

## Summary of Tenant Focus Groups

**Topic:** Developing a Fair Charging Policy for Solar Panel and Battery Installations

**Date:** 23rd and 24<sup>th</sup> April 2025

**Time:** 6:30 PM – 8:00 PM

**Participants:** 10 and 8 tenants respectively (18 in total)

**Facilitators:** Tenant Partnership Manager, Retrofit Manager

**Aim:** To gather tenant views to help shape a fair and transparent charging policy for solar panel installations on council homes.

### Session Outline

#### 6:30 – 6:40 PM: Welcome & Purpose

- Informal welcome with refreshments.
- Brief introductions and purpose explanation.
- Overview of the consultation process and the importance of tenant input.

#### 6:40 – 6:50 PM: Setting the Scene

- Overview of the solar panel project, its funding, and goals.
- Explanation of the proposed charging policy starting from Year 2.

#### 6:50 – 7:05 PM: Values Activity: "Would You Rather..."

- Facilitated discussion with prompts to explore tenant values and preferences.

#### 7:05 – 7:40 PM: Small Group Discussion: Shaping the Policy

- Focus on fairness, financial pressure, and alternative ideas.

#### 7:40 – 7:55 PM: Group Feedback & Open Dialogue

- Groups share key discussion points.

#### 7:55 – 8:00 PM: Reflections & Close

- Participants share final thoughts.
- Explanation of next steps in the consultation process.

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### Notes from the Session

#### Questions and Suggestions Raised by Tenants:

##### 1. Council Protection Against Installation Companies Going Bust:

- How will the council protect itself against the solar panel installation companies going bust?

##### 2. House Suitability and Timing:

- Has the council identified which houses are suitable (e.g., correct roof pitch)? When will this be done?

**3. Type of Solar Panels:**

- Are you installing PV (photovoltaic) or thermal panels? Consideration of degradation and sunlight optimization.

**4. Impact on EPC Ratings:**

- How do solar panels impact Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) ratings?

**5. Equitability of Savings:**

- Is the tenant benefiting from 100% of the savings the most equitable approach, given the climate emergency?

**6. Share of Savings Paid Back to Council:**

- How much could the share of the savings paid back to the council be?

**7. Maintenance Costs:**

- How much does the council need to cover the cost of maintaining the solar panels and batteries? Would 50% of the savings be enough?

**8. Annual Maintenance Fees:**

- Could the tenant cover the cost of the annual maintenance fees as a one-off fee from their utility bill savings?

**9. Funding for Maintenance:**

- Does Winchester City Council need all maintenance costs covered by tenant payments, or is there external funding available?

**10. Voluntary vs. Mandatory Charges:**

- Why would the charge be voluntary? Why not make it mandatory like rent?

**11. Limited Time Savings Share:**

- Could tenants share savings back to the council for a limited time? How would long-term maintenance costs be covered?

**12. Repairs and Maintenance Service Guarantee:**

- What guarantee is there around the repairs and maintenance service? What actions can be taken if solar panels cease to work but tenants continue to be charged?

**13. Component Warranty:**

- What is the warranty on the components? What happens when the warranty runs out?

**14. Payment Holiday for Financial Hardship:**

- Could there be a payment holiday for tenants facing unexpected financial hardship, with missed payments spread out over the remainder of the year?

**15. New Tenants in Properties with Panels:**

- What happens if a tenant moves into a property with installed panels? Are they obligated to pay from the start or do they have 12 months of usage without charge?

**16. Council as Energy Provider:**

- Why can't WCC act as an energy provider and sell energy back to tenants?

**17. Benefits to Tenants:**

- Clear communication of benefits, both financial and environmental. Clarification on the language around 'charges' to avoid confusion.

**18. Ownership of Solar Panels and Batteries:**

- Who will own the solar panels and batteries once installed? Can tenants buy their house with the panels in place?

**19. Phased Installation and Savings Allocation:**

- Suggestion to install panels in phases, with all savings paid to WCC for the first two years, then sharing half the savings after two years.

**20. Prepayment Meter Concerns:**

- Tenants on prepayment meters want assurance that the cost of switching to mains electricity will be offset by solar panel savings.

**21. Access Fund for Financial Changes:**

- Suggestion to create an 'access fund' from tenant fees to cover maintenance costs for those who can no longer pay.

**22. Policy Review and Feedback Loops:**

- Regular review and feedback loops for the policy, with opportunities for adjustments based on tenant input.