

COMMUNITY FUND REVIEW
WDA/24/23 REPORT

Recommendation

Members are asked to consider the improvements determined by the review of the Community Fund programme and are asked to;

1. Approve the recommendation that for project evaluation the tonnage element of applications are scored, using robust evaluation criteria.
2. Approve the recommendation that for evaluation project costs will be included and scored using robust evaluation criteria.
3. Approve the rebranding of the funding to the Zero Waste Community Fund.

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COMMUNITY FUND 2023-24**WDA/24/23****Report of the Chief Executive****1. Purpose of the Report**

1.1

Members are asked to consider improvements determined from the review of the Community Fund programme and,

1.1.1. Approve the recommendation that for project evaluation the tonnage element of applications are scored, using robust evaluation criteria.

1.1.2. Approve the recommendation that for evaluation project costs will be included and scored using robust evaluation criteria.

1.1.3. Approve the rebranding of the funding to the Zero Waste Community Fund to reflect the changing landscape of waste management, support the behavioural change programme and the Authority's Corporate Plan.

2. Background

2.1 The Community Fund supports MRWA's 2022-24 mission statement "To ensure that we reduce the impact of our actions on climate change and improve the sustainable management of waste and resources".

2.2 The Community Fund is also part of the Authority's Behavioural Change Programme and contributes to the Zero Waste Framework and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) outputs.

2.3 The Authority approved the Community Fund Policy Framework and an annual scheme in February 2015 (Report WDA 03/15).

3. Community Fund Review

3.1 In September 2022 Members agreed to the Chief Executive conducting a best practice review of the Community Fund programme (Report WD 17/ 22), to ensure best value, determine if improvements can be made to support the corporate objectives of the Authority, attract quality applications, and

maximise the collaboration with the Voluntary Community Faith Social Enterprise Sector (VCFSE).

- 3.2 The review included research and discussion with other similar grant funders, local, regional, and national. The research looked at approach, governance, and process. Lessons learnt from this exercise formed the starting point of ideas for improvements to Community Fund.
- 3.3 The regions Community Voluntary Services (CVS) were approached for their opinion of our funding. That included; promotion of the fund, the application process, timescales for applying, how bids are awarded, how projects are monitored and evaluated.
- 3.4 The CVS assessment of MRWA/Veolia funding was positive, and they recognised the good work the funding has achieved. The CVS are happy to continue to promote the funding in the future to the VCFSE they support.
- 3.5 Next steps were consultation with VCFSE this was to ask those who have experience and knowledge of Community Fund for their opinion. We consulted with both awarded and unsuccessful Organisations. The results of the consultation can be seen in Appendix I.
- 3.6 In 2023-24 the application process was trialled on-line, on the Authority website. All Applications were submitted on-line, with no requests for a hard copy of the application form. 58 bids were received and feedback from applicants was positive for the on-line application.

4. Community Fund improvements

- 4.1 Following the review of the Community Fund it is recommended that the application will continue as an on-line portal on the Zero Waste website, with links from the Authority website. A hard copy of the application will be available on request.
- 4.2 When Community Funding was originally set up the financing of the funding was apportioned from the saving in disposal costs that projects achieved. The focus was on recycling of materials and because of this, the actual tonnage figure of the proposed project is used for evaluation and scores 45% of the overall mark (from 100), and this evaluation method continues.

