



Committee Report Checklist

Please submit the completed checklists with your report. If final draft report does not include all the information/sign offs required, your item will be delayed until the next meeting cycle.

Stage 1

Report checklist – responsibility of report owner

ITEM	Yes / No	Date
Councillor engagement / input from Chair prior to briefing	Yes	CNWG
Relevant Group Head review	Yes	12/9/25
MAT+ review (to have been circulated at least 5 working days before Stage 2)	Yes	12/9/25
This item is on the Forward Plan for the relevant committee		
	Reviewed by	
Finance comments (circulate to Finance)		
Risk comments (circulate to Lee O'Neil)		
Legal comments (circulate to Legal team)	Jo Clare	14.12.25
HR comments (if applicable)		

For reports with material financial or legal implications the author should engage with the respective teams at the outset and receive input to their reports prior to asking for MO or s151 comments.

Do not forward to stage 2 unless all the above have been completed.

Stage 2

Report checklist – responsibility of report owner

ITEM	Completed by	Date rec'd
Monitoring Officer commentary – at least 5 working days before MAT	L Heron	27/03/26
S151 Officer commentary – at least 5 working days before MAT	T.Collier	25/3/26
Commissioner engagement	J. Kingston o.b.o. Cmmrs	31/03/2026
	Delete as applicable:	No issues
Confirm final report cleared by MAT		

Corporate Policy and Resources Committee

Date of meeting 20 April 2026

Title	Solar Canopy Project Closure report
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report Author	<i>Tim Snook Sustainability and Resilience Lead</i> <i>Sandy Muirhead Group Head Commissioning and Transformation</i>
Ward(s) Affected	All Wards
Exempt	No
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Corporate Priority	Community Resilience Environment
Recommendations	Committee is asked to: <i>Agree to formally end the project.</i>
Reason for Recommendation	The risks to the project due to issues with ground conditions in the car park were deemed to be severe enough as to impact the installation of a solar canopy for the Eclipse Leisure Centre car park. The project needs formal closure.

1. Executive summary of the report (expand detail in Key Issues section below)

What is the situation	Why we want to do something
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site specific constraints have been identified in the project increasing cost and delivery risks. There was a proposal to look at funding the capital works from Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) but this was not feasible and with additional debt financing required for the project it was formally a closing constraint. The project originally aligned with the Council's commitment to the climate emergency plan and was in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due to a number of reasons this project cannot be implemented and therefore formal closure is required

keeping with the design and ethos of the Passivhaus Eclipse leisure centre	
This is what we want to do about it	These are the next steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To seek a formal decision on closing the project as the risks are now clear with the required project design changes and challenges of financing the scheme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To formally close the project as a result of the issues associated with ground conditions. Integrate the lessons learned from this project, specifically the proper use of a RACI matrix into the project process.

2. Key issues

- 2.1 The project was originally designed to return an income to the Council from the development of the solar canopy and subsequent electricity generation over a long time period. This report documents the issues and risks and provides an assessment of the potential impacts concerning the solar canopy project i.e. the installation of a solar canopy to cover the Eclipse Leisure Centre car park and provision of electricity ideally to a Passivhaus leisure centre thus adding to its overall high level of sustainability. The report summarises the reasons the project was closed.
- 2.2 The concept of putting in solar canopies over the Eclipse Leisure Centre car park was first presented to Corporate Policy and Resources Committee (CPRC) in July 2024. The report sought, and received, agreement to the initiation of the solar canopy project, including the formation of a project officer group to explore options and return to CPRC with a more detailed business case.
- 2.3 Following exploration of the options a further report was brought to CPRC in September 2024 which provided more detail on the business case and sought permission to go to tender to ascertain finalised costs and designs for Councillor approval. This was agreed subject to reporting back to this Committee on the outcome of the tender process and presenting detailed proposals.
- 2.4 As a result of the procurement exercise and with agreement from CPRC and Full Council in December 2024 the solar company 3ti were awarded the project for design and installation of a solar canopy for the Eclipse Leisure Centre car park. At that time the scheme had the ability to tie in with the timescale of the demolition of the old leisure centre and construction of a new car park so minimising impact on the Phase 2 works (demolition of old leisure centre and construction of car park) for the leisure centre.
- 2.5 However, it was subsequently discovered there were issues with the ground conditions. 3Ti therefore needed to undertake a redesign of the solar canopy to allow for the proposed foundations which had not taken account of the presence of attenuation tanks affecting the function of the tanks and solar canopy. As 3Ti would be expected to follow the industry standard RIBA stages of design development this would have included referencing plans to show what sits underground, before finalising designs.

