

NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET – TUESDAY, 19 JULY 2022



Title of Report	AIR QUALITY CAPITAL GRANT FUNDING (DEFRA)	
Presented by	Cllr Woodman Community Services	
Background Papers	Community Scrutiny Minutes 29 June 2022	Public Report: Yes
	Cabinet 8 June 2021 http://prod-modgov:9070/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=126	Key Decision: Yes
Financial Implications	Cabinet 8 Dec 2020 http://prod-modgov:9070/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=126&\$LO\$=1	
	<p>There are no direct financial implications to the Council. The council has been awarded a grant of £27,240 from the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) of which £6,000 is a revenue grant and £21,240 is capital.</p> <p>As part of the grant conditions, match funding is required from North West Leicestershire District Council and Harborough District Council of £2,745. This match funding is delivered in terms of staff time which is already included on the General Fund budget.</p> <p>Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes</p>	
Legal Implications	<p>The council's Capital Rules do not allow the capital grant money to be spent unless the project is in the Capital Programme. Therefore, in order to spend the capital grant money it is necessary for the Capital Programme to be amended retrospectively.</p> <p>Signed off by the Monitoring Officer: Yes</p>	
	<p>Match funding elements of the Grant Award</p> <p>Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes</p>	
Staffing and Corporate Implications		
Purpose of Report	<p>To advise Cabinet of the successful joint bid for DEFRA Air Quality Grant funding.</p>	
	<p>Cabinet to consider and comment on the retrospective addition to the capital programme prior to approval by Council 6 September 2022. The capital element of the grant funding will be used to purchase air quality monitoring equipment.</p>	
Reason for	For Cabinet to note the award of the DEFRA air quality grant funding;	

Decision	and considers and comments on the retrospective addition to the Council's capital programme of £21,240 for delivery of the air quality project.
Recommendation	That Cabinet recommends to Council at its meeting on 6 September 2022 that the DEFRA air quality grant funding is added retrospectively to the Council's capital programme for delivery of the air quality project.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.2 In December 2020 the council adopted the Air Quality Delivery Plan. The plan included a priority action to work collaboratively in the county on air quality. The health impacts from particulate matter are a key priority especially from PM2.5.
- 1.3 Each year the government through DEFRA announces funding opportunities for work that supports the improvement of Air Quality.
- 1.4 The criteria DEFRA are looking for is detailed below: -
- To help deliver compliance in areas in current and projected exceedance of UK air pollution targets in the shortest possible time
 - To support LAs (particularly those with a Smoke Control Area) to reduce PM2.5 emissions from domestic wood and coal burning
 - To support projects which develop solutions over the longer term by increasing awareness to encourage behavioural changes.
 - To support projects that align with the objectives of Defra's Clean Air strategy
 - To support projects that reduce nitrogen dioxide (NO2) emissions
 - To support innovative projects that can improve local air quality, especially in relation to delivering effective air pollutant emissions reduction measures, and to share this best practice
- 1.5 Since NWLDC and Harborough District Council (HDC) share an Air Quality Officer and work collaboratively on air quality it was logical to develop a joint bid for the funding that DEFRA announced on 7 Sept 2021.
- 1.6 Local Authorities do not know when DEFRA will announce their funding and do not know what the funding pre-requisites will be. There is also often a narrow window of time to apply for the funding. The deadline for submission of the application was the 8 Oct 2021. The funding round in Sept 2021 required the bid to be composed of 78% Capital and 22% revenue along with match funding elements, bringing the total for the project to £29,985.

2. FINANCIAL GOVERNANCE

The table below details the bid funding applied for.

Element of Project	Revenue Grant	Capital Grant	Total Grant	Match Funding	Total
Work Package 1 – Monitoring		£21,240	£21,240	£911	£22,151
Work Package 1 – Monitoring Analysis	£6,000		£6,000		£6,000
Work Package 2 – Public Awareness Campaign				£824	£824
Work Package 3 – Survey of behaviour in relation to solid fuel burning				£333	£333
Work Package 4 – Monitoring and Evaluation				£677	£677
Total	£6,000	£21,240	£27,240	£2,745	£29,985

- 2.1 As per the council's constitution, capital expenditure can only be incurred where it is in the capital programme. Approval by Council of the capital programme shall be a prerequisite for the commencement of a project and to enter into a contract. Due to the tight deadline for the bid application, there was insufficient time to go through the council's governance process to add the capital element of the funding bid into the capital programme which was approved as part of the budget process by Council on the 24 February 2022. Following advice from the Deputy S151 Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer, a decision was made, due to the value of the expenditure and to avoid the risk of losing the funding, to apply for the grant, commit to the capital expenditure and retrospectively seek approval from Council to add the project into the capital programme.
- 2.2 The capital programme would usually be considered by Corporate Scrutiny as part of the annual budget process. However, the Constitution provides that the items generally falling within the remit of one Scrutiny Committee can be considered by the other Committee if necessary. Given the timescales on this matter and the interest which Scrutiny Committee had shown in the issue of Air Quality, it was considered by Scrutiny Committee on 29 June 2022.
- 2.3 NWLDC is the lead authority for the bid therefore it is NWLDC's governance process that needs to be followed to approve the retrospective addition of this capital project to the Capital Programme.
- 2.4 Having been successful with the joint bid and securing £27,240 of grant funding from DEFRA this report provides an update to Cabinet on the Air Quality Project and asks Cabinet to consider and comment on the retrospective addition to the capital programme of £21,240 (being the capital element of the grant funding) for the Air Quality project prior to approval by Council on 6 September 2022.

