

Report to: Environment Committee, 19th July 2022

Report of: Deputy Director - Corporate Policy and Strategy

Subject: ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNITY GRANTS AND ENVIRONMENT SUMMIT

1. Recommendation

1.1 That the Committee agrees an allocation of £20k to extend the Environmental Community Grants programme as proposed in this report.

1.2 That the Committee agrees an allocation of £5k to support the Environmental Summit planned for September.

2 Background

Environmental Community Grants

- 2.1 The Environmental Sustainability Action Plan for 2021-2022 was agreed by the Environment Committee on 16th March 2021. Within this plan, a specific objective was to develop and deliver a small grants scheme to support community projects that help to deliver the strategy.
- 2.2 In July 2021 the Environment Committee agreed to invest an initial sum of £20k to support this grants scheme. This was funded by a ring-fenced allocation from the previously agreed £100k enabling budget for the Environmental Sustainability Strategy.
- 2.3 The aim of these grants, as outlined in the Action Plan, is to increase community involvement and engagement in environmental sustainability, and / or to seed fund small projects which will provide steppingstones to larger projects. As well as funding stand-alone projects, grants could also be used to match fund, supplement, or show local support for larger grant applications.
- 2.4 Grant applications must fulfil at least one of the following criteria to be funded from this scheme:
- Lead to a direct reduction in carbon emissions from any source (residential, businesses, transport etc)
 - Enable a future reduction in carbon emissions
 - Improve resilience to climate change
 - Benefit the natural environment – e.g. improved biodiversity, reduced pollution
 - Reduce waste
 - Increase environmental awareness amongst residents, businesses, and visitors to the city
- 2.5 Applicants are also required to demonstrate the following:

- The need for the project
- A way of measuring the success of the project
- That the people and resources required for success are in place
- That the project will represent value for money

2.6 Organisations can receive up to two grants in a financial year, subject to demand, but only one grant per project.

2.7 Following initial officer checks on eligibility of an application, an officer grant panel assesses each grant application.

2.8 Applications to the Environmental Community Grant Scheme opened in November 2021 and between then and 31 March 2022, it attracted 21 successful applications as shown at **Appendix 1**. There were eleven awards to schools, five to community organisations and five to larger not for profit organisations.

2.9 Funded projects included the creation of kitchen and community gardens; construction of bird boxes, hedgehog houses and bug hotels; improved recycling facilities; education on recycling, composting and pollination; an art installation focussed on pollinators; tree planting and the creation of wild meadow and water habitats.

2.10 The original allocation of £20k has been used up by these grants.

Environment Summit

2.11 The Environmental Sustainability Action Plan includes an action to hold an annual summit which will bring together organisations and individuals from across the City. The objective of the summit is to share experiences and discuss how to work together to address the climate emergency, alongside promoting and engaging others in the delivery of the Council's strategy.

2.12 This will be a significant event, to be held at the Guildhall in September 2022. The scale of the event merits external support and will incur costs over and above those that can be covered from existing budgets.

3 Preferred Option

Environmental Community Grants

3.1 It is proposed that the Environmental Community Grants scheme is extended – offering grants of between £500 and £1000 to community groups, charities and voluntary sector organisations operating in Worcester.

3.2 This will be funded from an additional allocation of £20k from the Environmental Sustainability reserve.

Environmental Summit

3.3 It is proposed that £5k is allocated from the Environmental Sustainability reserve to support the cost of the summit.

