

REPORT TO: Grants Advisory Committee

29 March 2019

Lead Cabinet Member Councillor John Williams

LEAD OFFICER: Director of Health & Environmental Services

The Zero Carbon Communities Grant

Purpose

1. To consider proposed design of the new Zero Carbon Communities grant scheme including consideration of criteria and guidance and make recommendations to the Lead Member for Finance and Cabinet.
2. This is not a key decision.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that the Committee recommends to the Lead Member for Finance and Cabinet, the setting up of a new Zero Carbon Communities grant scheme with criteria as set out in scheme guidance in Appendix 1.

Reasons for Recommendations

4. The new Zero Carbon Communities grant aligns with the 'Green to our Core' Council priority, and the shift to zero carbon emissions, by providing support to parish councils and community groups for projects that will reduce reliance on fossil fuels and promote behaviour change.
5. The new grant will help re-engage parish councils and community groups in the Sustainable Parish Energy Partnership (SPEP).
6. The new grant will result in activities at a local level which achieve:
 - energy use reduction and renewable energy production
 - a better understanding of the need for, and a stronger commitment to, the shift to zero carbon, at individual and community level.

Background

7. The Council is committed to supporting the shift to zero carbon emissions by 2050, as demonstrated by the motion passed at its November 2018 meeting.
8. The Zero Carbon Communities grant scheme replaces the former Community Energy grant scheme which opened in March 2018 and was closed in May 2018. A total of £91,229 is available for the scheme, comprising £55,000 budgeted for a Community Energy Fund or similar in 2019-20, and a further £36,229 remaining in the 2018-19 budget for the Community Energy Fund which will be rolled over to 2019-20.

9. The Zero Carbon Communities grant scheme will build upon the Council's strong record of supporting community level action on sustainable energy through SPEP, an informal partnership of parish councils and community groups set up in 2009 to encourage a shift towards sustainable energy.

Considerations

10. The new scheme differs in three main respects to the former Community Energy scheme:
- It encourages more ambitious projects by permitting applications for up to £15,000
 - Applications for projects to engage communities on climate change and the environment are eligible for funding
 - All projects are required to show an element of community engagement
11. Applications will be invited from parish councils and constituted voluntary organisations. Partnerships with non-constituted groups (many groups in SPEP are not formally constituted), local businesses, community interest companies and schools are encouraged.
12. A workshop is planned as part of the launch of the Zero Carbon Communities Grant scheme to encourage partnerships and information sharing between community groups.
13. The proposed guidance including eligibility and assessment criteria is included in Appendix 1.
14. The proposed schedule for delivery of the grant is provided in Appendix 2.

Options

15. The Committee could recommend to the Lead Member for Finance and Cabinet the setting up of a new Zero Carbon Communities grant scheme with criteria and guidance as set out in Appendix, with or without changes.

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. Funding for the Zero Carbon Communities Grant is provided for within current budgets from the now closed Community Energy Fund. £36,229 has been allocated in the 2018-19 budget and will be carried forwards into 2019-20. £55,000 has been allocated in the 2019-20 budget, giving a total allocation of £91,229..

Legal

18. Funding agreement with grant recipients will be drawn up in accordance with templates approved by the legal team. Funding agreements will allow variation or recovering of the grant in specific circumstance

Staffing

19. Proposals can be delivered within existing staff resource.

Risk Management

20. Where risks are identified these will be managed within the Council's usual risk procedure

Equality and Diversity

21. Organisations applying for grants will be required to have an equal opportunities policy.

Climate Change

22. The proposed grant scheme aims to reduce carbon emissions and raise awareness of climate change issues.

Consultation responses

23. The Climate and Environment Advisory Committee considered proposals for a Zero Carbon Communities grant at their meeting on 4 February 2019 and made recommendations that a Zero Carbon Communities grant be set up and that the maximum grant available through the scheme be increased from £10,000 to £15,000 in order to encourage more ambitious projects.

Effect on Strategic Aims

Aim 1 – Climate and Environment

24. The proposed grant scheme aims to reduce carbon emissions and raise awareness of climate change issues

Aim 2 – Affordable Housing

25. Projects to engage the community around saving on the cost of power and heat in the home will be encouraged through the grant scheme

Background Papers

Reports and draft minutes for the Climate and Environment Advisory Committee, 4 February 2019

<http://scamb.smoderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1095&MId=7489&Ver=4>

Appendices:

- 1 Zero Carbon Communities Grant Guidance
- 3 Schedule for delivery of the Zero Carbon Communities Grant Scheme

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