- 2.1 3ti, the appointed supplier, then worked with the Council's engineering contractors to design 3 potential alternative options to alleviate the risk of the attenuation tank. However, due to the redesign that needed to be undertaken by 3ti, it took the company 10 weeks to come back with 3 designs of which only one was cost neutral compared to the original design. This meant deadlines were missed to integrate with the work being undertaken as part of the phase 2 contract works for demolition of the old leisure centre and construction of a new leisure centre car park. This could have increased the cost of the project, caused further disruption to leisure centre users, variation costs on the demolition contract and the risk of claims from the leisure centre operator.
- 2.2 Since the project was originally evaluated and approved in principle the context within which Spelthorne Borough Council is operating has changed significantly. Firstly, with the Devolution White Paper in December 2024, Spelthorne and the Surrey Councils are now involved in a reorganisation process will see Spelthorne Borough Council cease to exist as a sovereign council from 1st April 2027. Whilst a focus on achieving long term financial savings and environmental benefits is still relevant the benefits would accrue to a successor authority rather than to Spelthorne. However, we should bear in mind that the successor unitary may wish to consider options once it goes live post vesting day (1 April 2027).
- 2.3 Secondly in May 2025 the Best Value Inspection Report and Directives issued by the Secretary of State for Spelthorne were published with a clear emphasis on reducing Spelthorne debt levels. Therefore, unless there was certainty that a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) could fund the capital works, which it cannot, the additional debt financing required for the project was an additional constraint. Due to loss of previous project management support internally there would have been an additional cost to the project for those costs.
- 2.4 Given the project had a potential return on investment over considerable time and has community benefit in terms of a shaded car park being available which can mitigate heat stress in cars/people (more likely with a changing climate) it could have potentially qualified, with Councillor approval, for strategic community infrastructure funding. However, due to funding constraints under CIL the project would not have been funded via this route. Hence this report to formally close the project.

Lessons Learned

- 2.5 This project has highlighted several important lessons for how future work should be structured and supported. One of the clearest lessons is the value of establishing and using a clear RACI approach from the start. Challenges arose when the presence of the attenuation tanks was not fully accounted for during the early design work, something that should have been identified through stronger clarity of responsibility for checking underground conditions and validating design assumptions before progressing to later stages. A well-defined and consistently used RACI model would help ensure that every party understands their role in verifying critical information at the right time.
- 2.6 Another insight relates to organisational understanding and alignment. Delays were created when the redesign process by the supplier took ten weeks, which caused key integration deadlines with the phase two works to be missed. This shows how essential it is for internal teams, external partners

and supporting contractors to work from the same understanding of timelines, dependencies and constraints. Ensuring that all teams genuinely share the same picture of the project would reduce avoidable disruption and uncertainty.

- 2.7 Resource allocation has also been a significant learning point. The loss of internal project management support increased cost pressures and added risk to the project at a time when the Council was already facing wider organisational and financial demands. This reinforces the need to identify critical skills early, plan for continuity and avoid single points of failure in key project roles.
- 2.8 Finally, there is an important lesson around knowledge sharing. Much of the difficulty stemmed from information on underground infrastructure not being effectively surfaced and integrated early in the design process. This led to redesigns and late recognition of risks that could have been anticipated with better information flow between teams. Building structured knowledge sharing into project processes will support better decisions and reduce the likelihood of late-stage surprises.

3. Options appraisal and proposal

- 3.1 **Option (recommended)** Terminate the project completely due to the risks, additional costs for project management and the changed situation for Council funding outlined above.

4. Risk implications

- 4.1 All risks associated with the solar canopy project can be found in the project dashboard and are summarised in **Appendix A** Solar Carpark Risk Log appended to this document.

Careful consideration has been given to the impact of Local Government Reorganisation, and it is inappropriate to encumber the incoming unitary authority with a project of such significant cost.

5. Financial implications

- 5.1 Through the cancellation of the project, the Council would no longer carry the financial risk of £1.32M which was dedicated to the project in December 2024 and reflected in the approved Capital Programme for 2025-26. This decision to cancel the project might prevent the Council from realising an estimated yet unverified £4.9m potential revenue generation over 24 years. CPRC at its meeting on 8 September 2025 resolved to recommend to Council the cancellation of the solar canopy project and the £1.32m provision was subsequently removed from the 2025/2026 Capital Programme in the MRTTP report.
- 5.2 A purchase order had been raised ahead of the formal completion of the contract for design costs. Consequently, the supplier was entitled to recover its initial costs of circa £16,000 + VAT notwithstanding the absence of a formal contract. By negotiation this was reduced to £12,000 + VAT and £425 adjudication fee.

