

Statement: CS19.01

Cabinet – 2 November 2021

Re: Agenda item 19 - Ambition Community Energy Wind turbine

Statement submitted by: Councillor Martin Fodor

I'd like to support the decision of Cabinet to let Bristol City Council owned land in Avonmouth to Ambition Community Energy to facilitate the development of their proposed single wind turbine.

This is a valuable community-led energy project typical of the innovation and commitment that has been developing in the city over the last decade or more. Bristol Energy Network is recognised nationally and beyond for its achievements in community energy [including at the forthcoming COP26 summit as part of a national delegation] and the projects in Lawrence Weston including the solar farm are high among the innovations in place and underway across the city. It's notable too how the development of energy projects emerged from the commitment to tackling the underlying issues in the community like fuel poverty, need for employment and regeneration.

While Cabinet is asked to recognise and approve that the letting at less than market rent I'd like to stress how much additional community value there will be – the social and environmental, plus economic benefits of the project must far outweigh the potential extra monetary value to the council. Best value is about much more than the monetary value. I'm glad that officers have worked with the group to help them get this far.

As the report makes clear this is a long term project. The 5 year lead in time shows the determination of the community - largely volunteers – to resolving the issues that have emerged. Also the funding matrix shows just how complicated putting together the supporting package of grants and loan finance has been. It's an incredible achievement, frankly! Many groups might have given up along the way but here we can celebrate the fact this should now be going ahead. The turbine may also directly help the council's carbon neutrality target by supplying renewable electricity to the estate.

So I'd like to encourage to cabinet to consider how well community led projects like this meet our goals and fit in to the corporate strategy of empowering local action, while sharing countless social, economic and environmental benefits in ways that top down projects may not. Therefore I'd like to suggest there should be an explicit commitment to working with groups to develop local solutions that are also delivering our city targets and global goals. I'd like to see the council promising to be an enabler of community led projects and committed to helping them finding a way through the tricky issues in as supportive way as possible. This partnership should be endorsed as not only a part of our corporate commitment to social value while facilitating a just transition for the city but recognised as a large part of the solution. The Bristol Community Strategy for Energy* illustrates how many benefits we can gain from helping strengthen and expanding this sector.

Martin Fodor
Redland Ward Green Party Councillor
Green Shadow lead for Waste and Energy

*The Bristol Community Strategy for Energy 2013 diagram:

The Bristol Community Strategy for Energy

