

# Agenda Item 46

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Barkham Solar Farm Update</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	Climate Emergency Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 29 February 2024
<b>WARD</b>	Barkham;
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	Deputy Chief Executive - Graham Ebers

## **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

Climate Emergency Overview and Scrutiny Committee have requested an update on the business case and progress of the Barkham Solar Farm.

At its meeting on 14 March 2024, the Executive will consider a report providing a Progress and Business Case update on the project.

A draft of the 14 March Executive report is appended to this covering report. Please note that the Executive report will be inclusive of financial information to be considered in Part 2 papers. That financial information has also been included in the Part 2 information submitted with this report.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

To note the update on the business case and progress on the delivery of the Barkham Solar Farm.

## SUMMARY OF REPORT

The attached Executive report is in two sections:

- Part 1 – Provides a progress update on the delivery of the solar farm and a high level summary of the business case update
- Part 2 – Provides detailed financial information which is confidential by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Members are requested to scrutinise the attached report and Part 2 information and make recommendations, as appropriate, to the Executive. Any recommendations from the Committee will be reported to the Executive at its meeting on 14 March 2024.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

***The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are optimised and are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.***

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£285k	Yes	Capital
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£2m	Yes	Capital
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£18m	Yes	Capital

### **Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision**

The financial business case for the solar farm was considered and approved by Executive in July 2021 and by Full Council in September 2021.

The MTFP identifies an equalised net surplus, after capital financing costs, of circa £1m per annum from the Barkham Solar Farm. The project is forecasted to exceed this provision.

### **Cross-Council Implications** (how does this decision impact on other Council services, including properties and priorities?)

The net income from the Solar Farm will be introduced into the Council's annual budget using an equalisation reserve.

### **Public Sector Equality Duty**

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken. The Initial Impact Assessment did not identify any potentially negative impacts upon persons with protected characteristics.

**Climate Emergency – *This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030***

Generation of renewable energy through investment in solar farms is identified as a key priority under the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP). The delivery of the Barkham Solar Farm is a specific target identified therein.

**Reasons for considering the report in Part 2**

By Virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972:

Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

**List of Background Papers**

Draft Executive Report

Part 2 – Barkham Solar Farm Capital Costs (Jan 2024)

Part 2 – Barkham Solar Farm General Fund Income and Expenditure (Jan 2024)

Part 2 – Notes and Assumptions

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