



membership resources

State of the Market Survey 2016

Climate Change and Renewable Energy



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Climate Change and Renewable Energy

State of the Market 2016

Introduction

APSE conducted an on-line survey during spring 2016. A series of questions were asked covering a range of issues of interest to those officers and councillors responsible for climate change, renewable energy, energy management and related topics. 76 responses were received from local authorities throughout the UK although not everyone answered all questions. This report identifies the key findings of the survey.

This is the second survey of these topics. Where comparison is appropriate it has been highlighted and extra questions have been added which are new for this survey.

A number of the questions in the survey ask for opinions and as such this is a record of perceptions as much as it is of facts. We are not aiming to attribute specific comments to particular people or to identify the circumstances or arrangements within particular local authorities. The survey is an attempt to understand the opinions and perceptions within the sector amongst people directly involved in delivering energy related services and projects.

Context

Interest and investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency has never been higher. Technology is moving at a rapid pace; different operating models are emerging; in the UK the big six energy companies are being challenged by smaller more innovative organisations; the community energy agenda is developing especially both in the developed and developing world; and large commercial companies are investing significant sums of money.

Local authorities are entering the energy market – some investing significant amounts with big ambitions, others getting involved at a smaller scale. There are some local authorities who have yet to become involved but these are few and far between. of course the wider context is relevant for the decisions councils are making and that context is changing on a regular basis.

Results from a report by REN 21 noted that 2015 was a record year for installations with renewable power generating capacity having its largest increase ever – up to an estimated 147 gigawatts. Investment in renewable power reached \$286 billion worldwide in 2015 and that is without investment in large scale hydropower and in heating and cooling. The report noted that developing countries surpassed developed countries in total renewable energy investment for the first time whilst China accounted for more than one third of the global total. It went on to note that problems remain including integration of renewable energy into the grid, policy and political instability, regulatory barriers and fiscal constraints. The Renewables 2016 Global Status Report said that modern renewable heat capacity also rose and use of renewables expanded in the transport sector. However these later areas have received less attention and were progressing more slowly than other areas as a result.

The DECC Public Attitudes Tracker – Wave 17 is a survey which monitors public attitudes to the Department's main business priorities. Wave 17 was carried out in March 2016. In terms of renewable energy, public support has been consistently high at around 75-80% with the figure for the March wave standing at 81%. Only 4% were opposed and 2% strongly opposed. Support was particularly strong amongst those with incomes of over £35,000 (91%), in social grade AB (86%), social grade C1 (86%) or aged 55-64 (86%). Support is lowest amongst those aged 65+ (74%), in social grades DE (73%) and social renters.

In the survey nearly eight in ten agreed that renewable energy developments should provide direct benefits to the communities in which they are located (77%). 70% agreed that renewable industries and developments provide economic benefits to the UK. Just over half (56%) said that they would be happy to have a large scale renewable development in their own area.

The level of concern over climate change has risen in the most recent survey from 66% previously to 70%. Levels of concern were highest amongst 55-64 year olds (80%), those earning over £35,000 a year (77%), in social grade AB (76%), social grade C1 (76%). Concern was lowest amongst social renters (57%) and those in social grades DE (57%).

Results from the survey

1. Does your council have a specific policy which addresses issues of energy management?

The first question considers the existence of a specific policy addressing energy management issues. 78% responded that there was such a policy in their local authority. This may be in the form of a dedicated policy or strategy or as part of another corporate document and it is reasonable to expect such a policy exists in all councils.