- 5.3 This project has effectively been cancelled as already removed from the Capital Programme, but it means we will not incur the ongoing costs of project management. With the loss of our consultant, Assets had advised that they would need to outsource the project management.
- 5.4 Cancelling this project means that we will not incur the costs of a Phase 2 contract variation for the work in putting in the Solar Canopy foundations during car park construction. (This cost had been included in the Solar Carpark project costs.)
- 5.5 Procurement, legal and additional risks implications carry further costs.
- 5.6 3ti have offered to fully fund the project, this would come with its own financial risks as it would mean a small revenue share agreement and additional legal implications which have not been fully considered.
- 5.7 To ensure there was an ability to feed into the grid if the electricity could not be sold to Places for People there would be a legal cost for a power purchase agreement. Other authorities have developed power purchase agreements to cover electricity generation from renewables feeding into the grid.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1 The Council has a statutory duty to deliver best value pursuant to the provisions of the Local Government Act 1999. Further justification by reference to substantive evidence will be required to demonstrate that the proposed project meets this statutory duty.
- 6.2 Due consideration must be given to all and any title issues affecting the Leisure Centre Car Park and their impact on the proposed project. Utilities and energy law is a niche and specialised discipline, and the Council would require external legal advice to ensure compliance with the applicable laws and regulations to enable sale of solar-generated energy.
- 6.3 Cancellation of this project aligns with the statutory directions.

Corporate implications

7. Commissioners' comments

- 7.1 *(No issues.)*

8. S151 Officer comments

- 8.1 The financial implications are set out in section 5 above. The S151 Officer agreed with the recommendation to end the project and remove the associated provision of £1.32m from the Capital Programme but ensure that all the documentation is passed across to the successor unitary for their future consideration with respect to option of future retro-fitting. Given the close timing of the creation of the unitary, it will be the unitary which would accrue any financial return from a scheme. Under the Best Value Directions, we have a clear focus on reducing rather than increasing debt, and ending the scheme removed the risk that the scheme may have had to be funded upfront from borrowing. Given the intense resourcing pressures arising from Best Value Process and Local Government Reorganisation (with respect to the later those are now greatly increasing) there is a rationale for dropping a

scheme which still has complexities to be resolved around achieving a positive utility and energy outcome to provide a financial return.

9. Monitoring Officer comments

- 9.1 The Monitoring Officer confirms that the relevant legal implications have been taken into account.

10. Procurement comments

- 10.1 A procurement exercise for the selection of the supplier had taken place with the support of the Procurement Team.

11. Equality and Diversity

- 11.1 Any decision taken will be implemented with upmost care an attention so as not to impact any one group or organisation

12. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications

- 12.1 This project would have directly correlated with the Council's commitments in declaring a climate emergency in 2020 and adopting a climate change strategy in 2022. Specifically, the Council's climate change strategy action plan:- Key actions 4 "to incorporate energy efficiency measures and renewables into conversions, refurbishments and maintenance of council owned buildings and housing developments" and 9, to "produce as much energy locally through renewable resources".
- 12.2 The project estimated a carbon saving in the region of 137 tonnes per year which would have had a significant impact on the carbon emissions associated with the Council's scope 3 carbon footprint

13. Other considerations

- 13.1 Subsequently the Government launched a call for evidence in early 2025 to assess the feasibility of mandating solar canopies for car parks with a consultation period which ran until May 2025. This initiative, led by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), explores requiring solar installations on all new outdoor car parks and potentially on existing ones above a certain a certain size, including those in public and private ownership. If such a requirement came into law a future unitary may wish to install a solar canopy on site.

14. Timetable for implementation

- 14.1 On agreement to the report the project is formally cancelled. The £1.32m provision has been removed from the Capital Programme.

15. Contact

- 15.1 Timothy Snook Sustainability and Flood Risk Officer
Sandy Muirhead Group Head Commissioning and Transformation.

Please submit any material questions to the Committee Chair and Officer Contact by two days in advance of the meeting.

Background papers: CPRC Report 8 July 2024, CPRC Report 9 September 2024 and Council Report 9 December 2024.

Appendices:
Appendix A, Risk Log Solar Canopy Project.