

Interview script

Introduction:

a. SmartKlub and CAPE

SmartKlub is a start-up business with the ambition to empower cities and citizens to take control of their energy needs as a force for social good.

CAPE is SmartKlub's Community Action Platform for Energy, that allows local authorities to activate citizens to create and procure group buy energy solutions. Smartklub are helping me with my MSc as we share a desire to find win-win opportunities between councils, citizens and local suppliers to collaborate on community energy projects.

b. MSc Project

My project is an attempt to measure and evaluate how prepared local authorities are to support communities to carry out energy projects. I am interviewing a range of local authorities and will be following up with a questionnaire aimed at all UK local authorities.

c. Community Energy

We define community energy in its widest sense: any local energy initiative from energy efficiency measures to combat fuel poverty, to group buy PV panels (prompt: group buy?) to get best prices, via electric car charging points to promote cleaner transport - and everything in-between.

In order to understand of how your local authority currently engages with community energy and what further potential your local authority has, I have two sets of questions. The first are aimed at your approach to managing energy and the second focuses on what resources are available to you; and then if you don't mind I have a couple of quick question on the CAPE platform at the end:

Approach:

Energy Strategy

- Please outline your LA's energy strategy
- Does your LA engage communities to help achieve these goals?
- How is the LA working to achieve these goals?

Energy programmes

This set of questions is just to get a sense of what work you are currently doing on energy

- What 'top-down' council directed programs are you currently engaged in or considering for the future?
- What steps have or are going to be taken to promote or support 'bottom-up' community led initiatives?
- What are the greatest obstacles to energy programs and what support would be most useful from the private/charity sectors?

Carbon accounting

Often the justification for energy projects is meeting emissions targets (your... target). I'd like to ask a couple of questions about how you quantify success in that regard.

- Do you find it challenging to account for the carbon your saving?
- Does this result in you're only choosing projects that can be easily measured?

Cross departmental working

One of the great things about community energy projects is their many benefits (e.g. Social resilience, health, environment etc.). However, some of these can be hard to quantify and I imagine it is also difficult to work towards a range of different outcomes at once.

- How aligned are your goals with the goal of other departments?
- How often do you work together to achieve these goals? Could you describe this process?
- Which departments do you collaborate with most often and most effectively?
- How have you seen these barriers best overcome? (Prompt: funding structure, systems, personalities)

Resources:

Dedicated investment & officers

Beginning then with the core resources within the local authority

- What resources has your local authority dedicated to energy development over the last year? (Prompt: e.g. how many staff, annual expenditure, do you have a dedicated budget)
- When making a business case for energy investments what are the key most important outcomes for a project to have? (Prompt: ROI, Social, economic, welfare, emissions targets, health, security)
- [Insert LA specific question based on their Strategy]

Activated citizens

Now moving on to the ties you have with 'active' or 'engaged' citizens:

- How have you change your approach to community engagement in light of recent budget cuts? (Prompt: active citizen, 'critical friend' role)
- Do you find any conflict between supporting community groups and ensuring best value for your constituents? (Prompt: Asset rental, Procurement processes)
- Which organisations can be helpful in engaging and organising the community? Can you provide any contacts? (Prompt: umbrella on behalf of smaller 3rd sector groups) (Community action MK as example)

Data insights

I understand that central government is currently engaged in promoting more open access to data. So, the next set of questions relate to the data sets you have and how available they are.

- Do you have any data set which could help local communities to establish energy projects?
- Do you currently have ready access to: Housing quality (such as Energy Certificate rankings) EPC, Income deprivation, Fuel poverty? (explain CAPE role in this question)

Communication channels

Given the range of functions the local authority performs it would be good to get a sense of what avenues you have for engaging with citizens and businesses about energy Prompt with departmental structure chart.

- Where do you think there are unexploited opportunities for emissions reductions through community engagement?

SmartKlub:

The answers to the above questions, not only assists me in my dissertation topic, but also allows SmartKlub to understand which local authorities may be appropriate for a win-win partnership with SmartKlub. SmartKlub is looking to work with a number of councils with its award-winning CAPE platform. CAPE uses city data to highlight neighbourhood need and potential for energy measures and allows projects to be co-created to meet the need. In short, it activates citizens to act rather than put the burden solely on the council.

- Do you think your council could benefit from such a platform?
- Would you like a conversation with SmartKlub to discuss a collaboration?