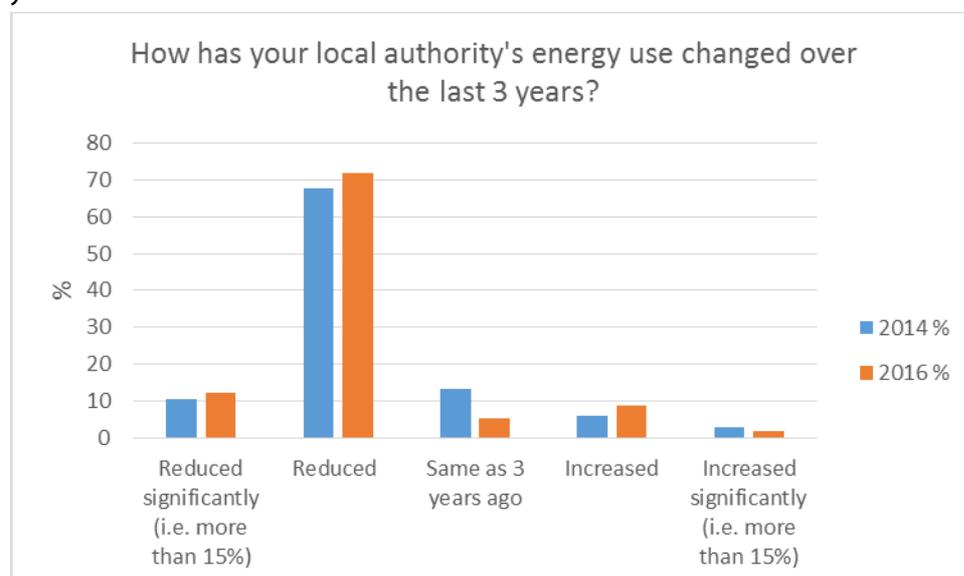
It is therefore understandable to expect that the principles of good energy management are built into other documents such as carbon management plans, sustainable energy action plans, climate change action plans and planning policies as well as service plans, especially as the topic of energy management has such a high profile. The figure for the previous survey was 77% so there has been little change in the response rate.

Of course all local authorities need to have such a policy in place or ensure it is built into other plans in such a way that officers and councillors understand it is central to the activity of the organisation.

Other responses pointed to the fact that some of the policies were coming to the end of their lives and so being reviewed, reflecting a long standing policy having been in place; others have energy principles, targets and arrangements for monitoring usage built into existing procedures; whilst some pointed to departmental arrangements rather than an organisation wide policy. The issue of energy management and resource use in general has grown in importance over recent years and policies and procedures addressing it may well be built into other policy documents. However, the great majority of local authorities represented through responses to this survey have standalone policies for energy management.

2. How has your local authority's energy use changed over the last 3 years?

As the focus on resource efficiency has grown over recent years local authorities have put in place arrangements to track usage of such resources. This question focuses on energy use over the last 3 years.



12.3% of respondents said that the energy used in their local authorities had reduced significantly (i.e. by more than 15%) compared with 10.3% for last year. A further 71.9% noted a reduction in energy use (of less than 15%). The equivalent figure in the last survey was 67.6%.

This comes to a total of 84% who use less energy now than they did 3 years ago. A further 5% of responding local authorities use no more energy now than they did 3 years ago. On the basis of this survey only 10.5% use more data now than 3 years ago whilst only 1.8% use significantly more. These results are welcome and reflect the attention that local authorities are giving this issue.

It can safely be assumed that saving energy is an aim for all large organisations including local authorities and the scale of the savings identified here reflect that this is happening. The proportion stating that their energy use has reduced significantly or reduced is greater than that from the previous survey.

3. Does your local authority have targets for future energy use?

The response to this question in the 2014 survey showed that 77% of local authorities had targets for future energy use whilst 23% had no targets. This time 81% have targets whilst 19 % do not

Some have carbon reduction targets which include a majority on energy but are not exclusively reflective of energy. Others have service specific targets for investment in energy efficiency measures, PV and other renewable technologies, and income generation, rather than direct energy use. Some have targets set through a revised Carbon Management Plan. Another closely measures energy use via a carbon management group and in the absence of set targets per service employ a list of projects with the aim to ultimately reduce energy use. Another has carbon reduction commitments but really need to put in place specific energy reduction targets for buildings. There are some local authorities however who appear to have no energy reduction targets.

There are a range of actual targets in place reflecting the different circumstances and approaches across local authorities. Examples include 2% per year for buildings for gas, electricity and water with all energy use having a carbon reduction target of a 34-45% from a 2005 baseline by 2020/21; 20% reduction in energy by 2020; 25% reduction in Carbon emissions from Council operations by 2025 from 2014/15 baseline; and 60% reduction by 2021.

