

Business case for Surrey Heath Borough Council to become a member of Apse and Apse Energy

1. Introduction

One of the high priority Energy Actions in the draft Climate Change Action Plan agreed by the Climate Change Working Group in September 2020 was to consider the benefits of Surrey Heath Borough Council becoming members of APSE and APSE Energy. This report sets out the business case for APSE/Energy Membership, providing a background to the organisation and the benefits of joining, as well as a breakdown of the annual membership fees. Officers have concluded that APSE/Energy Membership will assist the Council in delivering the Climate Change Action Plan and meeting the 2030 carbon neutral target set by the Climate Emergency declared by the Council in October 2019.

2. Background to APSE and APSE Energy

The Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) is owned by its members and, working on their behalf, maintains and develops a network of local government officers, managers and councillors from local authorities across the UK. The organisation works on a non-profit basis and is dedicated to the to promoting excellence in the delivery of frontline services to local communities around the UK. The organisation originally focused on frontline services such as refuse and cleansing, leisure services, environmental health and building maintenance, but over time it has moved into all areas of local authority service provision.

The APSE network of more than 300 local authorities and organisations are able to share information and expertise on vital frontline services, ask for advice and innovative solutions, and develop new, viable ways forward in an effort to help one another. The organisations states that it *'provides a united national voice for these authorities, as well as showing them the way to move forward and develop strong, sustainable frontline services'*.

APSE Energy is a bespoke Local Authority Energy Collaboration that constitutes a partnership of member authorities which looks to leverage and maximise the opportunities afforded to local authorities by working together on a national scale on the green energy agenda. APSE Energy Is part of the wider APSE family with the specific aim of getting local authorities back into a position of influence in the local energy market. This could be via generating energy such as through solar PV, use of low carbon vehicles, promoting energy efficiency in domestic properties, installing biomass boilers or ground source heat pumps, or addressing fuel poverty by delivering a local cheaper tariff for residents.

APSE Energy has four main functions (relating to climate change):

- Provision of consultancy work and guidance for Councils;
- Facilitating events, including webinars and training; and
- Publications and materials providing evidence and guidance relating to climate change, as well as briefings, technical notes and newsletters.
- An advocacy role;

More information can be found on the APSE website - <https://apse.org.uk/apse/>.

3. Breakdown of Membership costs

Becoming members of both APSE and APSE Energy is cheaper than becoming only a member of APSE Energy. Table 1 summarises the annual fees (invoiced in April of each year) and the pro-rata cost for joining for the remainder of 2020/21. Overall, for becoming members of both APSE and APSE Energy, the annual fee is currently £4,669.00. If the Council were only become members of APSE Energy, the cost would be £5,630.00 (£938.33 pro-rata from February 2021). It is important to note that there is a 12 month period of notice has to be given for members intending to disaffiliate.

APSE Membership breakdown	Current annual fee	Pro rata fee for February and March 2021
APSE	£2,412.00	£402.00
APSE Energy (with APSE discount)	£2,255.00	£375.83
Total	£4,669.00	£777.83

4. Benefits of joining

Taking each of the four main functions of APSE Energy outlined in section 2 in turn, this section of the business case sets out in more detail the benefits of APSE Energy Membership, including consideration of costs.

With regards to consultancy services, APSE Energy can provide a full range of expert consultancy services to member local authorities and public bodies on energy, climate change and green economy related matters. Their experts provide strategic advice, technical feasibility and business case development and project management expertise to support local authority energy projects. They can also assist and provide facilitation and stakeholder engagement.

In some cases, services and guidance are available at no extra cost. For example, APSE Energy assisted a number of member authorities in collating data for the recently released Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme. Moreover, through guiding council's through highly technical exercises and considerations, APSE Energy helps to avoid unnecessary costs and delays with complex climate change projects. For example, APSE Energy assisted Warrington Borough Council's with their two solar farm projects that are considered amongst the UK's largest and most technically advanced solar plus battery storage projects. This included making REGO and Capacity Market applications on their behalf, representing the Council at solar farm acceptance tests and providing expert support to work alongside the Council in its negotiations with maintenance contracts, service provision and a Power Purchase Agreement.

