

**COMMUNITY FUND 2024-25 OUTCOMES AND THE ZERO WASTE COMMUNITY
FUND 2025- 26 PROGRAMME**
WDA/27/25

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

1. Note the outcome of the 2024-25 Community Fund Projects.
2. Note the projects supported with Zero Waste Community Funding in 2025-2026.
3. Confirm they wish to continue the policy of delegating powers of the Authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairperson, to approve projects subject to the Zero Waste Community Fund being apportioned in line with the agreed funding allocation method.

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ZERO WASTE COMMUNITY FUND 2025-26
WDA/27/25

Report of the Chief Executive

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To inform Members of the outcome of the 2024-25 Community Fund programme.
- 1.2 Members are asked to note the projects supported with Zero Waste Community Fund for 2025-2026 as approved by the Chief Executive under delegated powers of the Authority.
- 1.3 Members are asked to confirm they wish to continue the policy of delegating powers of the Authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairperson, to approve projects subject to the Zero Waste Community Fund being apportioned in line with the agreed funding allocation method.

2. Background

- 2.1 Community Funding supports MRWA's Corporate Plan 2025-26 "To ensure that we reduce the impact of our actions on climate change and improve the sustainable management of waste and resources". Community Funding is part of the Authority's Behaviour Change Programme and contributes to the Zero Waste Framework and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) outputs.
- 2.2 The Authority approved the Community Fund Policy Framework and the annual scheme in February 2015 (Report WDA 03/15).
- 2.3 In November 2023 Members approved the rebranding of Community Fund to the Zero Waste Community Fund to align with the aims and vision of the Corporate Plan and the Zero Waste framework/strategy (Report WDA 24/23)

3. 2024-25 Community Fund Programme outcomes

- 3.1 Community Funding for 2024-25 was launched on 5th February 2024 and was open for submissions from the Voluntary Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector for 4 weeks, closing on 10th March 2024. 56 bids were received and the assessment process, using the approved criteria, completed.

- 3.2 Sixteen Organisations received the £164,995.21 funding: this supported 3 Regional and 13 District projects. In-kind support was also provided by the VCFSE.
- 3.3 Projects addressed one or more of five priority household waste materials: Food, Furniture, Plastics, Textiles, and Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE). Some projects also included other household waste materials e.g. paper, card, metals.
- 3.4 Projects finished on 31st March 2025. Projects provided “End of Project” reports that summarised project delivery, budget and outcomes. The end of project reports for each of the Organisations funded can be viewed by request.
- 3.5 The reports also provided feedback about the projects and the funding programme. VCFSE suggest that, to see longer term behavioural change and maximise the full potential of activities, it would be beneficial to fund projects over a longer period than annual funding which can be a barrier to VCFSE sector.
- 3.6 The table below shows the total outputs from the sixteen projects. Further details can be found in Appendix 1 Table 1.

Outputs	Achievement
Tonnes Diverted from Disposal	754 Tonnes*
Direct Engagement with project activities	8,335
Volunteer Hours	11,622
Training Sessions / Workshops	718
Community Events	45
Wider engagement (non-target output)	110,686

The *tonnage of materials is broken down as,

	Achieved tonnage
Food Waste Prevention	646
Diversion from Disposal	278

Furniture Repair / Reuse	11
Plastics	17
Textiles Repair/Repurpose	14
WEEE	5
Other	9
Total	*754

3.7 Media Coverage

- 3.7.1 Media coverage generated by the 2024-25 projects included 32 media articles, counting national and local press, trade press, web-news and included an appearance on BBC Radio Merseyside. There were 14 Facebook articles, with 12,955 views and 18 articles on X (Twitter) with 4,811 impressions. The value of this free press is equivalent to £273,770 paid for coverage.
- 3.7.2 To help promote the funding, the Communications Team produced two web-based application videos to advise organisations as they considered applying to the fund. The aim of the video's is to help improve the quality of submissions, by both explaining the funding process and highlighting the types of projects that will meet the funding criteria.
- 3.7.3 For the third year the Communications Team has produced a "Round Up" Booklet, which highlights the success of the 2024-25 funded projects. This will be used, by both MRWA/Veolia and the VCFSE organisations, to inform and promote the funding in the future.

