

REPORT TO: Cabinet

26 June 2020

LEAD CABINET MEMBER: Lead Cabinet Member for Finance

LEAD OFFICER: Head of Shared Waste Services and Environment

Zero Carbon Communities Grant Scheme

Executive Summary

1. This report proposes changes to the Zero Carbon Communities Grant Scheme in the light of learning from its first year, to focus on three specific themes – Cycling, Community buildings and Tree-planting and other nature-based solutions.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that Cabinet:
 - i. approves changes to the Zero Carbon Communities Grant Scheme, as outlined in paragraph 11, which will result in a more focussed scheme providing funding to projects under three themes:
 - Cycling
 - Community buildings
 - Tree-planting and other nature-based solutions
 - ii. Delegates to the Head of Shared Waste Services and Environment the authority to make minor changes to the scheme documents in Appendices A and B (Information for Applicants and application form questions) as necessary for clarity.

Reasons for Recommendations

3. The Zero Carbon Communities Grant Scheme is a pioneering scheme to support community action on climate change. When it was set up it was envisaged that changes would be made to the scheme based on learning from the first year of operation. This learning has been captured and incorporated in the proposed changes.
4. Authority to approve policies and criteria for the approval of grant schemes under which awards above Level 1 (£5,000) may be made lies with Cabinet after consultation with the Grants Advisory Committee. Recommendations from the Grants Advisory Committee in relation to the Zero Carbon Communities Grant Scheme will be published following their meeting on 26 June 2020.

Details

5. Setting up of a Zero Carbon Communities grant scheme was agreed by Cabinet at their meeting on 1 May 2019 with the aim of providing support to parish councils and community groups for projects that will reduce reliance on fossil fuels and promote behaviour change.
6. In its first year of operation applications were invited for projects to engage communities and support the aim of zero carbon by 2050. Forty-two applications were received, 19 of which were awarded funding following recommendation by the Grants Advisory Committee at their meeting on 20 December 2019.
7. As detailed at the Grants Advisory Committee meeting on 29 May, two projects are completed, and all other projects are in progress.
8. Learning from the first year of operation has been captured in two ways. Following awarding of funding, a survey was circulated to all 42 applicants. Responses were received from 15 applicants.
9. Members' views were captured at an online Workshop held on 4 June to which all Members were invited, and which 15 members attended. Views were broad-ranging and, on some issues, varied. A strong theme was the need to make it as easy as possible for parish councils and community groups to devise suitable projects and apply for funding through the scheme, especially in the light of the pressures caused by the Covid-19 crisis.
10. The revised scheme incorporates the views of applicants and Members. It differs from the previous scheme in that applications are invited for projects under three specific themes. These are:
 - i. Cycling
 - ii. Community buildings
 - iii. Tree-planting and other nature-based solutions

Details of the revised scheme are provided at Appendix A (Information for Applicants) and Appendix B (application form questions).

Options

11. Cabinet can approve, or not approve, of the Zero Carbon Communities Grant Scheme as proposed, with or without changes.
12. Cabinet can delegate, or not, to the Head of Shared Waste Services and Environment the authority to make minor changes to scheme documents in Appendices A and B (Information for Applicants and application form questions) as necessary for clarity.

Implications

13. 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

14. Funding of £100,000 for the Zero Carbon Communities Grant Scheme 2020-21 has been agreed in the Council's spending plans for 2020-21. Funding is from the 'Renewables Reserve', comprising retained non-domestic rates from renewable energy schemes.

Legal

15. 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.

Equality and Diversity

16. Consideration will be given to how the Zero Carbon Communities Grant Scheme can be promoted to groups with protected characteristics. Organisations applying to the fund will be required to have an Equality and Diversity policy, strategy and/or action plan, appropriate to the scale and nature of their operations.

Climate Change

17. The Zero Carbon Communities Grant Scheme is part of the Council's Zero Carbon Strategy to support the district to make the transition to net zero carbon by 2050.

Consultation responses

18. The proposals in this report will be considered at a meeting of the Grants Advisory Committee on 26 June 2020. By the time of the Cabinet meeting on 29 June, the recommendations from this meeting will have been published and circulated to Cabinet.
19. The proposals in this report have been circulated to the Climate and Environment Advisory Committee and this committee has been invited to attend the Grants Advisory Committee meeting on 26 June to contribute their views.
20. The scheme proposed takes into account views from previous applicants to the scheme. All applicants were asked for their views in a survey to which 15 responses were received.

21. All Members were invited to participate in a workshop on 4 June, at which 15 Members attended. Their views on the proposed changes to the grant scheme were recorded and are have been taken into account in redesigning the scheme.

Effect on Council Priority Areas

Growing local businesses and economies

22. Local businesses are likely to be involved in providing goods and services funded through the Zero Carbon Communities Grant Scheme.
23. Projects funded through the Zero Carbon Communities Grant Scheme may help residents to access jobs by cycling.

Being green to our core

24. The Zero Carbon Communities Grant Scheme supports community groups to promote behavioural change and reduce reliance on fossil fuels

A modern and caring Council

25. The Zero Carbon Communities Grant Scheme funds community and voluntary groups that benefit local people

Background Papers

Grants Advisory Committee, 26 June 2020

<http://moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1096&MId=7963&Ver=4>

Grants Advisory Committee, 29 May 2020

<http://moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1096&MId=7956&Ver=4>

Grants Advisory Committee, 20 December 2019

<http://moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1096&MId=7783&Ver=4>

Grants Advisory Committee, 29 March 2019

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

Cabinet 01 May 2019

<http://moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=293&MId=7365&Ver=4>

Appendices

Appendix A: ZCC Grant Scheme Information for Applicants

Appendix B: ZCC Grant Scheme application form questions

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