

<b>Report to:</b>	<b>Grants Advisory Committee 25/02/2022</b>
<b>Lead Cabinet Member:</b>	<b>Cllr John Williams</b>
<b>Lead Officer:</b>	<b>Bode Esan</b>

## **Grants to Voluntary Sector: Zero Carbon Communities Grant 2022/23**

### **Executive Summary**

This report sets out proposals to the Grants Advisory Committee (GAC) for minor changes to the Zero Carbon Communities (ZCC) Grant scheme criteria and guidance for applicants to further improve the effectiveness of the scheme in delivering the Council's priorities. Members are asked to consider the options set out and make a recommendation to the Lead Cabinet Member for Finance.

### **Key Decision**

1. This is not a key decision as it concerns minor changes to an existing grant scheme, to which funding has already been allocated.

### **Recommendations**

2. It is recommended that:

The GAC recommends to the Lead Cabinet Member for Finance changes to the ZCC grant scheme as set out in Option 1 of the 'Themes' section, and Option 1 from the 'Funding timescales' section.

The GAC recommends to the Lead Cabinet Member for Finance approve the proposed Information and Application Guidance documents for the ZCC grant scheme set out in Appendices B and C.

The GAC recommends to the Lead Cabinet Member for Finance delegate authority to the Head of Climate, Environment and Waste to make minor edits to the Information and Application Guidance documents as necessary for clarity.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

3. The priorities for the ZCC grant fund were recommended by CEAC (4 Feb 2019) and by GAC (29 Mar 2019) and approved by Cabinet on 01 May 2019. The aim of the fund is to enable parish councils and community groups to run projects which engage communities in climate and environment-related projects and reduce reliance on fossil fuels. The proposed changes will make it easier for applicants to devise suitable projects which score well and will make it easier to measure and report on the impact of grant-funded projects.

## **Details**

### **Background**

4. Proposals for a ZCC grant were recommended by the Climate & Environment Advisory Committee (4 Feb 2019) and the Grants Advisory Committee (29 Mar 2019) and approved by Cabinet on 01 May 2019. The funds are taken from the Renewables Reserve (business rates retained from commercial renewable energy projects in the district).
5. The ZCC grant was set up to support parish councils and community groups to run projects which engage communities and reduce reliance on fossil fuels.
6. The grant is a key mechanism by which the Council can pursue their Green to our Core agenda and deliver community-focussed actions as set out in the Zero Carbon Action Plan. The prime objective is the successful completion of at least 7 projects which deliver community engagement on climate change mitigation and reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.
7. The initial round of the ZCC grant accepted applications from any projects which met the criteria and were funded based on the highest scores from Officers and GAC members' recommendations.
8. In the two subsequent rounds, changes have been made to the criteria so that applications are invited under specific themes. This had the aim of making it easier for applicants to devise suitable projects and make it easier to compare applications. In Round 2 the themes were Community Buildings, Tree planting and Cycling. In Round 3 these were Community Buildings, Tree Planting and other Natural Solutions, and Other projects.
9. £100,000 has been allocated in the 2022/23 budget for the ZCC grant scheme. This is supplemented by an additional £20,544 which was unspent from the ZCC 2021/22 and is carried forward.

### **Proposed changes**

10. In past rounds, applications have been invited for projects which deliver both of the scheme's objectives, measurable carbon reductions and community engagement around lower carbon lifestyles. Projects which were strong on measurable carbon reduction but did not lend themselves to wider community engagement could not score well. Nor could projects which were strong on community engagement around lower carbon lifestyles but did not lend themselves to measurable carbon reduction.

11. It is proposed to replace the themes in previous rounds with two categories of projects, one for delivering measurable carbon reduction and the other focussing on community engagement around lower carbon lifestyles.
12. This change will make it easier for applicants to devise suitable projects which score well and achieve the aims of the grant scheme. It will make it easier to measure and report on the impact of grant-funded projects.

### **Training Programme for Community Climate Leaders**

13. An application for funding for a training programme for Community Climate Leaders was supported in the first round and ran last year, (delayed by Covid). This proved very successful empowering climate leaders across the district; more information is provided in **Appendix A**.
14. In order to allow this, or a similar programme to run this year, it is proposed to put aside £15,000 of the funding from the ZCC grant which was carried over after the 3<sup>rd</sup> round (2021-22) for the purposes of procuring this, or a similar training programme. Such a programme would contribute to the Council's wider actions in providing training for staff and residents in the district.
15. These proposed changes are set out in Option 1 below with alternatives at Options 2 and 3.

- i. **Option 1:**

Ringfence £15,000 to procure a Community Climate Leader Training programme to enable it to operate in the coming year, and shape applications for the following year.

Split the remaining funding between CO<sub>2</sub>e emission reduction projects and community engagement projects (a 70:30 split is proposed owing to CO<sub>2</sub>e emission reduction projects costing more). Projects will be required to demonstrate the degree of CO<sub>2</sub>e reduction or how many individuals have been engaged, and the depth of engagement in their applications. This will provide a more comparative method for scoring applications.

An Information Document (**Appendix B**) and Application Guidance document (**Appendix C**) will provide project ideas, and a standard method for calculating a project's expected CO<sub>2</sub>e emission reduction or degree and depth of community engagement.

- ii. **Option 2:**

The same as Option 1, however, no funding is set aside to procure a Community Climate Leader Training programme (The training provider, Cambridge Carbon Footprint could still be invited to apply for funding through the ZCC grant to run the programme again, although this would be later than if procured separately).

The grant is split between CO<sub>2</sub>e emission reduction projects and community engagement projects (a 70:30 split is proposed owing to CO<sub>2</sub>e emission reduction projects costing more).

- iii. **Option 3:**

The grant remains consistent with Round 3 with three main themes of community buildings, tree planting and other (or three other chosen themes). The maximum

amount is split between them in a 40:40:20 distribution respectively. Applications are funded based on the highest scores from Officers and GAC members' recommendations within each stream.

16. It is recommended that Option 1 is selected.

## **Section B - Funding timescales**

17. A change to the funding timescales is proposed. Projects from previous rounds have requested extensions beyond the 12-month completion date to allow them to provide us with measurable outcomes and impacts. It is proposed that projects be given 6 months from the completion date to measure their impact before delivering an end of project report. This will improve the ability to report on the success of the grant.

i. **Option 1:**

Projects are given 12 months to spend the funding after which projects must confirm that the funds have been spent so that they maintain momentum. An end of project report is required 6 months following the completion of the project to enable monitoring and measurement of project outcomes.

ii. **Option 2:**

No changes are made to the funding timescales. Keep as a one-year scheme with funding to be spent within 12 months. After one year, projects must deliver an end of project report.

18. It is recommended that Option 1 is selected.

## **Section C - Funding Amounts**

19. Upon receiving feedback from the GAC, the option of reducing the maximum available grant was considered. An analysis of the funding amounts was undertaken.

20. In Round 3, the mean amount applied for was £7,161 and the median amount was £5,000. A breakdown of the funding by category can be seen below.

	<b>All</b>	<b>Community Building</b>	<b>Nature</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>MEAN</b>	£7,161	£9,714	£4,609	£7,526
<b>MEDIAN</b>	£5,000	£9,495	£3,361	£8,541

21. The mean amount applied for across all projects remained high, particularly for the Community Building projects. This shows that projects still require a higher amount to afford project costs. The median amount applied for remained lower overall indicating that projects were not discouraged from applying for smaller amounts.

22. 9 out of 14 projects funded in Round 3 applied for less than £5,000, showing that projects were still granted smaller funding amounts even though the maximum amount

remained high. Therefore, a broad distribution of funding around the district was still possible.

23. It is, therefore, proposed that the GAC keeps the maximum funding amount the same (up to £15,000). This is contingent upon the stipulation in the Information and Application Guidance documents that the grant scheme is looking for value for money based on CO<sub>2</sub>e savings and community engagement.

24. Following changes made to the grant in Round 3, 19 out of 26 applications included match funding. A preference for applications with match funding will still be expressed.

## **Implications**

25. 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**

26. The funding available remains within the Council's budget for 2022-23.

## **Legal**

27. Funding agreements 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 circumstances.

## **Consultation responses**

28. This report has been circulated to the Climate and Environment Advisory Committee and Members of this committee have been invited to attend the GAC meeting to contribute their views.

## **Effect on Council Priority Areas**

29. The Zero Carbon Communities grant scheme has attracted significant interest. All the aims below from the SCDC Business plan 2019-24, will be furthered by the project recommended for funding and by the recommendations for the allocation of the remaining funding.

## **Growing local businesses and economies**

30. Promoting village-based businesses to encourage people to use local shops and food outlets.

31. Investing in renewable technologies.

32. Helping to ensure people's homes are close to their jobs and can be accessed by walking, cycling and using public transport.

## **Being green to our core**

- 33. Supporting community groups to promote behavioural change and reduce the reliance on fossil fuels.
- 34. Helping communities to secure grants to fund green projects.
- 35. Protecting and enhancing the district's heritage and environment.

## **A modern and caring Council**

- 36. Funding community and voluntary groups that benefit local people

## **Background Papers**

Climate and Environment Advisory Committee Meeting, Monday 4 February 2019  
[Agenda for Climate and Environment Advisory Committee on Monday, 4 February 2019, 3.00 p.m. \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Grants Advisory Committee Meeting, Friday 29 March 2019  
[Agenda for Grants Advisory Committee on Friday, 29 March 2019, 10.00 a.m. \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Cabinet, Wednesday 1 May 2019  
<http://moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=293&MId=7365&Ver=4>

Climate and Environment Advisory Committee, Friday 27 November 2020  
[Grants Advisory Committee Meeting Friday, 27 November 2020](#)  
<http://moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1096&MId=7968&Ver=4>

Grants Advisory Committee, Friday 26 February 2021  
[Grants Advisory Committee, 26 February 2021](#)  
<http://moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1096&MId=7971&Ver=4>

Climate and Advisory Committee Meeting, Tuesday 9 March 2021  
[Agenda for Climate and Environment Advisory Committee on Tuesday, 9 March 2021, 2.00 p.m. \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Grants Advisory Committee, Friday 24 September 2021  
[Agenda for Grants Advisory Committee on Friday, 24 September 2021, 1.30 p.m. \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Climate and Environment Advisory Committee, Tuesday 23 November 2021  
[Agenda for Climate and Environment Advisory Committee on Tuesday, 23 November 2021, 2.00 p.m. - South Cambridgeshire District Council](#)

Grants Advisory Committee, Friday 26 November 2021  
[Agenda for Grants Advisory Committee on Friday, 26 November 2021, 8.30 a.m. - South Cambridgeshire District Council](#)

## **Appendices**

**Appendix A:** Overview of Community Climate Leadership programme – Net Zero Now.

**Appendix B:** Proposed ZCC Information Document.

**Appendix C:** Proposed ZCC Application Guidance Document

### **Report Author:**

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