





# Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

<b>Report for:</b>	Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee
<b>Title of report:</b>	Solar Together Hertfordshire
<b>Date:</b>	4 December 2024
<b>Report on behalf of:</b>	Councillor Caroline Smith-Wright, Portfolio Holder for Climate and Ecological Emergency
<b>Part:</b>	I
<b>If Part II, reason:</b>	N/A
<b>Appendices:</b>	None
<b>Background papers:</b>	
<b>Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:</b>	CEE – Climate and Ecological Emergency DBC – Dacorum Borough Council HCCSP – Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership HGC – Hemel Garden Communities SLT – Strategic Leadership Team

**Report Author / Responsible Officer**

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<b>Corporate Priorities</b>	<b>Sustainable future: Take action on the Climate and Ecological Emergency</b>  <b>Homes to be proud of: Enable well-maintained and affordable homes, where people want to live</b>
<b>Wards affected</b>	All

<b>Purpose of the report:</b>	1. To inform SPAEOSC Solar Together Hertfordshire and seek approval to progress with the third cohort.
<b>Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):</b>	1. That SPAEOSC support the recommendation to Cabinet to approve progression with the third round of Solar Together Hertfordshire bulk-buy scheme in current contract with iChoosr.
<b>Period for post policy/project review:</b>	N/A

## 1. Introduction/Background:

- 1.1 In 2022, DBC entered a 4-year contract with the scheme provider (iChoosr) to proceed with the delivery of Hertfordshire-wide 'Solar Bulk Buy Scheme'. The scheme enables Hertfordshire local authorities to assist residents to benefit from a solar bulk-buy scheme. It allows homeowners to purchase solar PV panels at a discounted market rate and accelerate delivery of the respective Local Authority's carbon emissions targets.
- 1.2 DBC lead on this, due to the contractual relationship with iChoosr. Memorandums of Understanding are in place between DBC and the respective HCCSP partner authorities. Dacorum engages with partner authorities through HCCSP.
- 1.3 In June 2023, HCCSP members were presented with an initial evaluation of the Autumn 2022 cohort, along with information for how partner authorities could join an Autumn 2023 cohort.
- 1.4 All 10 district and borough councils in Hertfordshire agreed to participate in the Autumn 2023 cohort.
- 1.5 The End of Project Report 2023/24 details the impact of Solar Together on Hertfordshire, breaking down engagement and impact by district and by building use (domestic or commercial).
- 1.6 In summary, Solar Together Hertfordshire 2023/24 was considered a success, although not with such significant installations as the first cohort (this pattern reflected national trends).
- 1.7 Solar Together Hertfordshire 2023/24 has delivered a total of 5,434 registrations, from 100,899 letters sent, leading to a total of 537 household installations. The price achieved for the average 14-panel system in Solar Together Hertfordshire 2023 was a 36% discount on the typical market price for an equivalent system at that time.
- 1.8 89% of participants across the scheme opted to add a battery to their solar panel installation. This indicates a high appetite for battery storage and an increasing resident focus on self-consumption.
- 1.9 Approximately 60% of those progressing to installation heard about the scheme via the direct mail system, which uses MOSAIC data to target residents most likely to sign up. For the proposed Cohort 3, this has been refined to omit four specific profiles where data shows uptake has historically been lower.
- 1.10 The Solar Together Hertfordshire 2023/24 scheme delivered total private resident investment in renewables of £4,579,105, with an estimated delivery of 10,435 tonnes of carbon reduction over 25 years.
- 1.11 The combined Solar Together Hertfordshire schemes (cohorts 1 and 2) have delivered 1,665 installations across the county, resulting in 6.2 MW installed capacity, and over £17 million in private resident investment in renewables.

1.12 Due to the reduced demand for solar PV demonstrated in the second cohort compared to the 2022 cohort, Hemel Garden Communities and DBC have delayed initiating the third and final cohort until Q1 2025 (mailshot from January 2025). This is the last possible time to commence a full round within the current contract period.

**2. Key Issues/proposals/main body of the report:**

2.1 Responsibility for the remainder of the Solar Together Hertfordshire contract has moved from Hemel Garden Communities to the CEE team. This is to increase capacity in HGC to focus on strategic planning concerns. iChoosr deliver the scheme with supportive administration from DBC.

2.2 Subject to all necessary internal approvals, the CEE team has confirmed willingness to progress a Q1 2025 cohort and all HCCSP partners authorities confirmed interest in participation.

**3. Options and alternatives considered**

3.1 To approve progression with third cohort of Solar Together Hertfordshire. Recommended option.

3.2 To reject progression to third cohort of Solar Together Hertfordshire. Implications include missing final opportunity in iChoosr contract; reputational damage amongst HCCSP partners; reduced decarbonisation investment across the county.

**4. Consultation**

4.1 SLT was consulted and supported progressing with the third round.

4.2 The CEE Portfolio Holder was consulted on this decision and approved.

4.3 HCCSP was made aware of the proposals in this report, and interest in taking part in the third round was secured in writing from representatives from all Hertfordshire districts.

4.4 HGC Board approved change of responsibility to DBC.

**5. Financial and value for money implications:**

5.1 The cost of the direct mailshot to 100,000 households across Hertfordshire is approximately £40k. This will be paid from the CEE team cost centre, which is forecast in the financial year.

5.2 iChoosr expects to receive a fee from the winning Supplier for each Resident that accepts the winning Supplier's offer and enters into a contract with them. iChoosr will share this fee with the DBC, by paying DBC a Commission. DBC receives a higher fee for all installs once a volume tier has been reached, per the table below. Storage-only installations are a fixed-rate of £30 per installation.

From	To	Fee Per Install
0	100	£30.00
101	200	£45.00
201	300	£60.00
301		£75.00

## **6. Legal Implications**

6.1 Compliance with the contract with iChoosr. All Memorandum's of Understanding with other Hertfordshire districts are in force for the length of the contract.

## **7. Risk implications**

- 7.1 There is a risk that the CEE team does not make back the money it pays for the direct mailshot. The current estimate is approximately £40k. A direct mailshot is the best way to secure interest in the scheme from residents.
- 7.2 In previous rounds, the contract has returned the initial investment in full and delivered a small additional return.
- 7.3 If DBC does not proceed, a significant reputational risk with other Hertfordshire districts who are relying on us to proceed.

## **8. Sustainability implications (including climate change, health and wellbeing, community safety)**

- 9.1 There are significant positive sustainability implications. The Solar Together Hertfordshire will remove future carbon emissions from expected domestic energy consumption thanks to new solar panel arrays expected to last 25 years. Over the two previous schemes, over 19,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions have been saved.
- 9.2 This project helps mitigate fuel poverty concerns by reducing electricity bills (by varying degrees – this depends on the household and the size of the solar installation).

## **9. Conclusion**

- 12.1 That members recognise the change in responsibility for Solar Together Hertfordshire administration from HGC to CEE team.
- 12.2 That members support the recommendation to proceed with the third round of Solar Together Hertfordshire.