

Portfolio Decision made under the Council's Urgency Procedure

Wednesday 25 November 2020

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Councillor Heather Timms

1. Urgent Decision - BEIS Low Carbon Skills Fund


That the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Heritage & Culture:

- 1) Provides approval for WCC officers confirm the bid for and commit to acceptance of grant funding for an application made under the BEIS Low Carbon Skills Fund in the event that the application is successful.
- 2) Notes the potential to submit an application for capital grant funding in January 2021 to assist reducing carbon emissions in the corporate portfolio of buildings.

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**Proposed Decision to be taken under the Council's
Urgency Procedure by the Portfolio Holder Environment
and Heritage & Culture on 25 November 2020**

BEIS Low Carbon Skills Fund

Lead Member	Councillor Heather Timms
Date of decision	25th November 2020
	<p>Signed</p> 

Decision
<p>That the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Heritage & Culture:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Provides approval for WCC officers confirm the bid for and commit to acceptance of grant funding for an application made under the BEIS Low Carbon Skills Fund in the event that the application is successful. 2) Notes the potential to submit an application for capital grant funding in January 2021 to assist reducing carbon emissions in the corporate portfolio of buildings.

Reasons for decisions
<p>The approval of the relevant Portfolio Holder is required under the constitution in order to bid for grant funding. A conditional submission has been made to the BEIS Low Carbon Skills Fund on the 23 November which remains subject to this portfolio holder approval.</p> <p>This decision is being considered under the Council's urgency procedure as it was necessary to submit the application on an urgent basis as the BEIS low carbon skills fund is expected to be oversubscribed. In addition, to further delay an application would place significant risk on time to complete the funded work.</p>

Therefore, urgent approval is sought to confirm the submission along with the approval to accept any grant monies awarded.

1.0 Background information

This report covers the submission of a grant funding application to the BEIS Low Carbon Skills Fund (LCSF). This is a scheme for obtaining funding for the employment of consultants on a short-term basis. Funding is provided in the form of a 100% grant to public sector bodies, including local authorities. The purpose of the consultant will be to develop proposals for decarbonising buildings by reducing the demand for gas by improving insulation levels, replacing gas heating systems with low carbon heating systems, and by installing solar panels to reduce the estate electricity bill.

The output of the work carried out by the consultant will act as part of the evidence pack used to apply for an adjacent capital grant fund: the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) also run by BEIS. Funding from the PSDS will provide WCC with a grant covering 100% of the capital grant funding to enable works to be contracted for the implementation of low and zero carbon technologies.

A conditional submission for a grant of £95,000 has been made on the 23 November which remains subject to this portfolio holder approval. This application has been submitted on an urgent basis as the BEIS low carbon skills fund is expected to be oversubscribed.

Applications for the LCSF are subject to regular reviews, with the next review due on 25 or 26 November. Feedback on our application is expected 27 or 30 November.

If we are successful in receiving funding from the LCSF we have a very short deadline in order for the LCSF consultants to conduct and complete their work in time for WCC to make an application to the PSDS.

The deadline for application to the PSDS is 11 January 2021

Meeting this final deadline is critical if WCC is to receive the PSDS capital and project management grant funding.

At this stage we are asking for approval to accept any grant funding awarded under the BEIS LCSF. Should we be successful in receiving this funding, we will make a further request for approval for application to the PSDS.

WCC officers have shortlisted a building categories and priority buildings we wish to target for assessment by LCSF funded consultants. These are:

- Selected corporate buildings

- Fire stations
- Community schools

For each building a full business case will be developed for energy saving measures. Business cases will need to be reviewed by the property team to confirm if the proposed measures are viable.

2.0 Financial implications and Key Risks

This application is for 100% grant funding. Applications will be either fully approved or rejected. There will be no requirement to provided matched funding.

The LCSF consultants are expected to be funded for a four-week period. During this time, there would be a minor degree of involvement of internal staff to support consultants from the property, energy and PMO teams.

Low Carbon Skills Fund Application - Key Risks for WCC			
No	Risk	Impact	Mitigation
1	Funds have been fully allocated at point of application by WCC.	WCC miss the opportunity to receive grant funding. This funding will assist WCC in making progress to our zero-carbon target.	WCC have submitted an application on 23 November.
2	Proposals for consultants exceed the funding agreed under the LCSF following a successful application.	This will limit the work that we can contract to a consultant and reduce the number of buildings for which a business case can be delivered.	We have conducted soft market testing to determine the expected funding requirement. We will base out application to the LCSF on figures obtained from this exercise.

3.0 Environmental implications

An application to the LCSF supports the council commitment to reaching net zero carbon by 2030. Specifically, key commitments are to:

1. Reduce our energy consumption by improving the energy efficiency of our buildings and make our corporate buildings carbon neutral.
2. Substantially increase our renewable energy generation.

A range of technologies can be supported, although is intended principally to fund schemes to replace gas heating systems with low carbon alternatives. Based on 2019/20 figures, gas consumption is responsible for 32% the carbon emissions from our corporate building estate. We recognise that as the grid decarbonises that this proportion will grow in the absence of any action. Whilst there is an ongoing

programme of upgrade and replacement of building plant and fabric, this is often only at point of failure due to restrictions in council funding.

It is therefore a key priority to reduce gas consumption within the timeframe to 2030 in order to meet our zero-carbon goal. A successful application to this grant scheme will accelerate progress towards this goal.

At this stage it is difficult to predict the potential carbon savings that may arise from our involvement in the scheme, however an initial figure of 850 tonnes of carbon per annum (12% of carbon relating to our corporate buildings) has been estimated.

4.0 Timescales Associated with the Decision and Next Steps

This decision is made no later than 25 November 2020.

A conditional submission on the 23 November 2020 has been made which remains subject to this Portfolio Holder approval.

Applications for the LCSF are subject to regular reviews, with the next review due on 25 or 26 November 2020. Feedback on our application is expected 27 or 30 November 2020.

Report Author	Matt Whitehead
Assistant Director	Steve Smith
Lead Director	Rob Powell
Lead Member	Councillor Heather Timms

Urgent matter?	Yes
Confidential or exempt?	No
Is the decision contrary to the budget and policy framework?	No

List of background papers

None

Members and officers consulted and informed

Portfolio Holder – Councillor Heather Timms

Corporate Board – Rob Powell

Legal – Nichola Vine

Finance – Andy Felton, Virginia Rennie

Equality – Keira Rounsley

Democratic Services – Paul Williams, Helen Barnsley

Councillors – Member of the climate emergency cross-party group (Councillors Timms, Adkins, Chilvers, Falp, Fradgley, Redford, Birdi, Williams).

Councillor (For consent to urgency) - Councillor Golby

Opposition Leaders – For information

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