

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S
REPORT TO**

Cabinet
12 January 2022

Report Title: Community Renewal Fund

Submitted by: Executive Director - Commercial Development & Economic Growth

Portfolios: Environment and Recycling

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To outline the success in securing funding for a range of projects through the UK Community Renewal Fund (CRF) and seek approval to accept the grant funding.

Recommendation

That:

- 1. Cabinet accept the Community Renewal Funding and projects outlined.**
- 2. That the Executive Director, Commercial Development and Economic Growth, is authorised to enter into the Grant Funding Agreement with the County Council.**
- 3. That the Executive Director, Commercial Development and Economic Growth, in consultation with the portfolio holder for Environment and Recycling is authorised to enter into contracts for the delivery of the projects; their evaluation and to submit the final evaluation.**
- 4. That the outcome of the feasibility studies are shared with the relevant community centre management committees to enable them to plan for their future investment plans.**
- 5. That the outcome of the feasibility studies are used to direct the future Council investment through the Sustainable Environment Strategy.**

Reasons

The Council has been successful in securing funding from the UK CRF and Cabinet needs to give approval to accept this prior to the relevant legal agreements and projects being undertaken.

1. Background

- 1.1 In March 2021 the Government published its plans for growth 'Build Back Better'. The Government has invested £220m of additional funding via the UK Community Renewal Fund to target communities of greatest need and facing significant challenges. This is in line with the transition from EU funding towards the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
- 1.2 The UK CRF seeks to deliver investment in communities and place, with projects that address community needs, support local places by investing in community and natural assets. This included feasibility studies for delivering net-zero and local energy projects.
- 1.3 Staffordshire County Council is the Lead Authority and accountable body for the co-ordination of UKCRF in Staffordshire.

1.4 The Council is committed to delivering the Newcastle under Lyme Sustainable Environment Strategy and the commitment within that Strategy to ensuring a sustainable future that leads to improvements within our communities and to strive to reduce our own impact on the environment. It was therefore considered appropriate to bid for the UK CRF to take forward a range of feasibility studies and to direct future investment.

2. **Issues**

2.1 Bids for the CRF had to be submitted by 14th May 2021, at this time it was anticipated that the outcome of the bids would be known by 31st July 2021 for projects to be completed by 31st March 2022. The Council was notified on 3rd November 2021 that our bid had been successful and that the revised deadline for completion of projects including evaluation is 22nd June 2022.

2.2 The CRF is primarily a revenue funding opportunity, reflecting the short term deadline for delivery of projects.

3. **Proposal**

3.1 It is proposed that the Council accepts the UK CRF funding offer and signs the legal agreement with the County Council as the accountable body. In doing so the Council will deliver a range of projects outlined in the bid.

3.2 Feasibility of solar generation on land at Keele

As part of the development of the Sustainable Environment Strategy The Council committed to investigate green energy investment. Through undertaking a feasibility study to assess the suitability of potential solar generation on land at Keele adjacent to the cemetery, the Council will be able to develop a business case for future investment and have a better understanding of the issues and potential of other similar schemes within the Borough.

3.3 Smart LED lighting

It is recognised that good quality lighting influences residents in how they use our streets and car parks. Through assessing the potential options to upgrade our lighting in to LED the Council will be able to test the effectiveness and demonstrate carbon savings.

3.4 Replace fossil fuel heating systems

To complete a range of feasibility studies on key typologies of community centres, sporting complexes and the Almshouses. This will enable the Council and the various management committees to assess the investment options for clean energy usage and other measures to reduce carbon emissions. Subject to the costs of this work a demonstrator project could be delivered. Officers will then work with all the management committees to share the learning which can be used to develop Decarbonisation Plans for future investment. This is in line with the awareness, engagement and behaviour change element of the Sustainable Environment Strategy.

3.5 Evaluation

The UK CRF specifies that projects must have an evaluation plan with a minimum threshold of £10,000 allocated to this element. This should also be commissioned at the beginning of the project to ensure that all aspects throughout the programme can be evaluated.