The variety of arrangements reflects the different circumstances that each local authority finds itself in.

4. Bearing in mind previous targets, how would you say your council has performed?

Responses to this question revealed that 70% had achieved their targets successfully whilst the remainder fell short.

5. Are there arrangements in place at you local authority which enable you to confidently identify those budgets and resources which have been allocated to projects related to renewable energy, energy efficiency, energy management, fuel poverty or similar? (For example, 'we have systems in place which I can use to identify we have spent £X on these project' or 'we have dedicated Y working hours to this project')

Monitoring performance against targets is a fundamental part of public sector work and all local authorities will have a performance framework of some kind. Not every element of each service will be covered by it and the figures below reflect that. There is a slightly larger proportion stating they have arrangements in place which either fully or partially identify resources for such projects. In general arrangements for renewable energy projects are in place more than is the case for other areas of work.

	2014	2016 Total	2016 Renewables	2016 Energy efficiency	2016 Energy mgmt	2016 Fuel poverty
Yes fully	87.9%	50.2%	62.3%	47.2%	43.4%	48%
Yes partially		42.1%	30.2%	45.3%	49.1%	44%
No	12.1%	7.7%	7.5%	7.5%	7.5%	8%

It is unlikely that targets of this nature are going to go away and monitoring of performance is an established approach in local authorities. There will be a range of targets and those around community benefits and economic development will be more difficult to track than those around income generation. Issues remain about the availability of data, the fact that it may be collected in separate parts of the local authority (or indeed other organisations such as housing associations or public health) and is not brought together. Others commented that projects have been undertaken on an individual basis without reference to a corporate approach so collating information about their performance and targets is challenging.

6. What has the trend been over the past 3 years with regard to spending in areas of renewable energy, energy efficiency, fuel poverty projects or similar?

	2014	2016 Total	2016 Renewables	2016 Energy efficiency	2016 Energy mgmt	2016 Fuel poverty
Decreased	22%	48.2%	21.6%	51%	62%	60.5%
Stayed the same	32.2%	18.5%	25.5%	19.6%	14%	14%
Increased	45.8%	33.3%	52.9%	29.4%	24%	25.6%

Climate change, energy and related topics have remained high profile. They are issues which affect large organisations and especially those with the democratic accountability and leadership role that local authorities have. Nevertheless reductions in budgets are impacting on energy budgets just as they are on other council service budgets. This is reflected in the fact that 48.2% of responses noted a decrease in the overall budget for energy related services over 3 years. The previous survey figure was only 22%. A third of responses noted that budgets had increased (compared with 45.8% in 2014) with only 18.5% noting the budget had stayed the same (32.2% in 2014). It seems that more local authorities have decided to either invest in this area of work and take advantage of the benefits which can emerge, or cut back on this service as a lesser priority

In terms of the specific elements 52.9% of responses note that renewables projects budgets have increased. These have a reputation of being the more high profile in comparison to energy efficiency, management and fuel poverty and this may be a reason for the extra funding. They are also longer term projects so funds must be available for the duration of the project.

7. How do you expect the trend with regard to spending in areas of renewable energy, energy efficiency, fuel poverty projects or similar to change over the forthcoming 3 years?

	2014	2016 Total	2016 Renewables	2016 Energy efficiency	2016 Energy mgmt	2016 Fuel poverty
Decrease	23.8%	19.6%	28.8%	20.8%	17.3	10.6%
Stay the same	38.1%	32.4%	38.5%	41.5%	23.1	25.5%
Increase	38.1%	48%	32.7%	37.7%	59.6	63.8%

Although there was no clear cut overall response to these questions there appears to be a perception that those involved in delivering energy related services will have increasing budgets over the forthcoming 3 years. 48% of responses expect an increase in budgets compared with 38.1% in the last survey.

When looking at the individual elements, there is an expectation that energy management and fuel poverty spending will increase by 59.6% and 63.8% respectively. Spending on renewables and energy efficiency is expected to reduce in 28.8% and 20.8% of cases respectively.

