

Committee: Cabinet

Date: Thursday, 5
September 2024

Title: Zero Carbon Communities Grant Scheme
(Round 3)

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Neil Reeve,
Portfolio Holder for the Environment

Report Author: Vicky Reed, Climate Change, Lead Officer
Ben Brown, Director of Climate and
Environment

Key decision: No

Summary

1. As a Corporate priority it was agreed to deliver Round 3 of the Zero Carbon Communities Grant Scheme, if funding from the Climate Reserve Budget was available.
2. £125,000 has been allocated from the reserve to enable delivery of the Fund in 2024/25.
3. Round 3 of this Grant Fund will use the application and award process that was established in previous rounds. The grant awards will be managed in a fair and transparent way with evaluation of applications against clear grant criteria, concluding with a moderation panel. Decisions on the successful grant awards will be recommended for Cabinet approval in February.

Recommendations

4. To approve the plan to launch round 3 of the Zero Carbon Communities Grant fund in September.
5. To note the timeline and milestones outlined for the application and selection of the successful projects.

Financial Implications

6. Previously £300,000 was agreed to provide grants for community projects that would deliver on the Council's climate action priorities, via the Zero Carbon Communities Fund (note that in Round 2 funding of £84,371.15 was agreed from the Rural England Prosperity Fund for projects that met criteria for community net zero infrastructure. A total of £226,721 funding has been awarded as grants from the Climate Reserve Budget to date).

7. £125,000 is identified from the Climate Reserve Budget to deliver round 3 of the Zero Carbon Communities Grant Fund in 2024/25.
8. In round 3 applicants will be able to apply for grants up to a maximum of £20k, with applicants needing to demonstrate a % of match funding available, depending on the value requested.
9. 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

1. 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:

[Zero Carbon Communities Grant Fund Projects](#)

[The Council Climate Action Strategy and Climate Action Plan.](#)

Impact

10.

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|----------------------------|---|
| Communication/Consultation | The delivery model for the Zero Carbon Communities Grant Fund has been established after two funding rounds delivered in 2022 and 2023. Information on the fund and community projects that have been supported is shared widely via all Council communication and social media platforms. A webinar is held to showcase community projects and share information about the grant criteria and application process. |
| Community Safety | n/a |
| 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 | n/a |
| Human Rights/Legal | Applicants will need to ensure any required permissions are gained ahead of |

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| Implications | installation of infrastructure projects such as solar panels. |
| Sustainability | The fund enables community groups to deliver sustainability and carbon reduction projects aligned to the Council Climate Crisis strategy and priorities. |
| Ward-specific impacts | The council have a responsibility to lead and influence action on climate change and biodiversity restoration across the district. |
| Workforce/Workplace | n/a |

Situation

11. The Zero Carbon Communities Grant Fund provides an opportunity for the Council to deliver a district programme of community engagement on climate action. The fund is enabling a growing network of community Climate Action groups to establish themselves through engaging local communities and residents in delivering 'low carbon' and 'high nature' projects on the ground.
12. As in previous rounds the fund will be open to community groups and parish/town councils delivering projects that reduce carbon emissions; projects that restore or enhance biodiversity, and projects which engage communities in taking climate action.
13. To date the grant scheme has funded 14 net zero infrastructure community projects, including solar panel installations on community buildings such as village halls and sports facilities. The scheme has funded 13 community biodiversity and nature projects, including support to the development of the Roding Farm Cluster; it has also funded 2 river restoration projects, in Newport and at Pounce Hall.
14. The Climate Change team will monitor and engage with all projects and share success stories and case studies via the Zero Carbon Communities Newsletter, Council communications channels and local media.
15. We will also work to establish a district climate action networking, partnership forum that will enable community groups to learn from each other and share resources. The first Zero Carbon Communities networking meeting took place in July.
16. All projects will be asked to provide a method for how they will evaluate and measure the impact of their project. For projects delivering interventions to reduce carbon emissions, the impact will need to be quantifiable. It is expected that all projects will engage with others in their community on climate action.
17. The below table sets out high-level timeline and key milestones for delivering round 3 of the Zero Carbon Communities Grant Fund:

| Proposed Timeline & Milestones | Key Dates |
|---|---------------------------------|
| <i>Launch Zero Carbon Communities Fund</i> | 27 th September 2024 |
| <i>Webinar including Community case studies</i> | 10 th October 2024 |
| <i>Closing date for applications</i> | 2 nd December 2024 |
| <i>Moderation panel complete evaluation</i> | 17 th December 2024 |
| <i>Shortlist recommended for Cabinet Approval</i> | 13 th February 2025 |

Risk Analysis

18.

| Risk | Likelihood | Impact | Mitigating actions |
|--|------------|--------|---|
| Poor value for money secured, or value for money not sufficiently assessed | 2 | 2 | <p>Applicants are required to demonstrate value for money in their project proposal.</p> <p>Panel evaluation of proposals against key grant criteria.</p> <p>Further information requested if applicant has not given sufficient evidence to support grant value requested.</p> |
| Insufficient due diligence to ensure grant recipient is solvent and an appropriate organisation to receive funding | 1 | 3 | <p>Full due diligence checks are carried out before grant payment is made to an organisation. This includes UDC receipt and acceptance of a statement of accounts</p> |
| Risk of fraud, or loss of public | 2 | 3 | <p>Grant agreement/contract</p> |

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| money | | | <p>must be signed by the organisation before payment.</p> <p>Any funding unspent to be returned to the Council</p> <p>Project Team make a visit to all projects.</p> <p>All grantees submit an end of project report with detail on what has been delivered and impact.</p> |
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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.