



REPORT TO:

Climate & Environment Advisory
Committee

19 November 2019

LEAD OFFICER:

Director of Health & Environmental Services

Proposals for a Zero Carbon Communities Programme

Executive Summary

1. This report sets out proposals to provide support and guidance to community groups for projects that will reduce reliance on fossil fuels and promote behaviour change to help achieve the zero-carbon target.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the C&EAC considers the proposals in the report and recommends approval of the proposals by the Lead Cabinet Member.

Reasons for Recommendations

3. The proposals relate to climate change and environmental sustainability and the purpose of the C&EAC is to advise the lead Cabinet Member or Cabinet, as appropriate, on matters relating to these.

Details

4. A key priority of the Council, through the 2019-24 Business Plan, is to provide support and guidance to community groups to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and promote behaviour change to help achieve the zero-carbon target.
5. A key aspect of this work is the Zero Carbon Communities (ZCC) grant, launched in August this year. This grant provides up to £15,000 per project for proposals which engage the community around climate change and reduce carbon emissions. £91,000 has been made available in the first round and will be allocated in December. Over 40 applications have been received.

6. In parallel with the ZCC grant the Council is committed to providing support and guidance for community groups and parish councils. In doing this, the Council is building on ten years of providing support for a loose network of parish councils and community groups set up in 2009 as the Sustainable Parish Energy Partnership (SPEP). Support provided by the Council to SPEP has included project materials, networking & information events and newsletters. Many of the groups originally established and supported through SPEP continue to be actively engaged with this work though few now identify closely with SPEP.
7. In view of this it is proposed to relaunch the work associated with SPEP under the new name Zero Carbon Communities Programme to reflect the new focus on zero carbon, and to align with the ZCC grant.
8. The programme will liaise with projects funded through the ZCC grant and add value to these by providing opportunities for these to engage with a wider group and share learning.
9. The scope of the programme will include any action intended to accelerate the shift to zero carbon, including, but not limited to, encouraging take up of home energy improvements, active travel (cycling, walking, public transport), shifts to lower carbon diets, repair, re-use and recycling, and planting trees.
10. The programme will provide quarterly workshops/forums for information dissemination, networking and sharing of good practice and ideas. Soundings will be taken as to themes for these. There are several possibilities, including Community Energy projects (with possible speakers from the Rural Community Energy Fund, Gamlingay community wind turbine, Reach Community Solar Farm and the Swaffham Prior district heating scheme), and Low Carbon Neighbourhood Planning.
11. A regular e-bulletin will be re-instated and community groups encouraged to provide content for this.
12. The existing SPEP pages on the Council website will be revamped and rebranded to coincide with the launch. These pages will signpost to existing resources. New resources will be developed and added to the Zero Carbon Communities webpages where a demand for these is identified and subject to capacity within the team.
13. All events, e-bulletins and other news will be promoted using the Council's communications channels including the SouthCams magazine and social media channels.
14. The programme will launch in the new year at the first of the workshop/forums.
15. Evaluation of the programme will be through numbers attending events and opening the e-bulletin, and feedback on these.

Implications

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

Financial

17. Costs would include design of promotional material, refreshments and venue costs. These would fall within Sustainability budgets already allocated for the current year and in the proposed budget for 2020/21.

Staffing

18. Proposals would chiefly require Project officer time. This has been allocated for the current year and in the proposed budget for 2020/21.

Climate Change

19. The proposals are part of the package of Council actions to tackle climate change.

Consultation responses

20. There has been no formal consultation. However, the proposals have been discussed with several parish councillors and community group leaders.

Effect on Council Priority Areas

Being green to our core

21. The proposals provide information on how Business Plan Action C2ii to 'provide support and guidance to community groups for projects that will reduce reliance on fossil fuels and promote behaviour change to help achieve the zero-carbon target' will be delivered.

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