3.8 Social Value

- 3.8.1 MRWA has worked with a Social Value (S.V.) expert, Impact Reporting, to develop a framework and toolkit to measure the value of behavioural change activities, in terms of equivalent monetary worth. A set of metrics has been established as an initial measurement of the social value for the Zero Waste Community Fund.
- 3.8.2 This initial S.V. framework has been used to determine the social value achieved by the Community Fund in 2024 - 25. For the £164,995.21 funding, the programme attained £737,685.17 in Social Value. This gives a Return on Investment of £4.47 for every £1 of funding. Members should note that this SV evaluation has been done retrospectively, and

not all the project data required could be provided. See Appendix 1, table 2 for the S.V achieved.

- 3.8.3 Work is ongoing on the development of appropriate SV metrics specific to the Authority's requirements. The social value for 23/24 and 24/25 will be measured retrospectively and for the Zero Waste Community Fund 25-26 the Authority will measure the social value in coordination with groups. Once tested and robust the aim is the SV toolkit will be used to evaluate project work across Authority's activities.

4. Zero Waste Community Fund 2025-2026

- 4.1 In 2024-25 work began to promote the Zero Waste Community Fund (ZWCF) for 2025-26. Officers attended promotional events, in St. Helens & Halton and in Wirral, to showcase the funding opportunity to local VCFSE. An on-line application event was also held for Sefton CVS. Liverpool LCVs promoted the ZWCF on their funding portal.
- 4.2 The Zero Waste Community Funding 2025-26 was launched on the Authority website on Monday 10th February 2025. Applications were open for four weeks.
- 4.3 MRWA held a "Thank-you" event for the 2024-25 projects on the 11th of February 2024 at Mann Island. The feedback was positive and the VCFSE appreciated the opportunity to network with other organisations at the end of the project year. At this event the ZWCF 2025-26 was also launched to the media.
- 4.4 By the closing date on the 9th of March 2025, 64 submissions were received for the ZWCF 25-26 funding. This is a 31% increase in applications over the past four years, believed to be somewhat due to additional communication support for the programme and the promotional activities, see 4.1 above.
- 4.5 The assessment process was completed in four weeks. This year it took an additional week to evaluate submissions due to the higher number and improved quality of applications.
- 4.6 Projects addressed one or more of five priority household waste materials: Food, Furniture, Textiles, Plastics and Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE).
- 4.7 The Chief Executive continued with the policy of consulting Members on the list of recommended projects. Under delegated powers, the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair of the Authority, approved 12 projects for support in

2025-26. This was for 4 Regional projects and 8 District level projects. See Appendix 1, Table 3 for a summary of the projects supported.

- 4.8 The total funding awarded in 2025-26 was £164,546.00. The financial practice of issuing the grants in two or three stage payments, with the first stage funding being paid in advance, will continue for 2025-26 projects. Each subsequent stage will be dependent on the successful ongoing progress of the project.
- 4.9 In terms of monitoring performance VCFSE Organisations are required to provide regular information on key outputs, monetary spend, and evidence of behavioural changes achieved and social value during the delivery of projects.
- 4.10 The final outcomes for those receiving Zero Waste Community Funding in 2025-2026 will be reported to the Authority in 2026.

5 Risk Implications

- 5.1 The following risks were considered for the 2025-2026 Zero Waste Community Fund Programme.