- 2.5 Whilst this report primarily relates to the financial governance process for amending the capital programme, it was considered an opportune time to update Cabinet on the Air Quality Project.

3. AIR QUALITY PROJECT - SOLID FUEL BURNING

- 3.1. Due to the tight timeframes and reporting requirements to DEFRA for the project NWLDC and HDC have commenced the project whilst the retrospective governance process is followed.
- 3.2. PM2.5 and solid fuel burning was chosen for the bid because the Government's Clean Air Strategy sets out a wide range of actions by which the UK Government will seek to reduce pollutant emissions and improve air quality. Actions are targeted at four main sources of emissions: Transport, Domestic, Farming and Industry. The Strategy highlights that emissions from solid fuel use are significant. Burning wood and coal in open fires and stoves makes up 38% of the UK's primary emissions of fine particulate matter (PM2.5), and is, therefore, a potentially significant source of primary PM2.5. NWLDC and HDC are more likely to have a greater number of households burning solid fuel as there are several communities that do not have a mains gas supply, due to the rural location.
- 3.3. The objective of the project is to increase the level of knowledge of PM2.5 and ultimately reduce PM2.5 emissions by changing behavioural attitudes to solid fuel burning. There is increasing local public concern around PM2.5 across the two authorities, and it is recognised that currently there is little information in relation to current concentrations, how concentrations vary across the districts and the magnitude of contributions from different sources relative to the overall emissions.
- 3.4. The project will use a combination of additional monitoring, and a public awareness programme to achieve these objectives. The main benefits from the project relate to reduced emissions from solid fuel burning, but also awareness raising more generally. Reduced emissions should ultimately reduce pollutant (PM2.5) concentrations within solid fuel burning areas, and therefore improve health, but this will not be quantifiable or measurable. It is also anticipated that the public awareness work will be built on in the future (if funding allows) and expanded to a more ambitious, and potentially regional awareness campaign in line with public health priorities. This project will test out messaging, and methods of awareness raising in a cost-effective way.
- 3.5. The Public Awareness Campaign and survey will be undertaken just prior to and during peak solid fuel burning season. The project will be underpinned by a communications strategy and both council communications teams are working closely with officers to develop the survey and pre-campaign messaging.
- 3.6. The monitoring period will commence in early late June/July and run for 12 months. This is to ensure that all seasonal variations are accounted for, and that a full analysis at the end of the project can be undertaken. The monitoring will be undertaken using a piece of equipment known as a Zephyr. Both councils already use this equipment and the bid has enabled 3 further Zephyrs to be used, 2 in NWLDC and 1 in HDC. The locations will be chosen by using data on usage of solid fuel burning areas in both districts.
- 3.7. Monitoring Data Analysis will take place after 12 months of monitoring and written up into a report which is public friendly and can be used for knowledge transfer. The final report will be submitted to DEFRA in Oct/Nov 2023. The high-level programme is outlined in a chart in Appendix 1.

4. COMMENTS FROM COMMUNITY SCRUTINY

4.1 Community Scrutiny Committee has at previous meetings requested that since air quality is an important issue for the council that it wished to be informed of any successful applications for Air Quality Grant funding. Therefore, Community Scrutiny considered the retrospective addition to the Council's Capital Programme at its meeting on 29 June. Community Scrutiny supported the report and asked for a sensitive approach to the awareness campaign for the project for those that need to continue to burn solid fuel due to the current economic climate and rising energy costs. Community Scrutiny were reassured that this has been considered by the project group and this forms part of the communications plan for the project.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing a clean and green district - Our communities are safe, healthy and connected
Policy Considerations:	N/A
Safeguarding:	N/A
Equalities/Diversity:	N/A
Customer Impact:	The project will positively engage with the public and raise awareness.
Economic and Social Impact:	N/A
Environment and Climate Change:	The project seeks to have a positive effect on the environment and climate by reducing emissions of PM2.5 and behaviour change amongst the public that burn solid fuel and this has been captured in the Zero Carbon agenda for NWL.
Consultation/Community Engagement:	Public awareness campaign and resident surveys in solid fuel burning locations. Communication Strategy in place for the campaign.
Risks:	Identification and management of any risks have formed part of the project plan for the bid to DEFRA
Officer Contact	Paul Sanders Head of Community Services Paul.Sanders@nwleicestershire.gov.uk

Appendix 1

High Level Project Programme

