

Report to: **Executive**

Date: **2 December 2021**

Title: **Climate Change and Biodiversity Grant Funding Model Update**

Portfolio Area: **Climate Change and Biodiversity – Cllr Tom Holway**

Wards Affected: **All**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken: Upon the expiry of the Scrutiny Call-in period – 5.00pm on Monday, 13 December

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Executive:

- 1. Agrees to end the small direct cash grants scheme;**
- 2. Sets aside £100,000 of the £200,000 dedicated to Crowdfunder and the small direct cash grants scheme, to fund projects targeted to accelerate the delivery of the Council’s adopted Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan as set out in the report; and**
- 3. Authorises the Director of Strategy and Governance, in consultation with the lead Executive Member for Climate Change and Biodiversity and the Leader of the Council, to decide the outcomes of future fund applications.**

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. On 17 December 2020, the Council considered the draft Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan alongside proposals for the allocation of the approved climate change and biodiversity earmarked reserve.

- 1.2. A sum of £200,000 was allocated to community grants through the Crowdfunder scheme and small direct grants.
- 1.3. After the first Climate Change Action Plan update on 1st July to Overview and Scrutiny Committee, a task and finish group was set up to consider the current action plan in more detail.
- 1.4. The recommendations arising from the task and finish group will be considered by the Executive as part of this agenda. One of the recommendations was to review the adopted funding mechanism to enable community groups to undertake specific tasks as required by the Councils adopted Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy.
- 1.5. It is recognised that community groups and organisations are key partners in delivering shared ambitions on climate change and biodiversity.
- 1.6. This report sets out proposals to revise the funding model, end the small direct grants scheme and split the £200,000 equally between the Crowdfunder scheme and a new grant scheme aimed at accelerating delivery of the Councils adopted action plan.

2. Background

- 2.1. The Council, through its declaration of a Climate Change and Biodiversity Emergency, approved the establishment of a climate change and biodiversity reserve. On 17 December 2020, the Council considered the draft Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan as well as proposals for expenditure of the climate change and biodiversity reserve.
- 2.2. It was agreed that the following split initially be adopted; £180,000 for initiatives/actions focussed on the Council's own carbon footprint and biodiversity. The remaining £200,000 for initiatives supporting the District to reach net zero by 2050 through a range of Community Grants. This in turn would be split, initially, into 2 phases of £100,000 each which would be a combination of small, cash grants and larger match funded awards managed through the Crowdfunder Platform.
- 2.3. After this £93,000 was also set aside from the Councils budget in spring 2021 for a new Climate change and Biodiversity Member Locality Fund.
- 2.4. Officers developed a funding model in spring 2021 with the £293,000 – as detailed above - available for grants. The funding platforms went live between May and June 2021. There are three funding opportunities on offer currently;

- Match funding through the South Hams Climate Action and Biodiversity fund through Crowdfunder, full information, including eligibility and guidance can be found on our Crowdfunder page <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/funds/south-hams-climate-fund>;
- Small direct cash grants (up to £500); and
- Funding through Local Ward Councillors (£3,000 available per Councillor) under the new Climate Change and Biodiversity Locality fund.

2.5. Through the Crowdfunder platform, up to £5,000 is on offer and up to £10,000 in exceptional cases. The percentage of the total project ask that we will match fund is dictated by the status of the applicant.

- Up to 50% for constituted community groups and Town and Parish Councils
- Up to 30% for registered not-for-profit organisations
- Up to 20% for incorporated locally based for-profit organisations

2.6. Applications for funding across all platforms need to support the objectives as set out in the Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy.

3. Current Status

3.1. To date, £6,000 has been spent through Crowdfunder and no applications have been made for small direct cash grants.

3.2. Following an update on the Council's Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 1st July 2021, Members felt that the report presented was so detailed and raised many questions which meant that it could not be reviewed sufficiently in the time allowed. As a result, a Task and Finish Group was set up.

3.3. The Task and Finish Group made five recommendations including the following:

- The Action Plan should continue to acknowledge that the Council has an important facilitation and coordination role in the community it serves and that it is uniquely placed to be actively bringing key local organisations together, working with them to resolve issues where it has the relevant powers and/or influence, helping to access funds as the need arises, helping to create a common understanding of goals and timescales and working with groups to achieve them. In light of this, a review of the adopted funding mechanism will take place with a view to ensuring that, within available budgets, support is available to enable community groups to undertake specific

tasks, such as community engagement, as required by the Council's adopted climate change and biodiversity strategy.

3.4. The above formed part of the subsequent recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to the Executive (minute O&S.37/21 refers).

4. Proposed Revised Funding Model

4.1. A number of requests for funding have not met the criteria for the Crowdfunder model. Recognising this as a factor in the low take up, it is proposed that another funding stream is created by taking £100,000 from the original £200,000 allocated for Crowdfunder and small direct cash grants.

4.2. The small direct cash grants scheme will be withdrawn

4.3. This £100,000 will be set aside to fund a competitive grant scheme aimed at, but not confined to, community groups and organisations who are able to actively accelerate delivery of the Council's adopted Action Plan.

4.4. It is proposed to split the fund into two phases. Phase 1, consisting of £50,000, will focus broadly on:

- Community engagement;
- Knowledge sharing;
- Behavioural change; and
- Infrastructure delivery/feasibility.

4.5. Phase 2, the remaining £50,000, will be developed, taking account of the learnings and outcomes from Phase 1, with a view to seeking projects for meeting a different objective from our Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan

4.6. In terms of the process, it is proposed to have a one-month expression of interest window. High level proposals focussing on outcomes, rather than inputs, will be invited.

4.7. This will be followed by a screening process and more detailed applications will be invited by the selected groups/bids.

4.8. Applications will then be assessed against the existing Crowdfunder eligibility criteria. These details are found at Appendix 1

4.9. The same criteria will remain, but the key difference proposed is that, consideration will be given to funding the time needed to deliver the project, though, for example, salaries and administrative costs. In addition the grant fund will be directed at a very specific objective.

4.10. It is proposed that the Director of Strategy and Governance, in consultation with the lead Executive Member for Climate Change and Biodiversity and the Leader of the Council, is authorised to determine the applications.

4.11. All recipients of grants will be expected to report back with sufficient data to demonstrate their project has delivered the outcomes proposed in line with the existing Crowdfunder criteria.

5. Summary

5.1 The introduction of the new grant scheme will enable the Council to accelerate delivery of its adopted action plan by supporting community groups and local organisations.

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	In accordance with the Council Constitution, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee established a Task and Finish Group to review the contents of the Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan.
Financial implications to include reference to value for money	Y	The current financial management of the climate change reserve is set out in Section 2 of the report. The report doesn't commit to any extra spending, rather a re-allocation of existing funding
Risk	Y	That the Council fails to deliver a grant scheme that meets the expectations of Members and our Customers
Supporting Corporate Strategy	Y	Climate Change, Community
Climate Change - Carbon / Biodiversity Impact	Y	Directly aims to enable projects that will reduce carbon emissions or change behaviour
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity		N/A
Safeguarding		N/A
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		N/A

Health, Safety and Wellbeing		N/A
Other implications		N/A

Supporting Information

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - South Hams Climate Change and Biodiversity Fund: Eligibility Criteria

Background Papers:

None