APSE Energy also provides support in baseline carbon footprint reports. For example, APSE Energy worked with Bracknell Forest Council to produce a carbon footprint report. The lead officer at Bracknell Forest Council for the project noted that *'Our time and capacity pressures, as well as the minimal cost of the work, were*

prompts which led us to get support from APSE Energy and we have been very happy with the work. I'd recommend that others in our position followed exactly the same route we did. We are much better informed as a result of this work'.

As a not for profit local government association APSE Energy state that they are cheaper than most of the other consultancies and use professionals who have experience of local government and are experts in the industry. A key benefit of the APSE Energy consultancy services is their ability to tailor their expertise to bespoke projects and specific project requirements relating to individual local authority climate change actions. Another key benefit associated with this is the capacity to take a holistic approach to climate change related actions, with APSE Energy supporting the Council through all stages of project delivery as required. As such, it is considered that APSE Energy consultancy services would greatly assist the Council in delivering corporate climate change actions and objectives.

It is not possible at this stage to provide a direct cost comparison for APSE Energy consultancy services to other providers, primarily due to the bespoke nature of climate change related projects.

With regard to events, APSE Energy facilitate regular webinars that are free to attend for councillors and officers of APSE Energy members. All officers and councillors would therefore have access to such events should Surrey Heath become APSE Energy members. For example, APSE Energy recently ran a series of webinars on climate emergency action plans, and another on the skills needed to make the most of energy opportunities. Similar webinars from other organisations can cost between £30 to £99 per participant for each webinar.

Annex 1 outlines the APSE Energy prospectus. APSE Energy also run 15 events a year covering different topics, with examples including workshops on solar farms and electric vehicle charging points. APSE Energy Membership also gives members free entry to a number of exhibitions and seminars facilitated by other organisations, in addition to the quarterly advisory groups run in Manchester and Scotland and twice yearly in Wales and the south of England. The events also act as a forum to network with experts and other local authorities undertaking similar actions. Moreover, APSE Energy are able to provide a platform for those councils who want to talk about projects they have or raise questions and problems to get input from others. The events run by APSE Energy are therefore considered a valuable resource for the Council in delivering corporate climate change actions and objectives.

With regard to publications, APSE Energy provide a range of briefings, technical notes and newsletters related to climate change issues and considerations. The publications help keep council's up to date with changes and updates to climate change related considerations. As part of this, APSE Energy provide detailed research publications and reference materials highlighting practical issues and case studies, such as recent publications on climate emergencies and on street residential charging for electric vehicles. The publications provided to APSE Energy Members is therefore considered a valuable resource that will assist the Council in delivering corporate climate change actions and objectives.

Finally APSE Energy have an advocacy role, speaking at seminars and related events to promote the role of local authorities as organisations tackling fuel poverty, investing in energy infrastructure or energy efficiency, influencing the energy supply in the locality and addressing carbon reduction and gaining community/economic benefits. APSE Energy are in regular contact with government departments and Ofgem which allows them highlight concerns that local authorities have as well as promoting what the sector is doing.

Taking the above into account, and with 90 Council's already being members of APSE, officers have concluded that there is significant benefit in Surrey Heath Borough Council becoming APSE Energy Members, assisting the Council in delivering climate changes actions to address the Climate Emergency declared by the Council in October 2019. Due to the wide range of services that APSE Energy provides, and the nature of the membership allowing all councillors and officers to access such services, officers have concluded that APSE Energy Membership is good value for money.

5. Budget considerations

For the remainder of the 2020/21 financial year, the pro-rata cost of joining can be covered by the Planning Policy and Conservation budget. It is envisaged that the 2021/22 Membership fee will be covered by a dedicated climate change revenue budget.