4. **Reasons for Proposed Solution**

4.1 The Council is required to deliver the projects outlined in the bid, whilst the Council could discuss amendments with the Government this would create time delays and the projects

would be unable to complete by the deadline thus placing them at risk and the Council being unable to claim the defrayed funding.

4.2 The projects proposed are in line with the Council's ambitions set out in the Sustainable Environment Strategy.

5. **Options Considered**

5.1 The Council can decide to accept or decline the grant funding at this stage, prior to signing the legal agreement.

6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

6.1 There will be a requirement to comply with the obligations set out in the grant funding agreement with the County Council, in addition to complying with internal processes and procedures when the grant funding is used and contracts are awarded and entered into.

6.2 All branding and marketing of the projects must include the text 'This project is part funded by the UK Government through the UK Community Renewal Fund.'

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

7.1 No negative equality impacts have been identified.

8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

8.1 The Council's bid for the CRF was for £235,000, this comprises £215,000 CRF grant funding and £20,000 Council match funding as Officer time. The CRF funding is paid to the Council as 50% on signing of the legal agreement and 50% after the projects ends and evaluation is submitted. Throughout the programme, officers will be required to keep records of their time spent on the project as evidence of the £20,000 match funding.

8.2 The Council has not committed any direct funding to this project however; there is a requirement to show how the Council will be making investments in their assets going forward to deliver the carbon zero targets. It is known that the green technologies are more expensive than traditional technologies and the reason for the feasibility studies are to generate options and costings. These will be valuable for the Council in developing business cases for investment as part of the delivery of the Sustainable Environment Strategy.

9. **Major Risks**

9.1 The timescales for delivery of the projects and evaluation within the timescales is a risk. To mitigate against this officers have commenced the development of specifications for the projects and are procuring suitable contractors in order that contracts can be awarded and work commence as soon as possible after Cabinet agrees to the signing of the contract.

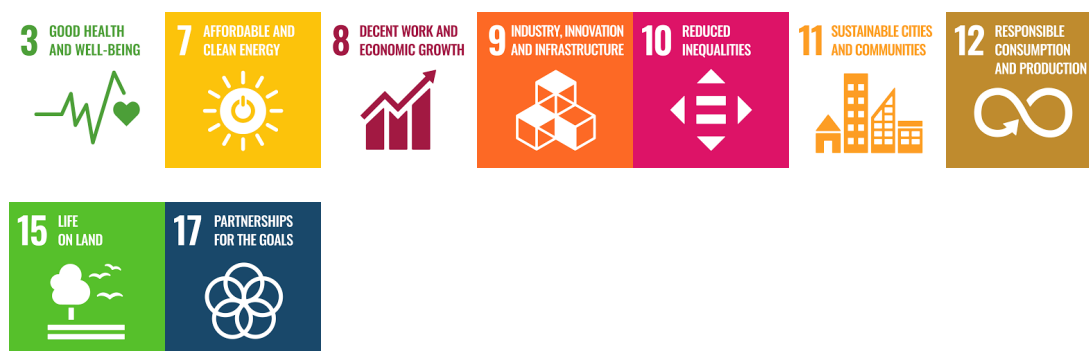
9.2 There will be regular programme monitoring meetings with the County Council as the accountable body to ensure the projects are delivering and expenditure is as planned throughout the programme.

9.3 The CRF project seeks to secure funding of £500,000 in future investment plans and carbon savings of 19.2 tonnes. The Council seeks to deliver these through the future investment plans for solar generation projects and investment in LED street lighting for the carbon savings.

9.4 Community Management Committees may chose not to participate in the fossil fuel replacement programme despite the best endeavours of the Council to engage with them. Should this be the case this will inform the evaluation of the projects in terms of attempts to encourage behaviour change.

10. **UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)**

10.1 As the proposals relate to improving sustainability they will impact a number of UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG). These are:-



11. **Key Decision Information**

11.1 This is a key decision as the grant is over £50,000 and the projects will include feasibility studies in a range of wards.

12. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

12.1 None

13. **List of Appendices**

13.1 None.

14. **Background Papers**

- 14.1 The draft agreement with the County Council for the CRF programme is available on request.
- 14.2 Newcastle under Lyme Sustainable Environment Strategy