Clearly there have been significant reductions in budgets cumulatively for the past 5 years and these are set to continue. It is difficult to be accurate about financial predictions of course but responses do seem to reflect a very positive outlook.

Comments include reference to winning HNDU funding which will increase funding; the identification of projects which will produce income and; district energy spend being likely to increase.

8. Does your council have a Merton rule?

The Merton Rule was a groundbreaking planning policy, developed by Merton Council, which required new developments to generate at least 10% of their energy needs from on-site renewable energy equipment, in order to help reduce annual carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions in the built environment. The rule applied to all types of buildings, not just homes. Merton Council developed the rule and adopted it in 2003. Since then the Mayor of London and many councils implemented it, and it became part of national planning guidance. Subsequently Merton's planning policies have changed, and the Merton Rule has been superseded by new energy requirements in building regulations.

This rule was considered radical when introduced and there is little surprise that it has not been adopted widely by other local authorities. In terms of the responses to this survey, 25.4% replied that they do have an equivalent of a Merton rule whilst 47.1% do not have such a rule. 27.5% of respondents did not know whether their authority had such a rule which is reflective of the fact that those with energy responsibilities are based in different parts of the council and deal with a range of projects and services not all relevant to new build schemes.

When asked what would help a council introduce a Merton rule, the responses received were as follows:-

"Commitment from elected members and finance"

"Clarity over what requirements can be introduced into planning policy"

"Clear guidance on what we can and cannot do. It is not clear and very difficult to get quality information on this"

"Greater clarity on the future building standards, zero carbon homes, etc"

"Change in the way developers are able to argue viability issues at Local Plan examination"

"Requirements to quantify impacts of development - would be Scottish equivalent"

"Additional resources"

"Reinstate national targets"

"Would be good to know if anyone has managed to increase the percentage of renewables required"

"Better understanding of the benefits of energy efficiency measures in a lifetime costing context-usual response is can't afford this although the business case usually stands up"

"Current Local Plan policy allows for some negotiation"

"Planning regulations"

"If the National Planning policy Framework endorsed it! Sadly it is not in the NPPF so we are likely to remove it from the Local Plan since planners are afraid it won't be accepted by the Planning Inspectorate"

"Energy efficiency should be prioritised instead of being regarded as 'tick box' exercise in new buildings"

"Some semblance of DCLG understanding climate change/ energy efficiency etc. in a practical sense rather than on paper (i.e. they don't have a feel for the difference in housing quality in terms of living in them)"

"Mandatory targets for renewable percentages that are not subject to negotiation"

"Seeing it more widely applied"

"Stronger central govt. support for renewables"

"Stiffer penalties for not abiding by our standards. Higher offset costs for example"

"It is not adopting a blanket Merton Rule but something that is relevant and tailored to the Authority."

9. What do you feel are the most significant issues related to the climate change and renewables agenda facing your local authority and/or locality? Please consider both short and long term issues.

Unsurprisingly, a number of responses to this questions referred to a lack of funding and resources, both financial and staff, in the context of austerity. Reference was made to a lack of senior management understanding which no doubt is connected to having to prioritise with limited budgets. Justifying spend on project if there is little or no return is difficult.

The need to generate income is a factor allied to spending cuts and it was mentioned in a number of replies.

The government's approach was criticised including comments referring to changes to government funding and ECO provision; a lack of consistent policy; a move towards help being aimed at fuel poor, low income, high cost but only funding low cost measures; and a lack of sufficiently strong legislation to force people, developers and landlords to improve current housing stock or plan well for the future. Although some see the government's approach as disjointed support, others view it more seriously as a lack of support and funding.

A direct implication of changes to government policy, specifically the cut to the feed in tariff, has had an immediate and significant impact having led to councils withdrawing from renewable energy schemes. The failure to provide renewables a level play field subsidies equal to gas and nuclear is seen as unfair.

Another response stated that “The most significant issues faced by renewables are the unstable subsidy environment making long term financial planning difficult and breeding a level of nervousness around renewable developments”. The uncertainty leads to the process of making businesses cases is very challenging. Changes to incentives has meant that projects have been cancelled very late in the day wasting precious resources which have been applied to the projects. The lack of revenue funding to assist with feasibility and business case planning makes getting projects started difficult.

