



**South  
Cambridgeshire**  
District Council

**REPORT TO:** Cabinet

1 May 2019

**LEAD CABINET MEMBER(S)** Lead Cabinet Members for Finance and for Environmental Services and Licensing

**LEAD OFFICER:** Director of Health & Environmental Services

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### **New Zero Carbon Communities Grant**

#### **Purpose**

1. To agree to the setting up of a new Zero Carbon Communities grant scheme and to approve proposed design including criteria and guidance.
2. This is not a key decision as the Zero Carbon Communities grant scheme would be funded from within existing budgets.

#### **Recommendations**

3. It is recommended that Cabinet agree to 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 enable a significant increase in community engagement activity around the zero carbon agenda and 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 approved by Cabinet in 16 November 2017. This opened in March 2018 and was intended to run for four years. £55,000 per year was allocated to the scheme subject to annual review. The scheme closed in May 2018.

A total of £91,229 is available for the new scheme in 2019/20, comprising £55,000, and a further £36,229 rolled over funds originally allocated to the Community Energy Fund.

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 as well as projects which directly cut carbon emissions
  - All projects are required to show an element of community engagement
11. Applications will be invited from parish councils and constituted voluntary organisations. Non-constituted groups (many groups in SPEP are not formally constituted), local businesses, community interest companies and schools will not be eligible to apply in their own right but are encouraged to form partnerships with organisations which are able to lead applications
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. Online publicity will also be used to promote the launch of the grant to ensure maximum engagement.
13. The proposed guidance including eligibility and assessment criteria is included in Appendix 1.
14. The schedule formally proposed for delivery of the grant is provided in Appendix 2. Due to staffing changes, it is likely that this schedule will need to be revised. The current Project Officer is moving to a new post at the end of April 2019 and recruitment to fill this position is underway.

### **Options**

15. Cabinet could agree or disagree to the setting up of a new Zero Carbon Communities grant scheme.
16. Cabinet could approve proposed design of the scheme including criteria and guidance with or without changes.

## **Implications**

17. 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***

18. Funding for the Zero Carbon Communities Grant is provided for within budgets allocated to the now closed Community Energy Fund. The budget for this has come from the Renewables Reserve from retained non-domestic rates from new renewable energy schemes. £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***

19. 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***

20. Proposals can be delivered within existing staff resource.

### ***Risk Management***

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

### ***Equality and Diversity***

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

### ***Climate Change***

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

## **Consultation responses**

24. 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.
25. The Grants Advisory Committee considered the proposed scheme at their meeting on 29 March 2019 and made recommendations to Cabinet for applications to include an environmental policy.
26. Informal Cabinet considered the proposed scheme at their meeting on the 03 April 2019, and made recommendations for clarification that the term 'match funding' includes in kind donations/volunteer time as well as monetary value. Informal Cabinet have also recommended that consideration be given to publicity, both promoting the grant and how the Council could also recognise successful projects.

## **Effect on Council Priority Areas**

### **Being Green to our Core**

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

### **Housing that is truly affordable for everyone to live in**

28. 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://scambsmoderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1095&MId=7489&Ver=4>

Reports and draft minutes for the Grants Advisory Committee, 29 March 2019

<http://moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1096&MId=7487&Ver=4>

Report and minutes of Cabinet, 16 November 2017

<http://moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=293&MId=7006&Ver=4>

## **Appendices:**

- 1 Zero Carbon Communities Grant Criteria and Guidance
- 2 Schedule for delivery of the Zero Carbon Communities Grant Scheme

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