

**REPORT TO:** Grants Advisory Committee

21 June 2018

**LEAD OFFICER:** Head of Sustainable Communities and Wellbeing

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## **Community Energy Grant Review 2018**

### **Purpose**

1. To review the criteria and decision-making timeline for the Community Energy Grant scheme and make recommendations to the Finance Portfolio Holder and Cabinet.
2. This is not a key decision.

### **Recommendations**

3. It is recommended that the Grants Advisory Committee reviews the Community Energy Grant scheme and makes recommendations to the Finance Portfolio Holder and Cabinet to:
  - (a) amend the Community Energy Grant scheme criteria and/or decision-making timeline; or
  - (b) make no changes to the Community Energy Grant scheme criteria and/or decision-making timeline.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

4. On 24 May the Leader and Finance Portfolio Holder decided to temporarily close the Community Chest and Community Energy Grants scheme to allow elected members to review the schemes' criteria. It was also agreed that applications received on or before 31 May 2018 would be considered using the schemes existing criteria.
5. The terms of reference for the Grants Advisory Committee state that the Committee's function is:

"To consider and make recommendations to the Portfolio Holder responsible for grants, or Cabinet as appropriate, including, but not limited to:

- Review of the Council's grant schemes to ensure they reflect Council priorities.
- Design of any new or revised grants schemes, including consideration of criteria and guidance applicable in respect of each scheme.
- Consideration of applications made under the Council's grants schemes."

6. The Community Energy Grant scheme is a new grant scheme and there have some enquiries regarding the timeline for re-opening the scheme since its temporary closure on 31 May. A swift recommendation by the Committee will allow the scheme to re-open promptly following a decision by the Finance Portfolio Holder and Cabinet.

### **Background**

7. The Community Energy Grant Scheme first opened on 1 March 2018. The first applications will be reviewed by Grants Advisory Committee on 21 June 2018.
8. The Community Energy Grant is funding available to voluntary and community sector groups, charities, parish councils seeking to deliver local energy saving and green initiatives in South Cambridgeshire. Applicants may apply for up to £3,000 for projects. These must deliver one or more environmental benefit, for example, the installation of energy efficiency measures, reduced carbon emissions as a result of reduced energy consumption, or increased use of low carbon energy sources. E.g.
  - Internal wall insulation
  - Loft/roof insulation
  - Electric vehicle charging points
  - Secondary glazing
  - Replacement windows/doors
  - Energy efficient lighting
  - Energy efficient boiler
  - Battery storage for solar panel or other low carbon energy generation measures
9. The amount of funding made available in the Community Energy Grant fund in 2018/19 is £55,000. The funding is allocated on a first-come first-served basis.
10. Applications are mainly submitted online, via a short online form. Paper copies are available where this is not possible.
11. On 24 May the Leader and Finance Portfolio Holder decided to temporarily close the Community Chest and Community Energy Grants scheme to allow elected members to review the schemes' criteria. It was also agreed that applications received on or before 31 May 2018 would be considered using the schemes existing criteria.
12. The terms of reference for the Grants Advisory Committee state that the Committee's function is:

“To consider and make recommendations to the Portfolio Holder responsible for grants, or Cabinet as appropriate, including, but not limited to:

  - Review of the Council's grant schemes to ensure they reflect Council priorities.
  - Design of any new or revised grants schemes, including consideration of criteria and guidance applicable in respect of each scheme.
  - Consideration of applications made under the Council's grants schemes.”

### **Considerations**

13. The existing Community Energy Grant scheme guidance notes, which include the criteria, can be found at Appendix A. In order to review the criteria, the Grants Advisory Committee could consider the following questions:

- (a) Do you agree with the Community Energy Grant scheme description under the heading “What is the Community Energy Grant Fund?” If not, what should it say?
- (b) Do you agree with the list of eligible groups who can apply? Are there any you would like to add or remove?
- (c) What do you think projects should be required to deliver? The Grants Advisory Committee’s terms of reference state that you should review the Council’s grant schemes to ensure they reflect Council priorities. Does it? (See ‘Eligibility Criteria - What must the project deliver?’.)
- (d) Do you agree with the examples of what can and cannot be funded? Do they meet Council priorities? Should anything be added or removed?
- (e) Do you think that the maximum award should remain at £3,000?
- (f) Should match funding be required?
- (g) Do you think that grants should continue to be awarded on a first come first served basis starting in April each year?
- (h) Is there any further documentation that you feel officers should require in order to process a grant application? (It has been highlighted recently that the form should require applicants to state the length of lease and lease end date if they are leasing land/property and requesting funding for improvements.)
- (i) Do you agree with the list of funding conditions? Should anything be added or removed?

14. The Community Energy Grant scheme is a new grant scheme and there have some enquiries regarding the timeline for re-opening the scheme since its temporary closure on 31 May.

### **Options**

15. The Grants Advisory Committee could:
- (a) review the Community Energy Grant scheme and make recommendations to the Finance Portfolio Holder and Cabinet to amend the Community Energy Grant scheme criteria and/or decision-making timeline; or
  - (b) review the Community Energy Grant scheme and make recommendations to the Finance Portfolio Holder and Cabinet make no changes to the Community Energy Grant scheme criteria and/or decision-making timeline; or
  - (c) start to review the Community Energy Grant scheme, requesting further information or work to be carried out by officers in advance of a second-stage discussion at its next meeting and/or consultation, prior to making recommendations to the Finance Portfolio Holder and Cabinet.

### **Implications**

16. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered: -

#### ***Financial***

17. This report is not seeking to amend the amount of funding available in the Community Energy Grant scheme. It is assumed that the funds, as agreed by Council in February remain in place for 2018/19.

***Risk Management***

18. Risk to the Council is managed via the documentation that is required of applicants plus agreement of the grant conditions.

***Equality and Diversity***

19. Depending on the amount of changes recommended it may be necessary to carrying out an EQIA screening.

**Consultation responses**

20. None.

**Effect on Strategic Aims**

21. The review will ensure that the Community Chest grant scheme reflects Council priorities.

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