

Portfolio Holder Decisions/Leader Decisions

Date: Wednesday 21 September 2022

Time: 12.00 pm

Membership

Councillor Margaret Bell

Items on the agenda: -

1. Air Quality Grant bid to DEFRA

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Monica Fogarty
Chief Executive
Warwickshire County Council
Shire Hall, Warwick

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Portfolio Holder Decision Air Quality Grant bid to DEFRA

Portfolio Holder	Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care & Health
Date of decision	23 September 2022
	<p>Signed</p> 

1. Decision taken

- 1 That the Portfolio Holder approves a submission for a funding bid to the Air Quality Grant Scheme 2022/2023 from The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs which is open to all Local Authorities in England.

2. Reasons for decisions

- 2.1 The report asks the Portfolio Holder to approve a submission of a funding bid for the Air Quality Grant 2022/2023. The County Council's Constitution requires that Portfolio Holders approve any bid for funding in excess of £250,000 or that will commit the Council to funding in excess of £50,000 that cannot be met from a service's allocated budget.
- It is anticipated that that the bid will be for a total project value of £530,250 requiring a local contribution of £53,025, being 10% of the project cost being a stipulation of the grant application process.

3. Background information

- 3.1 Each year DEFRA makes available the Air Quality Grant for which any Local Authority in England can make a bid. The aim of the grant is to improve air quality at local level to assist in the compliance with statutory provisions nationally. Additionally, there is an emphasis on education and raising awareness of issues of pollution in the general public and vulnerable groups, including children.
- 3.2 This year the total budget for the grant is estimated to be £7m. Each individual bid has a ceiling of £650,000 for a single bid or £1m for a joint bid.
- 3.3 The deadline for submissions is 23rd September 2022. The outcome of bid process will be notified to applicants in February 2023. Funding will be provided for the financial year 2023/24 but bids will be looked on favourably if the project continues beyond the funding period.
- 3.4 Warwickshire County Council Public Health proposes to make a single bid for

funding from Lot 2 of the grant which is concerned with the education and awareness raising aims of the scheme. The proposal is to build on work already in progress with secondary schools and introduce systems to monitor internal and external air quality in a sample of 25 primary schools across the county. A target of 5 schools per District or Borough Council will be sought. Where applicable, schools within or in close proximity to Air Quality Management Areas will be included. School liaison will occur on award of the grant.

- 3.5 In order to accurately measure the actual air quality at these schools, each will be provided with an air quality monitoring system allowing up to 30 rooms to be sampled for temperature, humidity, CO₂ concentration, particulate matter and Radon. Additionally, 2 external monitoring points will be provided to measure temperature, humidity, NO₂, particulate matter and air pressure. External monitoring points would normally be at the school entrance and main playground. Data from all monitoring points is collated and displayed via a dashboard accessible by site. Sample data may be displayed for parents and children in school reception and at the main entrance.
- 3.6 The results of the monitoring will lead to improvements in internal air quality at each site as practices are developed to improve ventilation or changes are made to the structure such as increased opening lights to window sets. The use of the existing air filtration units at these schools could also be targeted to reduce particulate matter pollution in particular.
- 3.7 Most importantly for grant application purposes, the data can form the basis of an educational plan to improve knowledge of air pollution among teachers, pupils and parents alike. Training will be given to teachers on the interpretation of the data and a slide pack as a basis for educating the children. Project work is envisaged whereby children utilise the existing CO₂ monitors at these schools to investigate air quality at home and engage parents with possible improvements. Pre- and post-project questionnaires will be utilised to help judge the success of the educational aspects of the project, especially with parents.
- 3.8 Generic learning from the project will be shared throughout the primary school estate.
- 3.9 The initial project will run for 1 year with the backing of DEFRA. WCC will retain ownership of the monitoring equipment which is also capable of relocation. This will allow a second and third project to be developed to engage another 50 schools across the county over an additional 2-year period. If deemed worthwhile, the process could be repeated in another 25 schools each year until the full primary school estate has been examined. Additional budget would be required for any projects after year 3.

4. Financial implications

- 4.1 The proposed project has a cost estimate of £530,250 and part of the grant conditions is a requirement for 10% match funding. The match funding contribution of £53,025 will be funded from a £1,500,000 allocation from the Control Outbreak Management Fund for a school ventilation project started in August, 2021.
- 4.2 The project cost includes licence fees and extended warranties for a three-year period for all hardware. This allows for two additional annual projects at different schools at no additional cost.

- 4.3 Any further projects utilising this hardware would attract an additional cost of £68.00/sensor for the internal monitoring equipment licence and warranty. This equates to £56,100/year for the 825 sensors purchased via the Air Quality Grant.
- 4.4 Additionally, further projects would attract an additional cost of £636.00/external sensor for licence and warranty purposes. This equates to £31,800/year for the 50 external sensors purchased via the Air Quality Grant.
- 4.5 There is no funding available to support the extension of the project beyond the schools covered by the grant bid. The relative benefits of funding the annual £87,900 cost would need to be considered alongside other spending pressures as part of the MTFs Refresh once all the grant funding has been utilised.

5. Environmental implications

- 5.1 The project is expected to lead to improved internal air quality standards at the schools partaking, resulting from improved knowledge which leads to better operational practices and ventilation standards. Improved learning environment would ensue.
- 5.2 Additionally, improved local outdoor pollution standards would result from parent engagement around the use of motor vehicles when transporting children to school.

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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 Margaret Bell

Corporate Board – Nigel Minns

Legal – Nichola Vine

Finance – Andrew Felton

Equality – n/a

Democratic Services – Isabelle Moorhouse

Councillors – Clare Golby (Chair of ASCH OSC for Consent to Urgency)

Local Member(s): n/a