

Bath & North East Somerset Council

DECISION MAKER:	Cllr Sarah Warren, Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency and Sustainable Travel	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	On or after 22nd March 2025	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 3560
TITLE:	Renewal of Keynsham Community Energy Cooperation Agreement	
WARD:	Keynsham Area wards: Keynsham North, Keynsham South, Keynsham East, Farmborough, Publow and Whitchurch, Saltford as per the Connecting Communities Keynsham area.	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appendix 1: Keynsham Community Energy Cooperation Agreement		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 To renew the Council's Cooperation Agreement with Keynsham Community Energy (KCE), using as a template the existing Cooperation Agreement with Bath & West Community Energy (BWCE) (2023-2028). KCE is a local social enterprise which aims to develop renewable energy and energy efficiency projects in the Keynsham area. KCE will retain the economic benefits of renewable energy in the local area and involve communities in their energy projects.
- 1.2 The Cooperation Agreement creates a framework for the Council to support and work with KCE on projects that help to achieve the Council's aims to reduce carbon emissions and increase local resilience.
- 1.3 The previous Cooperation Agreement with KCE lapsed in 2018; however, the Council has continued to work with KCE to identify renewable energy projects.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 The Cabinet Member is asked to agree to enter into a renewed Cooperation Agreement with KCE for five years, from 2025 to 2030.

3 THE REPORT

- 3.1 **Meeting our strategic aims:** The Council has a pivotal role in tackling climate change by reducing carbon emissions in the district. The Council has an ambition for BANES to be net zero by 2030, and to facilitate generation of 300MW renewable energy in BANES by 2030.
- 3.2 Our work with KCE through a Cooperation Agreement strengthens our position as a national leader in supporting community energy. It provides a vehicle for partnership working and enables a community group to support delivery of the Council's objectives.
- 3.3 **The Cooperation Agreement:** The template for the KCE Cooperation Agreement is the Bath & West Community Energy (BWCE) Cooperation Agreement which was adopted in 2011 and renewed in 2014 and 2023. The BWCE Cooperation Agreement has been recognised as a pioneering way for local authorities to work in partnership and has since been adopted by other Councils to support community energy.
- 3.4 The Cooperation Agreement has been instrumental to BWCE's success, providing them with their first project, the installation of solar panels on the roofs of six B&NES schools. Since then, BWCE has raised over £24m to invest in renewable energy projects and reinvested £425,000 in community projects.
- 3.5 The cooperation with Keynsham Community Energy gives KCE the same support provided to BWCE, creating a level playing field between local community energy organisations.
- 3.6 The KCE Cooperation Agreement would mean that the Council and KCE would agree to work together to identify and bring forward energy projects in Keynsham. The Cooperation Agreement attached is largely the same as the BWCE Agreement, with revisions to reflect the smaller area covered by KCE.
- 3.7 **Keynsham Community Energy:** KCE is unique in the Keynsham area, as a not-for-profit organisation set up by local people. KCE will keep the majority of the economic benefits in the area, through a local share-ownership model and importantly, the reinvestment of surplus revenues into the KCE Community Fund.
- 3.8 KCE, like BWCE, are looking to install their first solar PV array on a project with Council involvement; the Council is currently working with KCE on the feasibility of a solar project on Keynsham Leisure Centre.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 **Sustainability:** As set out in the report, the KCE Cooperation Agreement is part of the Council's strategic response to climate change. It will facilitate the Council's commitment in the Climate Emergency Strategy to provide the leadership to reduce carbon emissions across BANES to net zero by 2030, and to meet the Council's target to facilitate 100MW of renewable energy in BANES by 2027.
- 4.2 **Equality:** An Equality Impact Assessment for the KCE Cooperation Agreement has not raised equality issues. Support will be provided for KCE to take equality

into account in their overall approach and assess individual projects for equality impacts.

- 4.3 **Legal power:** The legal power to work with KCE is enshrined under section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 which gives B&NES the power to do anything which it considers is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of its area. This legal power was strengthened by Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 which grants local authorities a general power of competence to do anything which individuals may generally do. KCE's work to mitigate climate change contributes to meeting UK government's legally binding commitment to Net Zero.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 5.1 The Cooperation Agreement contains no financial or property obligations, stating only that the Council and KCE may work together to investigate the potential for funding mechanisms or projects on Council property, subject to a separate decision-making process in each case.
- 5.2 The Cooperation Agreement will require a limited amount of officer time from the Sustainable Economy service, resourced within existing budgets and staff capacity. Ad-hoc support will be required from the Council's property team where projects are considered on the Council's estate.
- 5.3 For individual projects the Council will need to determine whether activity can be resourced within its existing capacity or whether costs for Council officer resource will need to be built into project budgets.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

7 EQUALITIES

- 7.1 A new EIA has not been undertaken as this was conducted previously for both BWCE and KCE agreements, and the terms have not changed.

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

- 8.1 The role of the cooperation agreement is to enable and accelerate renewable energy projects in BANES, which is one of four critical actions to address climate change set out in the Climate Emergency Strategy.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 9.1 The Council has its own rooftop solar programme and has delivered many projects itself where the energy cost saving can be used to repay the upfront investment. However, where there is an opportunity to support community ownership and partnership with local communities, the Council will consider this.
- 9.2 Working with commercial companies to deliver similar projects: In this case the profits from energy projects are not reinvested locally, creating less value for the area. The social benefits of local ownership of energy, community involvement in

projects and the development of a local low carbon supply chain would not be as fully realised.

9.3 Working with organisations that are similar to KCE: We have not found any other local organisations who can provide the same benefits as KCE in the Keynsham area, of being non-profit, reinvesting revenues into a community fund and being owned by local people via community share offers.

9.4 The only organisation that could operate in the Keynsham area and provide similar benefits is BWCE itself. However, this would miss the opportunity for greater local engagement through KCE's connection to their area, and to create more capacity within the district in the form of another local energy enterprise. BWCE fully supports KCE and the principle of operating at the most local level, and is providing support to KCE for their first project.

9.5 As with the original BWCE Agreement, the KCE Cooperation Agreement is not an exclusive agreement, and the Council can choose to pursue other options should it be in its interests to do so and would positively consider any other organisation's proposals that achieved the same aims.

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 Legal Services have advised that there are no issues with the KCE Cooperation Agreement given that it follows the same format as the previous agreement and the existing BWCE Cooperation Agreement.

10.2 The Cooperation Agreement has no costs attached to it and therefore no budget implications

10.3 The original BWCE consultation was formulated following extensive consultation with the Procurement team.

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Background papers	None
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