

Committee:	Energy and Climate Change Working Group	Date: 01/03/2023
Title:	Zero Carbon Communities Grant Fund	
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Louise Pepper	
Report Author:	Vicky Reed, Climate Change, Lead Officer	Key decision: N/A

Summary

1. The Climate Change programme agreed an allocation of £300,000 over the next two years to enable funding of community projects that will support the delivery of priorities within the Council's Climate Change Strategy.
2. The ambition for the fund is to be able to stimulate engagement within the community about climate action, to share project ideas, success and learning.
3. The Zero Carbon Communities Fund was launched at the end of October 2022 with £150,000 available in the first round of funding. The closing date for applications was the 5th of January 2023.
4. Community groups, parish and town councils were able to apply for grants between the value of £1k, and up to £35k. Applications were invited under the themes of carbon emission reduction; biodiversity restoration and enhancement; and community engagement in climate change.
5. Twenty applications were received at the closing date, with a total of £250,000 funding requested.
6. The evaluation and selection of projects took place in January. Applications were independently evaluated and scored by Councillor Pepper, Councillor Pavitt, and Councillor Caton. After collation of scoring by UDC officers, a moderation meeting was held on 24th January and eleven projects were approved to receive grant awards.
7. A paper confirming the approved grant awards will be tabled for the Cabinet meeting on 16th of March 2023.

Recommendations

8. To note the evaluation and selection process that has been undertaken to determine the successful projects in this funding round.
9. To note that the Zero Carbon Communities Fund will open for a second round of applications later this year.

Financial Implications

10. A total of £125,426 grant funding has been awarded in year 1.
11. £150,000 was allocated for year 1, and any surplus funding will roll forward to year 2.
12. All applicants will receive feedback from the selection panel. For successful projects this will include details on any conditions attached to receiving their grant award.
13. Grant payments will only be released to a project when Officers are in receipt of a signed agreement and any other requested information, to confirm that conditions of the funding have been accepted and/or met by the applicant.

Background Papers

14. 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.
 - The Zero Carbon Communities Grant Fund Criteria (*see Appendix 2.*)

Impact

15.

Communication/Consultation	The model for the Zero Carbon Communities Fund has been reviewed by the Energy and Climate Change Working Group.
Community Safety	
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	
Human Rights/Legal Implications	
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	
Workforce/Workplace	

Situation

16. The Zero Carbon Communities Grant was launched on 28th October 2022 and the closing date for applications was 5th January 2023.
17. In this first round, applications for grants were invited under three themes:
 - 1) Carbon Emission Reduction
 - 2) Biodiversity Restoration and Enhancement
 - 3) Community Engagement in Climate Change
18. All projects were asked to provide a method for how they would evaluate and measure the impact of their project. For projects delivering interventions to reduce carbon emissions, the impact needed to be quantifiable.
19. At the closing date, a total of twenty applications for funding were received. Please see the summary of applications received in *Appendix 1*.
20. The selection panel independently scored and assessed each application ahead of a moderation meeting held on 24th January, where all applications were discussed and the successful grant awards agreed.
21. A traffic light system was used to evaluate each application against the grant award criteria, please see further details at *Appendix 2*. Panel members were asked to declare any interests ahead of the moderation process, to ensure transparency and fairness in the assessment of projects.
22. Eleven projects were selected to receive a grant award this year. The list of successful grant awards and projects will be tabled at the Cabinet meeting on the 16th March 2023.
23. The grant provides an opportunity for the Council to commence an ongoing programme of community engagement on climate action. The Climate Change team will monitor and engage with projects over the next 12 months, sharing stories and details of their implementation, via the Let's Talk Uttlesford Platform.
24. Key milestones to be aware of are set out in the table below:

Activity/Milestone	Key Dates
<i>Cabinet Approval</i>	16 th March 2023
<i>Publication of Grant Awards</i>	17 th March 2023
<i>Outcome letters issued to applicants</i>	17 th March 2023
<i>Grant Award Funding Released</i>	20 th March onwards
<i>Zero Carbon Communities Grant Fund opens for 2nd round</i>	End August 2023

Risk Analysis

25.

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>Other suitable grant funds 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	3	3	Available and recognised community carbon calculation resources and methodology are shared with applicants and projects.

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.			
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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.

Appendix 1 Summary of Applications

Total Grants requested

£249, 314.00

By Ward	No of Applications	Total Value
Clavering	1	£15,000
Debden and Wimbish	2	£19,150
Felsted and Stebbing	3	£18,150
Great Dunmow	1	£23,000
Hatfield Heath	2	£11,360
Littlebury Chesterford	3	£34,885
Newport	1	£5,425
Saffron Walden	2	£69,000
Stansted North	2	£4,993
Stansted South Birchanger	2	£39,893
The Sampfords	1	£7,500

Theme	No of Applications	Total Value
Carbon Emission Reduction	10	£172, 601
Biodiversity	7	£33 926
Community engagement and behaviour change	3	£42,787

Organisation type	No of applications
Parish or town council	11
Village hall/scout hall/Church	4
Recreational group	2
Other	3



Assessment Criteria

You need to read each application form and supporting documents to assess the following:

PROJECT PLAN

- Is there a clear project description, have they identified what the group wants to do and what the project will achieve?
- Has the plan clearly set out how the project will get the necessary people, support and resources? Do you understand the project objectives? Do the project objective/s align well to the grant theme?
- Did they submit a quote? Are you confident there is readiness and capacity to deliver the project?

VALUE

- Does the project represent value for money – is there a good impact for the amount of money requested?
- Does the project contribute additional value? this might include any of the following: other funding contributions; volunteer time/expertise from other sources; collaboration between organisations, and/or evidence of local support; communication of the project to the local community

MEASUREMENT AND IMPACT

- Has the applicant set out how they will measure and assess the difference that the project will make? For carbon emission reduction projects this should be quantifiable.
- To what extent will the project have a lasting impact on the local community?



Your Score and Comments

- For each application on the spreadsheet please complete Columns 'H' and 'I'.
- In column H: select one of the following to indicate your assessment of the application: **Green**, **Red** or **Amber**
- In column I: provide any brief notes and comments to support your assessment.

Quality Criteria – Traffic Light Assessment	
Please select your evaluation score (either RED , AMBER or GREEN)	
GREEN	The project meets all the requirements of the grant criteria The answers provided are regarded as excellent and fully relevant to the project outlined. I have full confidence in the capabilities or capacity of the applicant.
AMBER	The responses meet all the requirements of the grant criteria. The answers provided are regarded as good and are in part relevant to the project outlined. I have a good level of confidence in the capabilities or capacity of the applicant
RED	The responses meet some requirements of the grant criteria. The answers provided are of low quality. I have some doubts about the capabilities or capacity of the applicant.