

TITLE: Net Zero Villages Grant Scheme

Committee: Finance and Assets Committee

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1.0 Issue

- 1.1. To agree the arrangements for distributing to our communities the Net Zero Villages grant of £167,737 from the Cambridgeshire Peterborough Combined Authority.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1. Members are requested to:

- 2.1. Agree to accept the Net Zero Villages grant of £167,737 from the Cambridgeshire Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA)
- 2.2. Approve the East Cambridgeshire specific onward community grant scheme criteria as detailed in Appendix 1
- 2.3. Delegate authority to the Strategic Planning Manager, in consultation with the Chair of Finance and Assets Committee, to finalise the detailed arrangements and opening of the grant scheme, likely in October 2024, following the signing of the CPCA Grant Funding Agreement.

3.0 Background

- 3.1. The Council is in advanced discussions with the Combined Authority over an opportunity to deliver a community grant scheme under the overarching theme of Net Zero Villages. The Combined Authority has provisionally allocated £167,737 to East Cambridgeshire (excluding the urban areas of Ely and Soham), with such funds targeting capital works in villages to help reduce carbon emissions. Other district councils are in discussion to receive similar funding, albeit the amounts vary depending on the scale of villages in the applicable district, with the total funding pot across Cambridgeshire being £1m.

4.0 Arguments/Conclusions

- 2.4. The CPCA funding agreement, which is ready for signing, contains schedules establishing the framework for how the £167,737 can be spent. In simple terms, the idea is that East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC) will hold the total fund and transfer such funds to suitable community bodies for emission saving initiatives on community buildings. The CPCA have set the headline rules for this programme, but it is for ECDC to determine the precise governance arrangements and any detailed eligibility rules.

- 4.1. From the CPCA perspective, to be eligible for funding, community projects must meet one of the following eligibility criteria:
- tackle energy use and/or support energy efficiency or generation retrofit to community buildings
 - enable access to public transport or access to local services through low carbon transport, or
 - deliver nature-based solutions to tackle overheating of community buildings.
- 4.2. East Cambridgeshire based voluntary, community and social enterprise sector organisations and public sector bodies are eligible to apply. If the organisation is based outside the district, the building or asset must be in East Cambridgeshire. Businesses are eligible to apply but the project must relate to a community asset for public benefit as set out above.
- 2.5. CPCA terms do not prevent grants being for 100% of the project's cost. However, it is recommended that a cap is installed so as to ensure several community groups can take advantage of this grant. Projects need, in accordance with CPCA requirements, to demonstrate genuine value for money as well as meaningful emission savings. We should also take the opportunity to seek projects which delivered wider co-benefits, support equal opportunity to facilities or have an element of educational or replicability to it.
- 2.6. In Appendix 1 is the proposed East Cambridgeshire terms and conditions for the grant scheme which we intend to launch in October or early November 2024. These terms and conditions incorporate all the required terms from the original CPCA grant funding agreement, supplemented by some locally specific arrangements to fit our own circumstances and to help applicants understand what sort of projects might be suitable for funding.
- 2.7. It is recommended that the principle of accepting the funding is agreed, and that the grant scheme criteria at Appendix 1 be also agreed (subject to any minor adjustment prior to launching the scheme, which is recommended to be delegated to the Strategic Planning Manager in consultation with the Chair). A suitable application form will be prepared prior to launch, to ensure all essential information is submitted.

5.0 Additional Implications Assessment

5.1 In the table below, please put Yes or No in each box:

Financial Implications Yes	Legal Implications No	Human Resources (HR) Implications No
Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) No	Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA) No	Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) No

5.2. A brief summary of the implications under the relevant heading is set out below:

(a) Financial implications

- 2.8. The recommendations do not require any additional funding directly from the council's resources. However, the recommendation seeks to reach agreement on how the 'net zero villages' funding of £167,737 we are due to receive from the CPCA should be spent. Alternative arrangements to spend that funding are possible, subject to fit with CPCA main terms and conditions. We will take up the offer within the CPCA grant terms of using 10% of the funding (maximum £16,773, assuming the full £167,737 is utilised) to pay for the administration of the fund, so that any administrative burden on the council is cost-neutral. The fund will therefore launch with the headline of £150,000 being available for communities to bid for.
- 2.9. Alternatively, we could agree not to receive the funding from the CPCA and consequently not launch the programme. This is not recommended.

(b) Equality Impact Assessment

- 2.10. Whilst this is ticked 'no' in the above summary box, Members should note that the current nature-based Pride of Place community grant scheme, which is ongoing and open for applications until 31 October 2024, has in place requirements for grant recipients to have robust equality impact arrangements in place and ensures checks are done to ensure the project to be funded does not exclude any particular group from accessing such a project should it go ahead. Similar arrangements are being put in place for this similar community grant based Net Zero Villages fund.

(c) Carbon impact assessment

- 2.11. Whilst this is also ticked 'no' in the above summary box, Members should note that the Net Zero Villages fund has at its heart the intention to reduce emissions in our communities. Individual projects seeking grants will be assessed on that basis. It is not possible to assess such impacts at this stage, in advance of launching the grant scheme and receiving applications, hence the direct impact is recorded as 'no' above. However, indirectly this fund as recommended should result, for subsequent projects it supports, significant carbon emission savings and consequently a positive carbon impact assessment. Such savings will be assessed individually, for each project seeking a grant.

6.0 Appendices

Appendix 1: Draft Net Zero Villages (East Cambridgeshire) grant scheme criteria.

7.0 Background documents

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Net Zero Villages Programme Grant Funding Agreement.