

REPORT TO: Grants Advisory Committee 26 February 2021

LEAD CABINET MEMBER: Lead Cabinet Member for Finance

LEAD OFFICER: Head of Shared Waste Services and Environment

Zero Carbon Communities (ZCC) Grant Scheme 2021-22

Executive Summary

1. The purpose of this report is for the committee to provide feedback on changes to the Zero Carbon Communities Grant Scheme, which build on the learning from its first two years, and focus the scheme on two specific themes – Community buildings and Tree Planting/Nature; as well as introducing an extra general theme for projects not in the above categories.
2. The Constitution states that approval of policies and criteria for the approval of grant schemes under which awards above Level 1 (£5,000) may be made is for decision by the whole Cabinet. The committee is asked to confirm that the changes proposed do not significantly affect the policies and criteria of the Zero Carbon Communities grant scheme and do not therefore need to be decided by the whole Cabinet.

Key Decision

3. This is not a key decision. The Zero Carbon Communities grant scheme will be funded from within existing budgets and the changes proposed do not significantly affect the grant scheme criteria.

Recommendations

4. It is recommended that the Grants Advisory Committee

- i. review the proposed changes to the Zero Carbon Communities (ZCC) Grant Fund for 2021/22 as set out in **Table 1** of Appendix A to this report
- ii. provide feedback on the proposed changes
- iii. confirm that the changes do not significantly affect the policies and criteria of the grant scheme

Key changes proposed

5. Instead of inviting applications under the three themes Community buildings, Tree planting and other nature-based solutions, and Cycling, applications will be invited under the following three themes:
 - i. Community buildings
 - ii. Tree Planting/Nature
 - iii. Other projects

Reasons for Recommendations

6. 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 its previous years of operation. This learning has been captured and incorporated in the proposed changes.
7. The purpose of the Grants Advisory Committee is to consider and make recommendations to the lead Cabinet Member responsible for grants, or Cabinet as appropriate, including design of any new or revised grants schemes, including consideration of criteria and guidance applicable in respect of each scheme.
8. The proposed changes do not affect the broad criteria for the approval of grants under the Zero Carbon Communities grant scheme which remain as before, ie grants will be awarded to the projects which best fulfil the objectives of cutting carbon and engaging communities on climate change.

Details

9. 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.

10. In its first year of operation, applications were invited for projects to engage communities and support the aim of zero carbon by 2050. 42 applications were received, 19 of which were awarded funding following recommendation by the Grants Advisory Committee at their meeting on 20 December 2019.

11. In its second year of operation, applications were invited for projects to support the aim of zero carbon by 2050 plus one of the following objectives:

- Increased awareness of energy improvements to buildings by the wider public
- Increase in take-up of cycling by people who would not otherwise cycle
- Increased awareness of the importance of trees by the wider public

56 applications were received, 17 of which were awarded funding following recommendation by the Grants Advisory Committee at their meeting on 27 November 2020. Energy surveys for 10 community buildings were also provided.

12. Learning from rounds one and two of the grant has been captured through surveys circulated to all applicants and members of both the Grants and Climate and Environment Advisory Committees. Using this feedback, options for round three were discussed by three officers (those involved in the scoring of applications in round two).

13. The revised proposal incorporates the views of applicants, members, officers and the number of applications received for each theme in round two.

14. The revised proposed scheme differs from the previous schemes in that applications are invited for projects under two specific main themes and an extra general theme for exceptional projects; with each theme being allocated a percentage of the total grant fund:

- Community buildings (40%)
- Nature (40%)
- Other projects (20%)

Further details of the revised scheme, reasons for the changes and alternative funding options (with reasons why they are not the preferred recommendations), are provided at Appendix A.

15. Information for applicants is provided at Appendix B

Options

16. The Grants Advisory Committee can

- i. provide feedback on the proposed changes to the Zero Carbon Communities (ZCC) Grant Fund for 2021/22 as set out in **Table 1** of Appendix A to this report and
- ii. confirm, otherwise that the changes do not significantly affect the policies and criteria of the grant scheme, and do not, therefore need to be decided by Cabinet

Implications

17. 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

18. Funding of £100,000 for the Zero Carbon Communities Grant Scheme 2021-22 has been agreed in the Council's spending plans for 2021-22. Funding is from the 'Renewables Reserve', comprising retained non-domestic rates from renewable energy schemes.

Legal

19. 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

20. 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

21. 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

22. Previous applicants to the scheme were asked for their views of round two in an online survey. 18 responses were received and have been taken into account in redesigning the scheme.

23. All Members of both the Grants and Climate and Environment Advisory committees were invited to express their views of round two in a survey. Four responses were received and have been taken into account in redesigning the scheme.

24. This report has been circulated to the Climate and Environment Advisory Committee and this committee has been invited to attend the Grants Advisory Committee to contribute their views.

Effect on Council Priority Areas

Growing local businesses and economies

25. Local businesses are likely to be involved in providing goods and services funded through the Zero Carbon Communities Grant Scheme.

Being green to our core

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

A modern and caring Council

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

Background Papers

Grants Advisory Committee, 29 March 2019

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

Cabinet 01 May 2019

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

Grants Advisory Committee, 26 June 2020

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

Appendices

Appendix A: *Table 1* Zero Carbon Communities Grant Round 3 Proposed changes

Appendix B: Information for applicants

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