

RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION TAKEN BY AN EXECUTIVE MEMBER

This form **MUST** be used to record any decision taken by the Elected Mayor or an individual Executive Member (Portfolio Holder).
 The form must be completed and passed to the Chief Officer Legal, Performance and Democratic Services no later than NOON on the second working day after the day on which the decision is taken. No action may be taken to implement the decision(s) recorded on this form until 7 days have passed and the Chief Officer Legal, Performance and Democratic Services has confirmed the decision has not been called in.

1. Description of decision
 To approve funding from the Mayor's Climate Change Fund for an application from Harpur Trust to fund the installation of 54.4kW Solar PV, in the sum of £20,000 for the reasons set out in this report.

2. Date of decision
 16 October 2023

3. Reasons for decision
 To allow a qualifying project that meets the funding criteria to be funded which will contribute to reducing the overall carbon emissions in the Borough.

4. Alternatives considered and rejected
 Not to fund this application – If the Council does not strive to help the communities of the Borough to reduce their energy consumption it may have a negative impact on the Council's reputation and its ability to reach future government set targets.

5. How decision is to be funded
 The Mayor's Climate Change Fund budget is £0.600m. Funding is currently available to cover the application detailed in the report, which is £20,000.

6. Conflicts of interest

Name of all Executive members who were consulted AND declared a conflict of interest.	Nature of interest	Did Standards Committee give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and date of dispensation)	Did the Chief Executive give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and the date of the dispensation).

The Mayor has been consulted on this decision

Not Applicable

Signed 

Date: 16 October 2023

Name of Decision Taker: Tom Wootton

This is a public document. A copy of it must be given to the Chief Officer Legal, Performance and Democratic Services as soon as it is completed.

Date decision published:16October2023.....

Date decision can be implemented if not called in: ..26October2023.....

(Decision to be made exempt from call in.....NO.....)

Bedford Borough Council – Report to the Mayor

Date of Meeting: 16 October 2023

Report by: Chief Officer (Environment)

Subject: MAYOR’S CLIMATE CHANGE FUND PROJECT APPLICATION FROM HARPUR TRUST

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report provides details on an application for funding to the Climate Change Fund from Harpur Trust and recommends approval of the funding towards the project.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 **That the Mayor considers the report and, if satisfied:**

- **To approve funding from the Mayor’s Climate Change Fund for an application from Harpur Trust to fund the installation of 54.4kW Solar PV, in the sum of £20,000 for the reasons set out in this report.**

3. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

3.1 To allow a qualifying project that meets the funding criteria to be funded which will contribute to reducing the overall carbon emissions in the Borough.

4. THE CURRENT POSITION

4.1 The Council has successfully funded 11 projects to the sum of £117,317.45 in 2023. The approval for funding this project will bring the total grant spend to £137,317.45 out of the £600,000 allocated.

5. DETAILS

- 5.1 The Mayor's Climate Change Fund is a Council grant funded scheme that aims to support projects that improve community buildings, contribute to the reduction of the carbon emissions within the Borough, and thus contribute towards national reduction targets.

The fund is open to voluntary and community groups, not-for-profit organisations, registered charities, public sector including schools and parish councils, and social enterprises. It covers projects such as: insulation measures, upgrading of heating systems, installation of low energy lighting and other of renewable technologies.

The maximum level of grant, which can be applied for from the fund, is £20,000. All monies must be spent within 12 months of an offer being made and within the financial year, that approval was given. Importantly, as a demonstration of commitment, applicants will need to provide match funding of at least 50% of the total project cost from other sources.

It is a requirement of the criteria that groups have a legal status, terms of reference and a bank account. Projects must be located within the Borough boundary. Private businesses and individual households & groups of houses are not eligible.

5.2 Details of Funding Application: Emerald Court, Harpur Trust

The Pilgrims Court is a collection of 4 two-storey office blocks used by the Harpur Trust as well as other charities. The location where the project applies is Emerald Court, in 2020 the roof was replaced therefore the solar panels will not be affixed to the flat roof, instead they will be weighted down so as not to impact on the roof warranty. The trust has also installed LED lighting, additional insulation, revised heating and cooling system, reducing the dependency on gas heating. As the trust rolls out further roof replacements across its other buildings, it will also include installation of solar panels as part of that project. One of the tenants of Emerald Court is Carers in Bedfordshire which is a registered charity that offers support for unpaid carers across Bedfordshire, the other is Sense College which is an independent specialist college for people aged 16-25 with complex disabilities.

The solar installation at Emerald Court will comprise of 128 x 425W solar panels for a total system size of 54.4kW. This is expected to generate 47,150kW a year at 87-90% efficiency. Due to the sites high electricity usage, 100% of the solar PV system generation will be utilised on site.

The trust was severely impacted by the energy crisis in 2022 whereby their electricity rate was a massive 72p/kWh and even with the governments' energy bill discount scheme, this was still a financial strain on the trust. The energy savings from the solar were based on this price at the time of the application, but since their submission, the Trust has successfully re-procured their electricity contract and will be paying 29p/kWh from October 2023.

Savings have, therefore, been calculated based on the new unit rate, rather than previous unit rate originally on their application. The payback for the site is 3.9 years. The table below shows the energy currently used on site, how much the solar will save in kWh, carbon and in electricity costs. The installer has also offered a 20-year warranty on the product which is above average compared to other installers. The project will also save 12 tonnes of Carbon a year.