Another comment referred to the national policy for attracting international investment in centralised energy generation is threatening national investment in local energy generation.

Adaptation was mentioned - with the changing climatic conditions there seems to be a one fits all approach in the UK rather than giving the flexibility to respond to local climatic conditions with reference to Shetland and Southampton.

Fuel poverty was highlighted on a number of occasions.

In terms of climate change there were comments referring to climatic changes impacting on local authorities such as additional rainfall in winter and sea level rises; increased flooding and weather events will impact on our cities economic wellbeing and stability; heat related illness. From a wider perspective the need to prioritise climate change and why it is important to take action remains and as are the potential impacts of a failure to engage effectively on design for climate resilience and adaptation. Others mentioned that there remains a failure to properly understand climate risks and that climate change has been relegated to a low priority at a time of austerity. Population growth was also mentioned. There is a need to accept that climate change risks are real until there is concrete evidence that they are having an impact. The area of climate change and renewables can be positive in a culture of cuts as there are savings and income generation potential but in a time of large cuts climate change will be targeted as a non-essential service. Flooding was noted as an issue in a number of responses.

A lack of both skilled staff and numbers of staff were highlighted by a number of responses. There is no doubt that budget cuts have had an impact on the resources dedicated to this agenda at a local government. Capacity to develop projects.

Problems around grid capacity was a comment made by a couple of those responding. This is also limiting housing/ commercial growth alongside generation.

Other comments included:-

- Uncertainty surrounding conflicting agendas, council policy developments and assets
- The need for more involvement in the siting and development of renewable energy locations
- Falling energy costs, utility prices
- Behaviour changes
- Management of energy use
- Lack of senior management commitment
- Evaporation of national policies on the environment
- Local prioritisation of these issues across Council services
- Acquiring accurate baseline data about consumption

- Failure to maximise opportunities from renewable and low carbon technologies
- Some of our low carbon or energy projects put ease of implementation and capital cost ahead of the best available option both from short and long term benefits or local gain.
- Current low cost of conventional fuels presents a challenge

A short term focus on jobs and economic growth creation rather than on a longer term energy and growth policy.

The changing operational models of councils makes it difficult to commit resources to projects that may not be within the council's control in 12mths time.

Lack of resources to facilitate and mobilise partnerships over the longer term

Some specific comments included:-

“we are anxious to see further government support to help local authorities continue to lead on home energy efficiency retrofitting; we are worried that central government energy policy appears not to be designed to deliver the low carbon economy necessary to meet the national carbon budgets; we are concerned about the future for community led energy projects that maximise local economic and social benefit”

Legacy of poor building fabric, the requirement to upgrade building fabric (funded by Building Upgrades budget and also increase energy efficiency through capital spend to save bids
Removal of the RHI for renewable heating in Northern Ireland in Feb 2016. Reductions to ROCs in Oct 2016 and abolition in March 2017 - this will halt the further development of PV and other renewable electricity projects

Longer term it is the need to change gas boilers to either biomass or heat network but given the lifetimes (40 years)

10. Has the approach of your councillors to renewable energy projects altered since the reduction in FITs was announced?

Responses pointed to two thirds of councils not changing their approach to renewable energy projects even though Fits have changed. It is difficult to be accurate about this of course but this is a positive situation if it shows that councils feel they can continue with projects without government subsidies.