4 Alternative Options Considered

4.1 The alternative options are to discontinue the scheme or to allocate a lesser or greater amount.

4.2 The original allocation of £20k funded 21 grants over an 8-month period.

5 Implications

5.1 Financial and Budgetary Implications

The Environmental Sustainability reserve was set at £100k in 2021/22, to support delivery of the Council's Environmental Sustainability Strategy. Commitment against this budget is as follows

Project	Allocation	Status	Decision date
Community Grants	£20k	Approved(spent)	July 2021
Biodiversity management plans (Council land, Waterway corridors)	£20k	Approved	November 2021
Community Grants	£20k	Proposed	July 22
SMG solar PV Outline Business Case	£20k	Proposed	July 22
Wild about Worcester	£15k	Proposed	July 22
Environmental Summit	£5k	Proposed	July 22
Total	£100k	-	-

5.2 Legal and Governance Implications

The application, assessment and award process will be unchanged. There are no legal and governance implications arising from this report.

5.3 Risk Implications

There is a risk that the projects do not deliver against the agreed objectives. The terms and conditions include a claw back mechanism, although implementing this for small sums may not be cost effective.

5.4 Corporate/Policy Implications

The proposals within this report emanate directly from the Environmental Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan. The strategy recognises that it is only with the support of partners across the city that the Council can meet its objectives. Encouraging grassroots actions from new and existing environmental community groups is a key part of this.

5.5 Equality Implications

Some communities and organisations may find it more difficult than others to identify and access potential grant funding. This is to be mitigated by appropriate promotion and support.

The summit will be designed and run to ensure that it is accessible to all.

5.6 Human Resources Implications

No human resource implications have been identified in respect of this report.

5.7 Health and Safety Implications

No health and safety implications have been identified in respect of this report.

5.8 Social, Environmental and Economic Implications

Whilst the grants awarded will be relatively small, it is a condition that they will bring positive environmental benefits. Supporting community organisations to deliver will also bring positive social benefits. Previous awards have demonstrated social and environmental benefits.

Promoting the Environmental Sustainability Strategy through the summit will support the realisation of environmental benefits. Holding the summit online to reduce travel was considered but given that it is a local event the benefits of face-to-face networking will outweigh the environmental impacts of travel to the event.

Ward(s): All
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ackground Papers: Environmental Sustainability Strategy Action Plan 2021-22, Appendix 1 Action Plan.pdf (worchester.gov.uk);
Environmental Community Grants, Report to Environment Committee, 20th July 2021

Appendix 1

Applicant	Project
St. Paul's Hostel	<p>Created a kitchen garden to grow produce. Working alongside the chef and catering manager, residents are being taught basic cooking skills, the benefits of eating healthy and nutrition, cooking on a budget and cooking what you grow.</p> <p>These skills are essential for mental and physical health and well-being as well as preparing residents to live independently once they have left the hostel.</p>
Oasis Warndon Community Hub	<p>Created a wildlife trail around a community garden area. Local residents gave views on planting and layout.</p> <p>The Hub also received an independent report from Worcestershire Wildlife Trust with recommendations on how the gardens could be enhanced to support wildlife.</p>
RSPB (Worcester and Malvern)	<p>Built two owl boxes, a kestrel box and 21 boxes for other species, now installed in Laugherne Brook Nature Reserve</p>
Oasis Academy Warndon	<p>Created a natural outdoor play space. It's used to educate families on how to forage for food and grow more local species – as well as giving advice on composting and recycling.</p> <p>Residents can now access a wildlife haven on their doorstep in an area that is immediately surrounded by blocks of flats, with limited outdoor space.</p>
Cherry Orchard School Association	<p>Created a sensory and butterfly garden at the School. It comprises vibrant, scented and edible plants, wildflowers, planting to attract butterflies and insects, a wild meadow area, a habitat area and fruit trees.</p> <p>The Association held a family "dig & plant" event to get the whole school community involved.</p>
St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School	<p>Installed dedicated crisp recycling bins; two water butts and two compost bins. Children use the collected rainwater to care for plants and flowers. Left over fruit gets composed, reducing waste. The compost is then reused around the school site.</p> <p>Developed the area around the school pond and installed benches. These are a useful base from which to carry out science investigations or geography field work.</p>
Christopher Whitehead Language College	<p>Created a kitchen garden to provide home grown produce for food technology lessons and to demonstrate how produce can be grown at home.</p> <p>Students are learning how easily spaces from kitchen window sills, and pots to raised beds can be used to grow fresh vegetables, fruit and herbs for home cooking.</p> <p>Creation of raised beds, a greenhouse for tomatoes, fruit cage for canes and bushes and a frame for vines and compact fruit</p>