Energy Savings Breakdown:							
Type of Energy	Units to be used	Total units pre-project	Total Units saved	Carbon Emissions Factor (Kg)	Total Kg of Carbon Saved	Tonnes of Carbon Saved	Energy usage post project
Electricity	kWh	370,935	47,150	0.2556	12,052	12.051	323,785

Energy savings and Payback					
Type of Energy	Unit Rate	Kwh saved	Total £ saved	Project cost	Project payback (years)
Electricity	0.29	47,150	£ 13,674	£53,040	3.879

It is confirmed that the applicant meets the criteria for an award set out in paragraph 5.1 above in that the project:

- (a) aims to improve a community building.
- (b) installs renewable technologies.
- (c) contributes to the reduction of the carbon emissions within the Borough.
- (d) achieves energy and emission savings for a large number of community groups and residents that use the centre and the wider Borough in general.

6. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

6.1 To not approve the application for the climate change fund has been considered but rejected by officers. This project demonstrates both carbon savings and significant energy and cost savings for this organisation which is the aim of this grant funding.

7. KEY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Legal Issues	The Climate Change Act commits the UK government by law to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 100% of 1990 levels (net zero) by 2050. The 100% target was based on advice from the Climate Change Committee's 2019 report, 'Net Zero – The UK's contribution to stopping global warming'.
7.2 Policy Issues	<p>The Council's Corporate Plan 2022-2026, vision of the period of this Plan is:</p> <p>We want Bedford Borough to thrive as a place, that people are proud of, want to live in and move to. To do this we need a growing and strong local economy and an active response to climate change. From this foundation our residents will be able to thrive and realise their potential, supporting and celebrating our diverse and inclusive communities.</p> <p>Cross-Cutting Theme - Climate Change Emergency – to deliver what we need to do across all our services to address climate change.</p> <p>Sustainable Development and Environment Efficiency Strategy:</p> <p>Priority 1: Demonstrating Community Leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support local communities to reduce energy costs and carbon emissions• Support schools/academies in the Borough to reduce their energy and water use <p>Priority 2: Building Community Resilience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support local communities to help them become resilient to the impacts of climate change• Support the installation of low carbon buildings and communities within new and existing developments

7.3 Resource Issues	The Mayor's Climate Change Fund budget for 2023/24 is £600,000 and full funding is currently available to cover the application detailed in the report, which is £20,000. The Climate Change Fund is revenue funded and therefore it is necessary to have all the works completed and invoices received by 31st March 2024. The Climate Change Fund was established to help communities in the Borough to reduce the use of fossil fuels, which will result in a reduction in carbon emissions and will promote and improve energy efficiency in the Borough.
7.4 Risks	If the Council does not strive to help the communities of the Borough to reduce their energy consumption and encourage them to generate energy from renewable sources, it may have a negative impact on the Council's reputation and its ability to reach government set targets.
7.5 Environmental Implications	Encouraging communities to help reduce their carbon footprint will help mitigate the impacts of climate change.
7.6 Equalities Impact	<p>In preparing this report, due consideration has been given to the Borough Council's statutory Equality Duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, as set out in Section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010.</p> <p>In operating the Climate Change Fund the Council recognises the need to ensure that all residents and organisations of the borough are able to access information on the fund. The fund has been promoted through press articles, presentations and the council's website: www.bedford.gov.uk Those interested in the application process can e-mail their interest to climatechangefund@bedford.gov.uk</p>
7.7 Impact on Families	One of the tenants is Sense College which is an independent specialist college for people aged 16-25 with complex disabilities, this charity makes a real difference to the lives of disabled people and their families.
7.8 Community Safety & Resilience	Prominent threats to utilities, especially from extreme weather events, are common and increasing. The project will help with utility resilience by installing 54.4kW solar array to enable as much of the generated renewable energy as possible to offset their energy usage and costs.
7.9 Impact on Health and Wellbeing	One of the tenants of Emerald Court is Carers in Bedfordshire which is a registered charity that offers support for unpaid carers across Bedfordshire. This charity gives carers access to the support, information and skills that enhances their wellbeing and enables them to remain in a caring role for as long as they choose.

8. SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS AND OUTCOME

8.1 The following Council units or Officers and/or other organisations have been consulted in preparing this report:

Deputy Mayor & Portfolio Holder for Environment, Highways and Transport
Director of Environment – Craig Austin
Carbon, Energy Team – Claire Wilkinson
Chief Officer for Finance – Rhiain Bevan
Chief Officer Legal, Performance and Democratic – Margaret Martinus
Manager for Asset and Estate Management – Margaret Birtles

All relevant comments have been incorporated into the report as necessary.

9. WARD COUNCILLOR VIEWS

9.1 The local ward Councillors for the Brickhill Ward has been consulted and all relevant comments have been incorporated into the report.

10. CONTACTS AND REFERENCES

10.1 Please see references in the table below:

Report Contact Officer	Paul Pace – Chief Officer (Environment) paul.pace@bedford.gov.uk ext. 47275 Claire Wilkinson – Energy and Water Technical Officer claire.wilkinson@bedford.gov.uk
File Reference	I: Environment/Committees/Reports/Decisions
Previous Relevant Minutes	None
Background Papers	None
Appendices	None