

Title of meeting: Climate change & Environment Decision Meeting

Date of meeting: 6th October 2022

Subject: Greening the City - Funding application criteria

Report by: Zoe White, Green & Healthy City Coordinator

Wards affected: All

Key decision: No

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of report

- To consider and approve criteria for awarding grant applications into the Green City capital fund, and to ensure a consistent and transparent funding process.
- To note and agree the timetable for future open funding rounds.

2. Recommendations

2.1 The Cabinet Member is asked to:

- approve the criteria for internal and external grant applications using the application and scoring process outlined in appendix B
- agree to award £15,000 from the total capital fund to community projects in the first of two funding rounds in the financial year, with the amount for the second to be determined on the basis of interest in the first.

3. Background

3.1 The Greening Portsmouth Strategy (Appendix A to this report) outlines the approach that will be taken to making Portsmouth a greener city. PCC is working towards its objective of becoming carbon neutral by 2030. The document also highlights a range of broader benefits that greening the city offers, notably:

- Improved mental wellbeing
- Greater opportunities for physical activity for recreation and active travel
- Tackling climate impact (through carbon capture and mitigating the impacts of a warmer environment)
- Improved air quality
- Opportunities for increasing biodiversity

- Improved public amenity and visual impact

- 3.2 A 12-month progress update was taken to Cabinet in October 2021, outlining a summary of key achievements over the 12 months since the Strategy was adopted. The progress made was the result of collective business as usual efforts across PCC services, The Greening Portsmouth Strategy is due to be refreshed at the end of 2022.
- 3.3 Moving forwards PCC has made capital funding available to the Climate Change & Environment portfolio to deliver against the Greening Strategy objectives, while also delivering co-benefits for other strategic priorities such as tackling air quality and responding to the climate emergency. Further capital funds were awarded to the portfolio in April 2022, totalling £100,000.
- 3.4 Work over the last 12-18 months has predominantly focussed on making use of existing opportunities, with 7,750 trees of various standards planted on PCC-owned estate, the creation of 3 wildflower meadows during winter 2021/2022, and support offered to schools and community groups to enable local greening projects through available Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding and/or access to national grant funding secured by PCC.
- 3.5 To offer best value for public funds, and to maximise the greening opportunities across the city, we now seek to agree criteria for all (internal and external to PCC) grant applications and the process for funding decisions against desired outcomes. This will afford both the City Council and applicants a transparent and consistent process in terms of how grants are awarded, while providing a clear framework for how each project application meets the strategic objectives for citywide greening.

Criteria

- 3.6 An application form has been developed to guide applicants in meeting the criteria listed in 2.7 (Appendix B: Proposed City Greening Fund criteria questionnaire for applicants), with the intention to evaluate all applications using a simple scoring matrix based on the criteria (this is explained in Appendix B, Part D).
- 3.7 All bids for PCC capital funding will be expected to demonstrate how they deliver against the following criteria:
- the priorities of any given funding round (Appendix B, Part A)
 - the objectives of the Portsmouth Greening Strategy (Part D)
 - essential criteria that must be met for any application to be considered (Part E)

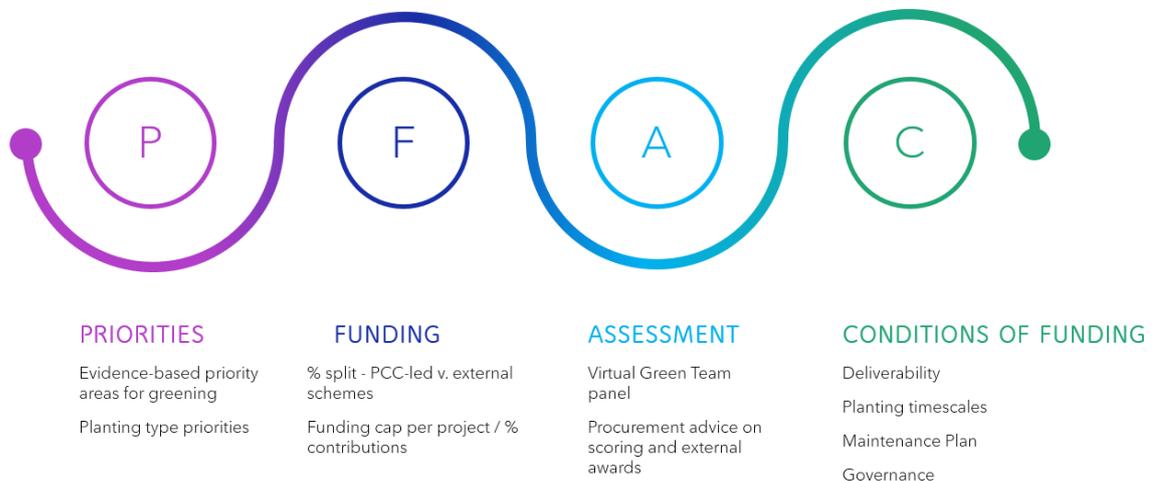
Process

- 3.8 Given that the capital fund is limited and the number of proposed greening initiatives is growing, it is no longer appropriate to consider funding applications on an ad hoc basis. A robust framework has been developed to allow all funding bids to be considered through an application process using a simple scoring matrix and assessment panel.

