

HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 13 September 2021

Title: Burwell Hall - Replacement Heating System

Contact Officer: Project Officer - Nicky Cayley

Background

Burwell Hall is currently served by a gas boiler which heats both the building and provides hot water. The boiler is coming to the end of its life and spare parts are not available. In the light of this and the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency, Officers have been exploring renewable/green energy solutions to reduce the Council's carbon footprint and provide a reliable replacement for the gas boiler.

Current Situation

The Project Officer contacted the Climate Action Delivery Manager and the Energy Insights Manager at Oxfordshire County Council. She had an in-depth discussion with the former who explained that the County was not using Ground Source Heat Pumps due to the huge expense of installation. This concurred with what Town Council Officers had established during their research. The County is retrofitting buildings such as schools and libraries with Air Source Heat Pumps and backing these up with boilers. The Climate Action Delivery Manager advised that whilst current funding sources were not open, there would be a new stream of funding coming along at some point this year/next year. However, in order to stand any chance of success in a bid for funding (bearing in mind that the funding will be hugely oversubscribed), the Town Council would need a feasibility study and business case.

With this in mind, the Project Officer began researching how this could be done. She got in touch with Energy Solutions Oxfordshire (ESOx), a not-for-profit organisation that works in association with Oxford Brookes University. Its aim is to make it simple for local businesses to make energy improvements to their premises, decarbonising Oxfordshire's building stock and accelerating the clean energy transition.

After initial discussions with ESOx's Business Development Manager, explaining the requirements for Burwell Hall, the Project Officer sent over a year's worth of energy bills from the last year of operation "pre-Covid" (2019). ESOx has now returned a free -of-charge desktop assessment which is attached to this report. Members will note that at this early stage, the indication is that air source heating would be a good option for the building, with the possibility of adding solar panels.

The next step offered by ESOx would be to commission it to visit the hall and provide a full feasibility study. This would enable the Council to have confidence that any decision it makes regarding replacing the boiler is the best option for the hall, the environment, and its users and also would put it in a good position to bid for the funding when it comes on stream.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

By replacing the gas boiler with a green energy solution, the Council would be making a significant step towards its goal of becoming carbon neutral. If the project is successful, the Council may wish to roll it out to its other building stock.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

If the Council chooses to go ahead with a feasibility study, the risk of making an ill-judged decision on this important issue would be reduced as it will be provided with advice by professionals with significant experience in the industry who understand that the Council's aim is to move to cleaner energy provision.

The ESOx report is designed to set out practical steps towards executing on specific projects, containing further analysis of the data already provided and what is gathered on site, and consequently more specific costs applied to what would be a Return-on-Investment estimation for the different projects e.g. Air Source Heat Pumps, PV etc.

The study is part of a process of support which would help the Council get to deployment of solutions.

Financial implications

Members will note that any change to the energy provision for the building is unlikely to provide any financial benefit. The cost of commissioning a feasibility study from ESOx is £1,500.

The Project Officer has looked into other organisations that offer this service, but ESOx is a not-for-profit organisation whilst other services are either commercial or attached to companies wishing to sell their products and therefore not independent.

This will need to be funded from the budget set aside for the replacement heating system – 4903/800, which is £30,000.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

1. To commission ESOx to carry out a feasibility study for Burwell Hall, for a new heating/hot water system that reduces its carbon footprint and use of fossil fuels, at a cost of £1,500.