

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 Ravensden Village Hall to fund the installation of Solar PV and LED lighting, in the sum of £10,926.78, for the reasons set out in this report.

2. Date of decision

8 March 2024

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 £10,926.78.

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: 8 March 2024

Name of Decision Taker: Mayor 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:8March2024.....

Date decision can be implemented if not called in:20March2024.....

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

Bedford Borough Council – Report to the Mayor

Date of Report: 08 March 2024

Report by: Chief Officer (Environment)

Subject: MAYOR’S CLIMATE CHANGE FUND PROJECT APPLICATION FROM RAVENSDEN VILLAGE HALL

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report provides details on an application for funding to the Climate Change Fund from Ravensden Village Hall 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 Ravensden Village Hall to fund the installation of Solar PV and LED lighting, in the sum of £10,926.78 (including VAT), 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 projects to the sum of £165,536.81 in 2023/2024. The approval for funding this project will bring the total grant spend to £176,463.59 out of the £600,000 budget allocated for this purpose.

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:

Ravensden Village Hall was built in 1952 and hosts meetings, community events, social gatherings, exercise and fitness classes, arts & crafts activities, local elections, WI activities for the local community. The village hall, spanning 180 square meters, relies solely on electricity for its power needs. The main hall and stage area is lit by fluorescent tubes suspended from the ceiling, operated by a bank of switches positioned just inside the main hall. For heating, both the main hall and bar room are equipped with wall-mounted electric fan-assisted heaters, each featuring individual control switches. The committee and trustees have developed a plan to enhance the energy efficiency of the Village Hall facility. The primary objectives include replacing the current fluorescent lights in the main hall with energy-efficient LED lighting and installing solar panels to meet the entire energy demand of the building.

It is proposed that 12x fluorescent tube lighting will be replaced with 12x LED lights and a 10.2kW Solar and battery storage system will be installed generating over 8000kWh, which will result in the village hall able to utilise all of the renewable energy as well as generate income from selling the excess energy back to the grid. Their energy supplier is offering a Smart Export Guarantee tariff of up to 16.5p/kWh so whatever the hall doesn't use/store, they can sell back.

The committee states "Considering the current challenges related to climate control and in line with our commitment as a community-supporting charity, the committee and trustees of our organisation are eager to adopt environmentally friendly practices for lighting and heating our village hall. Our objective is twofold: to embrace greener solutions and to enhance the cost-effectiveness of our energy consumption. This, in turn, will allow us to maintain low hiring fees, directly benefiting the community we serve."

This project fully aligns with the Ravensden Neighbourhood Development Plan 2030, dated 16 March 2023, demonstrating a strong commitment to the outlined vision. The Neighbourhood Plan underscores the significance of energy efficiency and generation as key components for fostering sustainability and resilience against the adverse impacts of climate change.

Below is an extract of the NP Vision:

‘By 2030, Ravensden parish will be: • A sustainable, safe and well-integrated place in which to live, work and spend leisure time, and which is resilient to climate change’.

The Chair of the Parish Council was contacted regarding the plans to improve the energy efficiency of the village hall and the CCF application. Below is the response received.

‘I think I can speak for the PC and say we wholeheartedly support your application for a grant to make the Village Hall greener. Bernie’

5.3 The energy savings breakdown below show both the solar and the lighting project figures together. Income from the exported solar generation has also been factored into the calculations which bring the payback of the projects down to under 8 years and saving over 1 tonne carbon.

<u>Energy Savings Breakdown:</u>							
Project	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
Solar	Electricity	kWh	4605	3,779	0.2556	965.9	0.97
Lighting	Electricity	kWh	4605	430	0.2556	109.9	0.11

Energy savings and Payback							
Project	Type of Energy	Unit Rate	Kwh saved		Project cost	£ savings	Project payback (years)
Solar	Electricity	0.388 (day)	3,779		£16,473.00	£1,466.25	11.2
Lighting	Electricity	0.334 (night)	430		£1,738.23	£143.62	12.1

Income							
Project	Solar Export	Export unit rate	Expected Export kWh	Total Export £	Total Saved plus income		Project payback (years)
Solar	Electric	0.165	4251	£701.42	£2,167.67		7.6

Total £ saved	Project cost without VAT (£)	Project payback
£2,311.29	£18,211.23	7.9

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) contributes to the reduction of the carbon emissions within the Borough.
- (c) 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

<p>7.1 Legal Issues</p>	<p>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'.</p>
<p>7.2 Policy Issues</p>	<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.
<p>7.3 Resource Issues</p>	<p>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 £10,926.78. 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.</p>
<p>7.4 Risks</p>	<p>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.</p>

7.5 Environmental Implications	<p>Encouraging communities to help reduce their carbon footprint will help mitigate the impacts of climate change. LED lights are more energy-efficient than traditional fluorescent lights. They consume less electricity, leading to a reduction in overall energy consumption and subsequently lowering carbon emissions. LED lights also have a longer lifespan, reducing the need for frequent replacements and waste.</p> <p>Solar panels provide a renewable and clean source of electricity. By generating on-site renewable energy, our Village Hall can decrease its reliance on fossil fuels, helping to reduce carbon emissions associated with conventional electricity generation.</p> <p>Both LED lighting and solar panels directly contribute to reducing carbon emissions, they also indirectly contribute to supporting resilience against climate-related issues such as flooding. Climate change is associated with extreme weather events, and the move towards sustainable practices helps build a more resilient infrastructure.</p> <p>Regarding pollution, LED lights do not contain hazardous materials like mercury, which is found in fluorescent lights. As a result, the disposal of LED lights is less harmful to the environment. Additionally, the use of solar panels reduces the reliance on traditional energy sources that may contribute to air and water pollution.</p>
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 email their interest to climatechange fund@bedford.gov.uk</p>
7.7 Impact on Families	<p>The village hall users are wide and varied both culturally and in terms of age, (ranging from young children to the elderly) and also families. The village hall is 72 years old and is used for many community events, social gatherings, exercise and fitness classes, arts & crafts activities, local elections, WI activities.</p> <p>The improved lighting system in the Village Hall will result in improved efficiency and quality of lighting for the users. The savings achieved from the project will enable the hall to maintain low hiring fees and continue to provide valuable services to the community.</p>
7.8 Community Safety and Resilience	<p>Improved lighting and saving in costs by reduced usage all helps towards resilience. Better for the environment. Prominent threats to utilities, especially from extreme weather events, are common and increasing. The project will help with utility resilience by installing solar array.</p>
7.9 Impact on Health and Wellbeing	<p>The Village Hall improves individual quality of life and has a positive impact on those using it on their Health & Wellbeing by contributing to social, physical, economic, educational and environmental wellbeing, it also positively impacts on the social cohesion of the village through the sharing of common interest and experience, resulting in friendship, togetherness, a sense of belonging and community spirit.</p>

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 – Rhian Bevan
Interim Monitoring Officer – Lee Phanco
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 Councillor(s) for the Renhold & Ravensden Ward have 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