- 3.9 In developing this framework, we have been guided by existing funding methods such as Community Infrastructure Levy and the Jubilee community grants. We have considered how best to reflect strategic priorities for greening, options for funding, assessment process and awarding conditions. General funding round priorities are set out in part A of the application form. In advance of 'calls to bid' for each funding round, additional priorities may be added depending on the specific needs of the city at that time.
- 3.10 Capital budget made available for greening the city in 2022 is £100,000. In addition to community greening projects and wider community engagement, this funding is also supporting additional greening projects across PCC directorates (outside of business as usual) which support the outcomes of the greening strategy.
- 3.11 Our recommendation for this proposal is to award £15,000 to community projects in the first of two funding rounds in the financial year, with the amount for the second to be determined on the basis of interest in the first. There will be a maximum grant of £5,000 per project. Having a maximum cap on each awarded application will enable a variety of projects of different sizes to be considered. The funding could also be requested as a match funding exercise for larger projects; however, an award would not be given until match funding has been secured and evidenced.
- 3.12 In the first funding round, if fewer than three applications are received, or a particular application is of high quality and high greening gain, we will consider uncapping the funding to remove the grant limit. We will apply a similar approach to subsequent funding rounds.

The first funding round will be in Autumn 2022. This will be followed by a further 'Call to bid' in March 2022.

CITY GREENING FUND FRAMEWORK



3.13 Assessment of funding applications will be made using the scoring matrix. Section D of the application will have six questions with a maximum point score of 3 points per section and a total score value of 18 points. Responses to questions in Part D will only be awarded three points if applicants are able to demonstrate added value in the following areas:

- Levelling up - place-making, improving health and inequalities
- Creating social capital, improved community safety and cohesion
- Improved health outcomes

Applicants will need to score a minimum of six points to progress to consideration by a PCC panel. This will demonstrate either a satisfactory response in all six questions or a good/excellent response in a specific targeted area.

Following a short-listing exercise using the scoring matrix, decisions on the funding will be made by a panel comprising members of Portsmouth City Council's 'Green Team'. The panel will include PCC and non-PCC representatives including Elected Members and officers from relevant services including Culture & Leisure, Finance, Landscape Architect team, and Climate Strategy. We will also invite representatives from external stakeholders - such as Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust - to guest on the panel.

4. Reasons for recommendations

4.1 To offer best value for public funds, and to maximise the greening opportunities across the city; this will afford both the City Council and applicants a transparent and consistent process in terms of how grants are awarded, while providing a clear framework for how each project application meets the Greening Portsmouth Strategy (2020) objectives (see Appendix A).

5. Integrated impact assessment

5.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment can only be usefully undertaken once we are aware of the proposals in individual projects which are candidates for or awarded funding. The co-benefits of greening projects are substantial, especially for our most vulnerable communities, addressing climate risks by reducing flooding and heat risk and increasing biodiversity; improving mental and physical health by promoting active travel, connecting people with nature, and creating social capital; and promoting the economy through job creation. The added value of greening the city supports the aims of the Council and the City Vision for a green and healthy city with a thriving economy.

6. Legal implications

6.1 The criteria is within a fairness construct appropriate; all that needs to be clear is that the process is communicated at the time of application and that the decision is final. Decision makers acting within a sensible criteria of application can say yes or no. The fairness and challenge mitigation is based upon: a fair application criteria, process, assessment and objective justification for a decision to grant funding or not. This can be looked at again.

7. Director of Finance's comments

7.1 Funding of £100,000 has been allocated within the Council's capital programme to support 'Greening the City' initiatives. The proposals contained within this report set out how a proportion of these funds will be utilised to create a fund against which applications can be made for schemes that will support greening opportunities. The green and healthy city coordinator will put in place the necessary governance arrangements to ensure that bids are robustly evaluated and selected and that all funds are appropriately utilised.

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Signed by: Helen Atkinson, Director of Public Health

Appendices:

- Appendix A: The Greening Portsmouth Strategy
- Appendix B: Proposed City Greening Fund criteria questionnaire for applicants

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
Greening Portsmouth Strategy 2020	https://democracy.portsmouth.gov.uk/documents/s26330/Greening%20Portsmouth%20Strategy%20appendix.pdf
Update to Cabinet October 2021	https://democracy.portsmouth.gov.uk/documents/s32455/Greening%20Strategy.pdf

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/
rejected by on

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Signed by: