

**REPORT TO:** Climate and Environment Advisory  
Committee

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

4 February 2019

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## **The Sustainable Parish Energy Partnership (SPEP) Review and Draft Action Plan**

### **Purpose**

1. To provide the committee with the background and an update on SPEP and present a draft action plan including setting up of new Zero Carbon Communities grant scheme.
2. This is not a key decision. It has been brought before the Climate and Environment Advisory Committee to inform recommendations from the Committee to Cabinet relating to providing community leadership on climate change and sustainability, facilitating and engaging community groups and the public.

### **Recommendations**

3. It is recommended that the Committee
  - (a) notes the proposals for support for SPEP in 2019-20 and provides comments and/or suggests changes
  - (b) recommends to Cabinet the setting up of a Zero Carbon grant scheme to support community-level activities which speed up the shift to zero carbon emissions.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

4. 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. This shift requires action and engagement at all levels.
5. Continued support for SPEP will help engage community groups and the public on climate change and sustainability.
6. A Zero Carbon Community Fund has the potential to prompt activities at local level which result in
  - o reduced energy usage and shifts to renewable energy
  - o 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 has a strong record of supporting community level action on sustainable energy through its launch in 2009, and support since that time, of the Sustainable Parish Energy Partnership (SPEP).
8. SPEP is an informal partnership of parish councils and community groups (sometimes associated with the parish council) with the shared aim of encouraging the shift to sustainable energy. Around 40 parish councils 'signed up to' SPEP in the early years. In each of these parishes at least one project has been undertaken from a menu including thermal imaging, village energy days, film screenings and calculating carbon footprints.
9. In recent years Repair Cafes have been the main project supported. These have been established in around ten villages with the help of local charity Cambridge Carbon Footprint.
10. Thermal imaging to identify draughts and other heat loss problems continues to be popular. Initially, the Council's thermal imaging cameras were loaned to trained volunteers who provided surveys in their villages. More recently, the Council has purchased six pocket sized thermal imaging cameras and made these available to residents generally.
11. Although SPEP was originally set up with the intention of providing project grants with funding from the (now defunct) Local Strategic Partnership, no grants were ever made as the funding was withdrawn. Projects carried out through SPEP have been low cost with funding provided by the Council, parish councils and/or groups themselves.
12. £55,000 was made available through the Community Energy fund for 2018-19. A Community Energy grants scheme was open for applications on 1 March 2018 to 31 May 2018 and provided grants of up to £3,000 to voluntary and community sector groups, charities and parish councils seeking to deliver local energy saving and green initiatives. Projects were not required to include an awareness-raising or community engagement element. £18,771 was awarded to 8 organisations through this scheme. The scheme was closed to allow a review, which remains underway.

## **Considerations**

13. The proposed revised grant scheme has been devised with the intention of encouraging bold and ambitious projects which result in
  - (a) reduced energy usage and shifts to renewable energy, and
  - (b) a better understanding of the need for, and stronger commitment to, the shift to zero carbon, at individual and community level
14. Proposals have been informed by a review of similar schemes currently operated by Bristol City Council, Suffolk County Council and Cambridge City Council (see Appendix 1).
15. Responses to a survey sent to the SPEP mailing list in December have also been taken into account (see Appendix 2).

16. The scheme would be open to parish councils and properly constituted voluntary and community organisations, for projects to be carried out in South Cambridgeshire. Applications from partnerships would be encouraged. These could include partnerships of parish councils, SPEP groups (most of which are informal and unconstituted), established voluntary sector organisations and/or small businesses.
17. The proposed scheme would support all costs including core costs (eg staffing and office costs), project costs (eg venue hire, project worker) and capital costs (eg renewable technologies).
18. Evaluation would be on the basis of both anticipated reductions in carbon emissions and raised awareness. Projects to install renewable technologies or make energy saving improvements to buildings could be funded, but only if the proposal included an awareness-raising or education element.
19. Projects that tackled fuel poverty would be explicitly encouraged.
20. £36,229 remains in the 2018-19 budget for the Community Energy Fund. £55,000 has been budgeted for a Community Energy Fund or similar in 2019-20.
21. The decision as to where to set the maximum level of funding per project requires a balance between encouraging bold, ambitious projects and spreading the benefits of the fund evenly through the district. A maximum of £10,000 per project is proposed, which would allow at least six projects within the annual budget.
22. A requirement for match funding is proposed, with value of volunteer time allowable. This would encourage buy-in from other funding organisations and raise the value of projects resulting from the fund.
23. A draft workplan/schedule for the development and launch of the new grant scheme is included at Appendix 3. It is proposed that this be the main focus of support for SPEP over the next six months.

### **Options**

24. The Committee could
  - (a) note the proposals for support for SPEP in 2019-20 and provide comments and/or suggests changes
  - (b) recommend, or not, to Cabinet the setting up of a Zero Carbon grant scheme to support community-level activities which speed up the shift to zero carbon emissions, with or without changes

### **Implications**

25. 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**

26. Funding would be required for a Zero Carbon Communities grant scheme. This could be provided for within current budgets, which include £36,229 for 2018-19 and

£55,000 for 2019-20 for a Community Energy Fund or similar. Given that the first round of grants would be made after the end of the current financial year, it is proposed that the 2018-19 budget be carried over into 2019-20.

***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 clawing back of the grant in specified circumstances.

***Staffing***

28. Proposals can be delivered with existing staff resource.

***Risk Management***

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

***Equality and Diversity***

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

***Climate Change***

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

**Consultation responses**

32. See Appendix 2, survey responses from SPEP
33. The Grants Advisory Committee will need to be consulted regarding proposed changes to the Community Energy grant.

**Effect on Strategic Aims**

34. **Aim 1 – Climate and Environment**

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

35. **Aim 2 – Affordable Housing**

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**

Leader's Portfolio Meeting, 24 September 2015, Report Pack, item 5, pp 21-34  
<http://scamb.moderngov.co.uk/documents/g6639/Public%20reports%20pack%20Thursday%2024-Sep-2015%2010.00%20Leaders%20Portfolio%20Meeting.pdf?T=10>

Leader's Portfolio Meeting 17 July 2014, Report Pack, item 6, pp 33-42  
<http://scamb.moderngov.co.uk/documents/g6350/Public%20reports%20pack%20Thursday%2017-Jul-2014%2010.00%20Leaders%20Portfolio%20Meeting.pdf?T=10>

Appendices:

- 1 Examples of Sustainable Energy-related Grants available through other Councils
- 2 Survey of SPEP
- 3 Draft Workplan/Schedule for the Development, Launch and Operation of the new Grant Scheme

**Report Authors:** Siobhan Mellon, Development Officer  
Telephone: (01954) 713395

Katherine Southwood, Project Officer  
Telephone: (01954) 712922