



Cabinet
17 October 2022

**Report from the Corporate Director
of Resident Services**

**Proposals for Future Brent Carbon Offset Fund Allocations
and Together Towards Zero Small Grants Scheme Criteria**

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision	Key
Open or Part/Fully Exempt:	Open
No. of Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	None
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1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with proposals for the allocation of two council climate funding schemes.
- 1.2 The first part of the report seeks Cabinet approval on a proposed policy framework for utilisation of the council's Carbon Offset Fund, in advance of a significant bid being submitted by the council for the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (subject to Lead Member approval).

- 1.3 The second part of the report provides Cabinet with an update on the 'Together Towards Zero' small grants scheme, and seeks approval for a refreshed proposal for the management of this second phase of this scheme, with the intention of re-launching the scheme in autumn 2022.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Brent Carbon Offset Fund

That Cabinet:

- (a) Agree to the future allocation policy for Brent's Carbon Offset Fund, as outlined in section four of this report (60% to own housing stock; 30% to schools; 10% held in reserve for general use), and to delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Resident Services, in consultation with the Lead Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Action to have overall responsibility for the oversight and operationalisation of this policy, with an immediate opportunity to utilise as part of a bid to the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund.

Together Towards Zero Small Grants Scheme

That Cabinet:

- (b) Agree to the proposed amendment to raise the maximum amount payable to successful applicants to the Together Towards Zero Grant Scheme from £1,000 to £5,000.
- (c) Agree to delegate authority to the Operational Director of Environment and Leisure to approve Together Towards Zero applications up to the overall value of £100k.
- (d) Agree to delegate authority to the Operational Director of Environment and Leisure to approve any subsequent changes to the key grant documentation such as: guidance notes, application form, frequently asked questions, funding agreements, evidence of community support template and data protection and safeguarding pack.

3.0 Part A - Brent Carbon Offset Fund

Policy Background

- 3.1 Since 1 October 2016, under the London Plan, any development that fails to achieve on-site zero carbon must make cash in lieu contributions to a Carbon Offset Fund within the borough that they are operating, collected via Section 106. These contributions are used to fund local carbon reduction projects, thereby offsetting the development's carbon emissions shortfall. As of the end of August 2022, Brent has collected approximately £2,000,000 in total carbon-offset contributions since 2016.

- 3.2 Brent is a Local Planning Authority (LPA) and the London Plan requires LPAs to:
- set up a carbon offset fund that is ring-fenced to secure delivery of carbon savings within the relevant LPA
 - set a price for carbon, i.e. price per annual tonne of carbon, that developers pay to make up any shortfall in on-site carbon savings, securing contributions through Section 106 agreements
 - identify a suitable range of projects that can be funded through the carbon offsetting fund
 - put in place suitable monitoring procedures to enable reporting to the GLA
- 3.3 The GLA has specific guidance on the Carbon Offset Fund which is available online, but the fundamental purpose of the fund is that it should ideally be used for tangible carbon reduction projects in homes and buildings, although education projects are also eligible. There are specific criteria related to the amount of carbon reduction achieved.
- 3.4 As per GLA guidance on the usage of Carbon Offset Funds, there are no restrictions as to who can be a recipient or beneficiary of offset funds provided the project being funded aligns with an LPA's identified priorities for offset funds. A recipient or beneficiary could therefore be a local business, public sector organisation, community organisation or not-for-profit organisation.
- 3.5 Individual households could also receive or benefit from funding; however, funding individual households directly will significantly increase the administrative burden for investing carbon offset funds and LPAs may therefore choose to invest funds via community and public sector organisations to target benefits to certain groups of households (e.g. the fuel poor).
- 3.6 In essence, the Council has wide discretion to agree how the funding is spent in relation to carbon reduction activity, as long as it complies with the GLA's guidance.