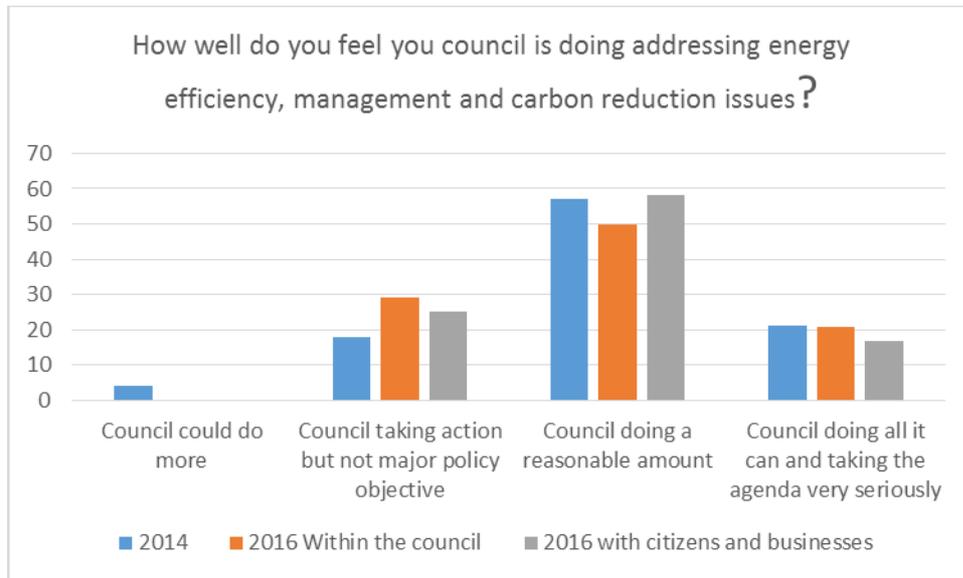
11. Do you feel your council is doing all it might reasonably be expected to do in terms of addressing energy efficiency and management issues and carbon reduction within the organisation?

Respondents gave their perceptions of the extent to which councils are addressing these issues. Many of the respondents are working full time in this area and it could be that they may demand a far higher level of resources be allocated to the agenda. Equally they will have seen colleagues losing their jobs as the cuts have taken effect and no doubt some of these will be in energy and sustainability related posts.

However they appear to have given measured opinions with the a reduction in the number claiming that they thought their council could do more and is only paying lip service to the agenda down from 4% in the last survey.

There has been an increase in the number of respondees who think their council is taking action but not as a major policy objective. The majority feel that taking their council is doing a reasonable amount with about a fifth claiming their council is doing all that it can and taking the agenda very seriously.

When asked about the split between work within the council as opposed to working with local citizens and businesses, perceptions are that similar amounts of effort are being exerted on both of these fronts.



There are major barriers to overcome in order to properly address all aspects of this agenda and the availability of financial resources is one such barrier. It appears that in the opinion of these respondents most councils are taking their responsibilities in this area seriously and managing to balance financial restrictions with investment decisions.

12. Which do you feel are taken more seriously by councillors within your council - global climate change issues or local factors such as job creation and income generation?

By far the majority of responses to this question show that local factors are of greater importance. In the previous survey a single response claimed that global issues were taken more seriously than local issues. This time there were none of those responses.

In the 2016 survey, amongst councillors the perception is that 79.1% take local factors more seriously whilst 20.9% feel that local factors and global climate change issues are given equal weight. Amongst officers the figures are virtually identical – 78.8% taking local factors more seriously with 21.3% giving local and global factors equal weight. These figures were virtually the same as the previous surveys figures.

This is itself is not surprising as the councillors and officers should be working together to take the agenda forward and so one would expect similar approaches amongst the 2 groups.

Individual comments included that “very few councillor stake climate change seriously”, “the green agenda is not as important as cost”, “Senior Officers are guided by the elected members to address local issues, but do have the insight to ensure that their actions do contribute to global climate change and as such strive to minimise the effects through reducing energy at a local level”

and “It's a bit of both really - some key senior officers get climate change, but quite a few support the work more because of the business case we have made for local economic benefit”.

13. Do you feel that there is an appropriate level of understanding of both global climate change issues and local factors amongst your councillors and senior officers?

