battery storage.
Installation	
Invoice	Minus deposit
Savings on electricity bills begin	Carbon reductions also begin

4.6.

## **5. Issues for consideration**

5.1. The Solar Together Programme is a unique offer. There is no equivalent solar group buying offering working with local authorities. Adur District and Worthing Borough Councils would not be able to deliver their own version of the programme because the scale of 800 installations required by iChoosr could not be achieved in one scheme.

## **6. Engagement and Communication**

6.1. Consultation has been undertaken with legal and procurement teams, in particular on the Inter Authority Agreement Collaboration document. Consultation has also been undertaken with Communications Team.

6.2. Consultation with legal teams across the Sussex wide Districts, Boroughs, Unitary and County Councils has been undertaken by the County Council.

6.3. If the Solar Together programme goes ahead, Direct Mails will be sent out to prospective residents based on regional demographic data accessed through the 'Mosaic' database. An example of a Direct mail letter from Swale Borough Council is included at Appendix 1 and proposed text at appendix 2.

- 6.4. The offer will be promoted to all residents via the councils communication channels including social media, in order that any private home owning residents can benefit from the programme.

## **7. Financial Implications**

- 7.1. If approved, the cost of the direct mailout will be paid by the District and Borough Councils initially through existing budgets. The costs will be 45p per letter and will be sent out to approximately  $\frac{1}{3}$  of owner occupiers in the District and Borough. This is expected to be up £11,750.
- 7.2. For every installation completed each participating council will receive a minimum of £25 commission until the costs of the direct mail have been repaid. After this threshold, the commission will be paid into the Your Energy Sussex Fuel Poverty Fund operated by the YES Partnership Board to benefit vulnerable householders struggling to pay their energy bills.

## **8. Legal Implications**

- 8.1. Under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council has the power to do anything that is calculated to facilitate, or which is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions.
- 8.2. Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 provides a Local Authority to do anything that individuals generally may do (subject to any current restrictions or limitations prescribed in existing legislation).
- 8.3. Section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 1999 (LGA 1999) contains a general duty on a best value authority to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 8.4. The Councils intend to enter into a collaboration agreement, for which West Sussex County Council who has been acting at the lead authority in this project and they have established and approved through their governance arrangements that a direct arrangement may be made with ichoosr.
- 8.5. The Council who is joining WSCC's collaboration agreement may rely on the governance process that WSCC has carried out, or alternatively it might be viewed that Adur and Worthing are only facilitating the delivery of solar panels to the public and is not requiring ichoosr to deliver services or works on behalf of the Council then this contract does not create a Public Service or Works

contract. In this alternative, providing that the Council is not entrusting the delivery of the works or services it would otherwise be wanting to provide itself, the arrangement with iChoosr is also not a concessionary arrangement.

### **Background Papers**

- [Climate Emergency ... Becoming Carbon Neutral by 2030](#). Item 10 Report to JSC July 2019
- [Platforms for our Places - Going Further \(2020-2022\): Unlocking the Power of People, Communities and our Local Geographies](#) JSC December 2019
- [SustainableAW Refresh - increasing ambition and deepening engagement](#) JSC December 2019

### **Officer Contact Details:-**

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## **Sustainability & Risk Assessment**

### **1. Economic**

- This scheme offers a quality assured discount rate to householders to install solar panels and battery storage under a not for profit scheme. It therefore offers an affordable route to decarbonize domestic emissions.

### **2. Social**

#### **2.1 Social Value**

- There are opportunities for local installers to bid into the installation contract (managed by iChoosr under contract to West Sussex County Council). Surplus commission will be paid to the YES Fuel Poverty Fund to support local residents struggling to pay energy bills.

#### **2.2 Equality Issues**

- The impacts of climate change are predicted to impact on all communities, but the greatest impact is predicted to impact the most vulnerable communities. This scheme aims to mitigate the impacts of climate change.
- Not all communities will be able to afford to participate in Solar Together Sussex. However fuel poor households may be able to benefit from the increased funds to the YES Fuel Poverty Fund as a result of this scheme.

#### **2.3 Community Safety Issues (Section 17)**

- Matter considered and no issues identified

#### **2.4 Human Rights Issues**

- The impacts of climate change are predicted to impact on all communities, but the greatest impact is predicted to impact the most vulnerable communities. This scheme aims to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

### **3. Environmental**

- The scheme has potential to reduce carbon emissions associated with domestic energy use and thereby mitigate the impacts of climate change.

### **4. Governance**

- Delivering the scheme meets commitments in Platforms for Our Places and SustainableAW and helps to achieve carbon targets made under the Climate Emergency Declaration.