

Committee: Energy and Climate Change Working Group

Date: 7 December 2022

Title: Zero Carbon Communities Grant Fund

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Louise Pepper

Report Author: Vicky Reed, Climate Change, Lead Officer

Summary

1. The Climate Change programme has agreed an allocation of £300,000 to enable funding of community projects that will support the delivery of priorities within the Council's Climate Change Strategy.
2. The allocation of funding will be split over two years. £150,000 will be available in 22/23 and the same amount again in 23/24.
3. Grants between the value of £1k, and up to £35k are available to community groups, parish and town councils via an application to the Zero Carbon Communities Fund.
4. The Zero Carbon Communities Fund was launched at the end of October 2022, and a webinar for residents was held on Tuesday, 15th November.
5. Evaluation and selection of projects will take place in January, with grant awards for year one to be approved by Cabinet on 6th February 2023.

Recommendations

6. To note the actions that have been taken to date to launch the fund and engage with community groups in Uttlesford, and the timeline for selection of the successful projects.
7. To note that this enabling activity will support a further plan for district wide engagement on climate action. This engagement will also help inform the development of the Council Climate Change Action Plan, specifically the future programme of work that will be needed to deliver community decarbonisation.

Financial Implications

8. £300,000 has been allocated for the next two years. £150,000 has been allocated for year one and it has been agreed that if some of this allocation is unspent in year one, the surplus will roll forward to year two.

Background Papers

9. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report:

- The Council Climate Action Strategy and Climate Action Plan.
- The Zero Carbon Communities Grant Fund Application Form and Guidance and the Zero Carbon Communities Webinar Slides are available on the Council Website [here](#).

Impact

10.

Communication/Consultation	The model for the Zero Carbon Communities Fund has been reviewed by the Energy and Climate Change Working Group.
Community Safety	None.
Equalities	Grant funding will be allocated so that we can support as wide a range of projects as possible across the district. All projects will need to demonstrate how they will engage with others within their community.
Health and Safety	None.
Human Rights/Legal Implications	None.
Sustainability	The fund specifically supports enabling community groups to deliver sustainability and carbon reduction projects aligned to the Council Climate Change priorities.
Ward-specific impacts	None.
Workforce/Workplace	None.

Situation

11. The Zero Carbon Communities Grant was launched on 28th October 2022. The closing date for applications is 5th January 2023.
12. Our communications plan included the launch of a new Zero Carbon Communities Newsletter which the Council will issue on a regular basis to provide information, support and guidance to residents on climate change matters.
13. A launch webinar took place on Tuesday 15th November 2022, attended by more than 20 representatives from community groups, parish and town

councils in the district. We were able to provide an overview of the application process, the grant criteria and the types of projects that may be suitable.

14. In this first round, applications for grants have been invited under three themes:

- 1) Carbon Emission Reduction
- 2) Biodiversity Restoration and Enhancement
- 3) Community Engagement in Climate Change

15. All projects are expected to provide a method for how they will evaluate and measure the impact of their project. For projects delivering interventions to reduce carbon emissions, we expect the impact to be quantifiable.

16. It is proposed that the selection panel evaluating applications will include Councillor Pepper, Councillor Pavitt, and Councillor Caton. A scoring matrix will be designed to assess the applications against the agreed grant criteria. Members will not evaluate project applications from within their ward.

17. The ambition for the fund is to be able to stimulate engagement within the community about climate action, to share project ideas, successes, resources and learning.

18. The grant provides an opportunity for the Council to commence an ongoing programme of community engagement on climate action. Along with a regular newsletter, we will implement dedicated project pages and resources on the Let's Talk platform, in addition to further webinars to share learning from the projects funded by the grant.

19. Key milestones to be aware of are set out in the table below:

Activity/Milestone	Key Dates
<i>Application Submission Deadline</i>	midday, 5 th January 2023
<i>Evaluation of Applications and Scoring Complete</i>	16 th January 2023
<i>Selection Panel Moderation Meeting</i>	23 rd January 2023
<i>Successful Projects Approved by Cabinet</i>	6 th February 2023
<i>Publication of Grant Awards</i>	End February 2023

Risk Analysis

20.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
That the demand for grants cannot be met by the funding that has been allocated, leading to projects not being delivered, and community climate action plans being delayed in delivery, and the disengagement of community groups.	2	2	<p>Detailed feedback will be given to all applicants on the outcome of their proposal. Arising themes from applications will be reviewed to look at where other grants or resources could be utilised to support delivery.</p> <p>The Essex Climate Commission grant fund will continue to be publicised which provides a further opportunity for community groups.</p>
There is a risk that project impact measurements are not quantifiable, which means the contribution of projects to the reduction of carbon emissions cannot be monitored or understood, leading to a failure of the fund to achieve its aims.	3	3	Available and recognised community carbon calculation resources and methodology are shared with applicants and projects.

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.