Answer Options	2014		2016	
	Councillors	Senior officers	Councillors	Senior officers
A comprehensive understanding of both climate change issues and local factors	9.4%	10%	2.3%	13.3%
Some understanding of both climate change issues and local factors	60.4%	73.3%	79.5%	75.6%
An understanding of local factors but not climate change issues	28.3	11.7%	15.9%	11.1%
An understanding of climate change issues but not local factors	0	1.7%	2.3%	0
Do not have an understanding of climate change issues or local factors	1.9%	3.3%	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100

In terms of the level of understanding, the picture (in the perception of those responding to the survey) is that councillors and senior officers have similar levels of understanding about global climate change and local factors. There is a feeling that officers have a more comprehensive understanding about both climate change issues and local factors but the main point which emerges is that about three quarters of responses feel that both councillors and officers have an understanding of both climate change issues and local factors. A very small proportion do not have a grip of either of the 2 issues and this proportion has reduced between the surveys.

The responses to this question are general in nature but do give an indication of the levels of knowledge and awareness. From the information given it is the case that the majority of councillors and senior officers are well versed in the debate around climate change and the relevant global and local factors. As might be expected there are some more knowledgeable than others but in general the overall picture is a positive one.

14. Do you feel the Government is providing a clear and helpful lead on policies which help you to carry out you role within council? Do you feel the Government is providing a clear and helpful lead on policies which aid the council to carry out its role within the local area?

	2014 Yes (%)	2014 No (%)	2016 Yes (%)	2016 No (%)
Do you feel the Government is providing a clear and helpful lead on policies which help you to carry out you role within council?	14.3	85.7	15.5	84.5
Do you feel the Government is providing a clear and helpful lead on policies which aid the council to carry out its role within the local area?	16.7	83.3	15	85

There are 2 things to note about the responses to this question. First of all they are consistent about the role of those with responsibilities around the energy agenda both within the council and in the local area and they have not changed between the surveys. Secondly they are not complimentary of the Government's role as the vast majority of those responding do not feel that the Government is providing a clear and helpful lead.

The main issue raised which contributed to the responses given was the fact that policies, frameworks and targets are changing too frequently leading to uncertainty and confusion.

Comments made to the survey included the following:-

"Too many policies removed / changed and this has created too much uncertainty"

"There is still significant uncertainty on the future direction of energy policies which make it hard to "plan investments."

"The wholesale dismantling of low carbon policies has not provided a helpful lead."

"The Government is just leaving local authorities to fend for themselves on climate change."

"Reduction in FIT and RHI challenges longer term strategic approaches"

"Better lead from Holyrood than Westminster"

More help on funding building efficiency projects and clearer energy policy including renewables"

"The removal of FiT has had a serious impact on our project possibly delaying them by up to 2 years"

"Constantly changing policies e.g. National Indicators, CRCEES, ECO / Green Deal and subsidy changes - doesn't make it easy for business"

"A long term strategy for renewable energy, energy efficiency and fuel poverty, backed by robust policy and resources that will not change is needed"

"I would welcome a statement of the Scottish Government's expectations of local authorities in regard to climate change - what plans, strategies and measures do they want to see in place?"

“Government departments could do more in communicating policy and engagement with local councils to deliver the policy”

“Scottish perspective - we now have mandatory climate reporting in Scotland and the 2009 climate change act so this is a key issue. Still probably insufficient money in the kitty to deliver (home insulation probably needs in excess of 10 billion to deliver eradication of fuel poverty target we had on the list for 2016. Westminster on the other hand are a disaster and are in the lead of making sure we hit 3 degrees of global temp rise as far as I can see”

“Govt policy is clear that energy efficiency is the only stable support available. SALIX finance is a very useful tool and the Local Partnerships framework smooths out a number of barriers to improving our corporate buildings. However there is no policy or direction on local energy generation or supply which councils are now taking seriously.”

“I believe emphasis and leading should come from senior officer and the government should ensure that they understand why this is important”

“As above - national energy policy seems to be headed in the wrong direction. We are waiting for the outcome of the Bonfield Review on home energy efficiency in the hope that it will provide good support for the fuel poor and sufficient incentives for the able to pay market - but are not confident - so this may undermine our Energy at Home scheme just as it's starting to demonstrate that it works. We would like to see the government make an exception for community led renewable energy projects to ensure they continue to come forward. We would like to see a more favourable climate for investment in renewables and the development of the smart, low carbon energy infrastructure that we want to create”

“There are currently few policies available, of those that are they are haphazard and show a complete failure to understand anything related to climate change or energy. The speeches they deliver highlight only their incompetence/ ignorance.”