- 4.4 The current scoring of tonnage is dis-proportionately in favour of heavier weighted material. Changing the way tonnage is evaluated will put all priority materials on an equal footing when scoring.
- 4.5 Scoring the tonnage, using robust evaluation criteria from 0-10, would determine if the project tonnage proposed is realistic, reasonable, and achievable.
- 4.5.1 Scores for this section would be given between 1-10 based on the following criteria;
- 10 - Ambitious but realistic and achievable tonnage based on clear calculations*
 - 8 - Achievable tonnage based on clear calculations*
 - 5 - Expected tonnage with calculations*
 - 3 - Too ambitious, unlikely to be achieved; or calculations need more detail*
 - 1 - Calculations not clear, can't see how the tonnage is determined; or the tonnage would not be achievable*
 - 0 - No calculations.*
- 4.6 This change in evaluation would also encourage waste prevention, education, and behavioural change projects, whilst continuing to support priority materials.
- 4.7 Similarly, when the Community Fund was set up, for assessment and recommendation of projects the cost section was not included in the evaluation. Using robust evaluation criteria to score proposed project costs, from 0-10, would determine whether a budget was realistic, reasonable and gave value for money.
- 4.8 It is considered a good time to rename the Community Fund to make clear the aims of the funding. The name recommended is the Zero Waste Community Fund, the consultation suggests this is the most popular re-name. Zero Waste Community Fund aligns with the aims and vision of the Corporate Plan and the Zero Waste Framework/ Strategy.
- 4.9 The recommended improvements discussed above satisfy the existing Community Fund Policy Framework, and no changes to this is required. The Framework is attached for reference as Appendix II.

5 Risk Implications

- 5.1 The following risks were considered for the changes to the funding programme.

Identified Risk	Likelihood Rating	Consequence Rating	Risk Value	Mitigation
Continuing to score proposed tonnage	2	3	6	Evaluate tonnage using robust scoring criteria. This will score projects fairer, considering if the proposed tonnage realistic, reasonable, are achievable.
Continue not to score project costs in the evaluation	2	3	6	Evaluate costs using robust scoring criteria. This will consider value for money in the evaluation of projects
Name change will confuse VCFSE Sector	2	3	6	Re-name Community Fund to Zero Waste Community Fund aligns the objective of the fund with Corporate Plan and Zero Waste Strategy. CVS will help to promote the Zero Waste Community Fund. During the application period, there will be three face to face funding events, a webinar and website information available to support and promote the funding.
Lack of funding requests because using an 'on-line' application on Authority website	2	3	6	Experience from 23-24 seen an increase in applications from previous years, using the on-line application Clear guidance will be given with the application. An automated receipt will be generated on submission to acknowledge the received application. Paper copies available for organisations not able to access on-line

6 HR Implications

6.1 The Authority has sufficient internal staff resources to ensure the continued delivery of the Community Funding programme.

7 Legal Implications

7.1 The policy framework and funding procedure ensures the Community Fund is in line with the Authority's Best Value and fiduciary obligations and supports the Authority's statutory duty to address the Waste Hierarchy in line with regulation 12 of the Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011 (as amended).

8 Environmental Implications

8.1 Projects awarded Community Funding contribute towards the Authority's response to the 'declaration of a climate emergency', which Members declared in 2019. Projects will demonstrate progress against the Zero Waste Framework and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

- 8.2 The Community Fund programme offers clear benefits for sustainable waste and resource management by reducing, re-using, refurbishing, and recycling more material and increasing the quality of recyclates.

9 Financial Implications

- 9.1 To minimise the risk of financial default, awards will continue to be made by interim stage payments, paid in advance, and released dependent upon continued successful progress of projects.
- 9.2 Including project costs as part of the evaluation process will ensure that projects recommended for funding will be value for money.
- 9.3 The policy Framework and funding procedure ensure that the control measures proposed are commensurate to the budget and the risks associated with achieving value for money.

10 Conclusion

- 10.1 Members are asked to approve the recommendation that for project evaluation the tonnage element of applications are scored, using robust evaluation criteria.
- 10.2. Members are asked to approve the recommendation that for project evaluation, project costs will be included and scored using robust evaluation criteria.
- 10.3. Members are asked to approve the rebranding of the funding to the Zero Waste Community Fund to reflect the changing landscape of waste management, support the behavioural change programme and the Authority's Corporate Plan.

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The background documents to this report are open to inspection in accordance with Section 100D of The Local Government Act 1972 - Nil