	trees. These have been constructed by students on the Foundation Learning Programme.
Severn Arts	Staged 'Bees! The Colony' by Artizani during the Atmosphere Festival (April 2022). This was an intriguing installation of multiple Bee Hives, each containing unexpected interior worlds and highlighting the importance of bees, pollination and our inter-connectedness. The installation was located at Worcester Woods Country Park.
Perrywood Primary and Nursery School	Purchased bug and bee hotels, hedgehog houses, bird seed and bugnoculars. These resources have been used to develop our nature area. They are being used as part of our formal curriculum in a range of year groups. They are also being used at after school club where children are becoming nature detectives.
Worcester Community Garden	Created a floating pontoon for beehives at Pitchcroft, to protect them from future flooding.
Comer Gardens Committee	Converted gardens into a useful space for community. Created an area to plant fruit and vegetables, involving local playgroups. Potential forest school area for future.
Worcester Theatres Charitable Trust	Improved recycling facilities across theatre venues and paid for portable recycling bins for external events. Improved the quantity and quality of bins and signage throughout venues to enable all users to increase recycling.
St George's Primary School	Made an outdoor learning space where children are taught the importance of protecting the environment, life cycles and caring for nature. Created a water habitat for pond life such as frogs and newts. Planted hedgerows to increase the number of habitats for insects and small mammals. Installed hedgehog and bee boxes as well as bug houses to attract a variety of wildlife in their natural habitat.
Tudor Grange Primary School	Created a school community Garden for pupils and staff, allowing them to take an active part in creating a sustainable garden. The garden boosts mental health and well-being by allowing access to outdoor space. It also provides an outdoor area where pupils can take part in lessons/workshops outside, learning about the environment and how they can strive to be greener.
Tudor Grange Primary School	Planted trees and create an orchard, as part of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations. The trees are used as part of Science lessons, DT and other lessons to show life cycles and planting. Growing the fruit inhouse demonstrates how local produce reduces carbon emissions by eliminating fuel miles for delivery. These issues are discussed in class but it will be a chance to put learning into practice. Fruit to be used in class for juicing and cooking etc and the excess will be offered to our school community.

St Wulfstan's Church	<p>Creating a wildflower meadow area for wildlife to thrive, whilst involving community groups and educating on wildlife and sustainable water collection.</p> <p>Installed environmentally friendly raised planting beds in the grounds surrounding the church.</p>
Our Lady Queen of Peace Primary School	Planted trees in the wildlife area of the school garden.
Stanley Road Primary School	<p>Utilised an unused area of waste ground to create a sensory garden for the whole school to use. It contains raised beds, bird feeders and bird houses; fruit trees and a variety of plants that boost biodiversity.</p> <p>Installation of a greenhouse for children to grow plants and vegetables in. Compost bins have been added to reduce fruit waste, and a water feature has been added.</p>
Worcester Environmental Group	Made a wide range of wildlife boxes, including a variety of bird boxes, bat boxes, bug hotels and hedgehog houses to be distributed along a 12 mile walk and wildlife corridor - the Wild about Worcester route.
Worcester Community Garden	Planted 22 fruit trees, raising base to protect the roots from flooding. The trees will be grown as espaliers, to show visitors to the garden that it is possible to grow several fruit trees in a limited space.
Christopher Whitehead Language College	<p>Regenerated a neglected to create a biodiverse Garden to support insect, animal and bird life.</p> <p>The area is a focal point for the Eco-club, who have been involved in the planning and development of the space. Our aim is to equip students with a life-long interest, understanding and involvement in gardening and growing.</p>