Identified Risk	Likelihood Rating	Consequence Rating	Risk Value	Mitigation
Projects under perform in terms of value added.	2	3	6	Monitoring and evaluate outputs and outcomes regularly prior / post award. Provide support and assistance to projects. Hold an early networking event so that VCFSE can share best practice, lessons learnt and ideas. The Social Value framework will be used to measure outcomes for the ZWCF at the end of the 2025-26 programme. Include VCFSE recommended improvements from End of Project reports where possible.
Challenge by unsuccessful applicants for the grant	2	2	4	Members have approved a policy framework and the funding criteria that must be met to receive funding. This process has also been verified by audit. This ensures the evaluation process is equitably applied to all applications. Feedback is given to unsuccessful applicants. More detailed feedback will be provided upon request.
Programme slippage due to high number of applications needing to be evaluated.	2	3	6	Build in additional time for evaluation, aiming to give Organisations the maximum time available to deliver projects activities within the financial year.
Lack of funding requests because using an 'on-line' application on Authority website	3	3	9	Promotional schedule, including CVS funding days and "meet the funders" events. Clear guidance given with the application. F.A.Q explain funding process. On-line video's support Organisations with the application process. An automated receipt is generated on submission to acknowledge the received application. Paper copies available for organisations not able to access on-line.
Projects accept funding but projects don't go ahead	3	3	9	Funding released in interim payments with next stages dependent on progress completion to revised plan.

Identified Risk	Likelihood Rating	Consequence Rating	Risk Value	Mitigation
				Fundees complete a Funding Agreement. If it becomes necessary, a % of funding could be retained/clawed back, determined by the amount of progress achieved.
Project Lead and/or Volunteers, Facilitators unavailable	4	3	12	This could stop or significantly delay project until replacement can be put in place. Most Organisations work in teams to deliver projects and others will cover absences.
Difficulties in Projects attracting Volunteers	3	2	6	<p>VCFSE will provide additional support for volunteers (telephone, zoom, mental health resilience, etc).</p> <p>VCFSE intend to use multiple communication methods to help existing and recruit new Volunteers.</p> <p>MRWA Communication Team will support project promotion with photography, press releases, social media, promotional booklet.</p>
Projects don't complete by March 2026	4	4	16	Where possible revise timetable to make-up time aiming to complete as close to March 2026 as possible.

6 HR Implications

- 6.1 The Authority has sufficient internal staff resources to ensure the delivery of the 2025-2026 Zero Waste Community Funding programme.

7 Legal Implications

- 7.1 The policy framework and funding procedure ensures the Zero Waste 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 Zero Waste 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 Projects awarded funding in 2025-26 will deliver against the Authority's corporate objectives. They offer clear benefits for sustainable waste and resource management by reducing, re-using, refurbishing, and recycling more material and increasing the quality of recycle.

9 Financial Implications

- 9.1 To minimise the risk of financial default, awards will be made by interim stage payments, the first paid in advance, and further stages released dependent upon continued successful progress of projects.

- 9.2 The policy 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 note the outcome of the 2024-2025 Community Fund projects.
- 10.2 Members are asked to note the projects supported with Zero Waste Community Fund in 2025-2026. Projects will provide waste prevention, re-use and recycling activities, and will deliver core objectives and best value outcomes.
- 10.3 The Zero Waste Community Fund will maintain a high standard of governance and delivery of sustainable waste management projects across the Region and will contribute to solutions for the Authority's behavioural change programme, Sustainable Development Goals and the response to the declaration of a climate emergency (2019).
- 10.4 The final outcomes for Zero Waste Community Fund projects in 2025-2026 will be reported to Members in 2026.
- 10.5 Any future recommendations to changes to the policy framework and apportionment of the funding will continue to be the subject of a report to the Authority.
- 10.6 Members are asked to confirm they wish to continue the policy of delegating powers of the Authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairperson, to approve projects subject to the Zero Waste Community Fund being apportioned in line with the agreed funding allocation method.

The contact officer for this report is: Rebecca Haynes McCoy
7th Floor.
No 1 Mann Island
Liverpool L3 1BP

Email: rebecca.haynes-mccoy@merseysidewda.gov.uk

Tel: 0151 255 2540

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