“NI Assembly does not have its own Climate Change Bill. Nor does it have its own climate change targets like Scotland and Wales.”

“In some areas yes but with regards low carbon technology and energy generation, absolutely not”

“It is clear that neither the UK nor Scottish Government are providing clear or helpful policies. The UK government stripped our FITs and have made recent policy decisions on fossil fuels which contradict the UK Climate Change Act. They have confused investors and developers and risk the UKs lead in renewable research and development as well as the UKs future energy security. The Scottish Government has put out a plethora of Fuel Poverty schemes which seem to dilute a full scale approach to this growing problem. They seem to be insistent in centralism and a one fits all approach to this issue which when you look at the problem. Nationally it is decreasing in the cities and urban areas but increasing in the rural areas. This says that the solutions need to now focus on the hard to reach- but this is not the approach”

A number of issues emerge here but the main one revolves around uncertainty and risk for investments. Neither local authorities nor the private sector will invest unless they are sure there is adequate consistency in government policy – as well as a number of other factors.

15. Does your council have a dedicated budget to take forward projects related to renewable energy, energy efficiency, energy management, carbon reduction, fuel poverty or similar OR are funds only accessible via departmental/service budgets?

Responses to this question show a mixed bag as might be expected. There are benefits to both of these approaches but it may appear that the most favoured position is where there is a dedicated budget for specific projects. The figures show that 59% of responses have a dedicated budget to take forward projects whilst 41% of officers must apply to departmental and service budgets which have no element allocated for energy spend.

APSE Comment

The responses to the questions on this survey provide a picture via the views of those officers and councillors with responsibility for climate change, energy and carbon management, renewables and related services and investment plans. The work they are able to do will of course be affected by the Government's policies, the amount of resources they are able to access as well as the international scene.

It is interesting to see that there appears to be a consensus amongst those responding to the survey. Difficulties arising from government policy seem to be held by most as does a lack of financial resources and for many the capacity to take projects through to implementation.

Survey results noted at the start of the report show that public perceptions are generally in favour of renewable energy and understanding of the issues surrounding the energy agenda is clear amongst the majority of the population. Such conditions are ideal to take forward investment in this agenda but of course austerity and government policy are seen as blockers by those replying to this agenda.

There appears to be a growing feeling amongst respondents to this survey and to others attending APSE Energy events that local authorities have a set of assets which are ideally suited for energy generation and so potentially promoting a level of influence over the local energy market. However there are factors in place which are holding them back including capacity in terms of staff resource and specific expertise within local authorities. This is not the same for all local authorities of course and some are taking forward the APSE vision and making the municipalisation of energy a reality.

As the results from the DECC Tracker survey highlight as noted at the start of this briefing, the public are in the main in agreement with the development of renewable energy, the benefits which can emerge locally and the national economic advantages. Now is the ideal time for local authorities to become involved in the energy market with the added advantage of avoiding the problems that early adopters have encountered.

The Association for Public Service Excellence

APSE member authorities have access to a range of membership resources to assist in delivering council services. This includes our regular advisory groups, specifically designed to bring together elected members, directors, managers and heads of service, together with trade union representatives to discuss service specific issues, innovation and new ways of delivering

continuous improvement. The advisory groups are an excellent forum for sharing ideas and discussing topical service issues with colleagues from other councils throughout the UK.

Advisory groups are a free service included as part of your authority's membership of APSE and all end with an informal lunch to facilitate networking with peers in other councils. If you do not currently receive details about APSE advisory group meetings and would like to be added to our list of contacts for your service area please email enquiries@apse.org.uk.

Our national advisory groups include:-

- Building cleaning
- Catering
- Cemeteries and Crematoria
- Environmental Health
- Housing, building maintenance and construction
- Parks, horticultural and ground maintenance
- Renewables and climate change
- Roads, highways and street lighting
- Service delivery models
- Service improvement and performance management
- Sports and leisure management
- Vehicle maintenance and transport operations
- Waste management, refuse collection and street cleansing