Progress so far

- 3.7 An initial tranche of £500,000 (of the approximate £2,000,000 collected) of Brent's Carbon Offset Fund was designated for Brent's first participatory budgeting pilot (CO₂GO) which took place in January 2022. The decisions made by the community were approved by Cabinet at its meeting on 20 June 2022 and the payments from these awards are progressing.
- 3.8 The £500,000 of CO₂GO funding was split into two pots, the first pot of £400,000 included a total of 39 flats, maisonettes and houses that will undergo sustainability works to reduce their carbon footprint. These properties have combined as a cluster to maximise the benefits of green measures. Two community buildings in Willesden were also selected for energy saving makeovers. The second pot of £100,000 was awarded to community groups who will run educational projects to help residents reduce carbon emissions, save money, and make positive and healthier lifestyle changes.

4.0 Brent Carbon Offset Fund Pipeline Allocation Policy

- 4.1 The 2022-24 Delivery Plan for the council's Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy, which was also approved by Cabinet in June 2022, committed to *'delivering further retrofitting projects via the Carbon Offset Fund'* (action HBBE006 of the delivery plan). Officers have been tasked to develop proposals for how these monies can best support the delivery of the priorities in the new Plan and this has been expedited by a potential opportunity to match-fund a significant bid to the next wave of the government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF).
- 4.2 Following CO₂GO, a further £1,500,000 is currently available from the Carbon Offset Fund, with more money expected through the development pipeline. The governance of how this remaining amount and any future amounts through the development pipeline should be spent has yet to be formally established, and provides the substantive purpose of this section of the report.
- 4.3 Whilst this amount falls significantly short of the investment that will be required to retrofit all council homes, schools buildings and the rest of the property estate owned by the council, it nevertheless represents a significant amount when compared to the council's existing budgets for climate action. The council has commissioned a number of studies to consider the energy efficiency measures and interventions across council homes, school buildings and the corporate estate required to achieve carbon neutrality and the potential associated costs. There are sliding scales of interventions that could be undertaken, and whilst it is extremely difficult to forecast with great certainty, this is currently estimated at:
- £80-£100m for the schools estate to achieve net zero – via the highest standard of retrofitting available
 - £62m for council housing stock – to achieve an average Energy Performance Certificate B rating, in line with the London Councils target we adopted in our Climate Strategy. This figure does not include any remedial works required to the fabric before installing energy efficiency measures nor preliminary contractor costs, fees or contingency sums
 - £6m for the council's wider buildings estate – to achieve net zero

Key Policy Proposals

- 4.4 As per the recommendations of this report, officers are proposing that the Corporate Director of Resident Services is granted delegated authority to authorise the use of Brent's Carbon Offset Fund as part of the application process for grant schemes that relate to energy efficiency improvements for both domestic and non-domestic properties. Given that most grant schemes require a percentage of match funding from the council as part of any application, and in many instances this proves very difficult to meet within existing council budgets, it is most likely that the Carbon Offset Fund would be utilised as a match funding commitment. It is well established that retrofitting homes and buildings is extremely challenging, particularly due to the costs involved. Having the flexibility to utilise the fund in this way would be beneficial in maximising the resources at the scale needed to tackling carbon emissions

in the borough which arise from both domestic and non-domestic buildings – a key priority in Brent’s Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy.

- 4.5 It is also proposed that, the spend within Brent’s Carbon Offset Fund would be split three ways to focus on the following three key areas, with the rationale for this proposal set out in the paragraphs below. It is suggested that this policy remain in place for the first £3,000,000 generated and accessible through Brent’s Carbon Offset Fund, and that following this funding limit being reached the policy would be reviewed and re-confirmed by the council’s Cabinet. Amendments to the policy could be required at a future point in advance of the funding limit being reached, which would also prompt a review report being provided to the council’s Cabinet.

Proposed allocation split:

Measure	Percentage of Offset Fund Total
A) Energy efficiency works within the council’s own housing stock	60%
B) Energy efficiency works within the council’s Community and Foundation schools estate	30%
C) Other – such as grant schemes and project delivery for schemes which meet GLA criteria	10%

A) Energy efficiency works within the council’s own housing stock (60%)

- 4.6 It is proposed that the majority of the Carbon Offset Fund be put towards energy efficiency improvements in the council’s own stock. The majority of LPAs have largely focused on identifying projects within their own estate, including social housing.
- 4.7 Energy efficiency performance in the council’s own stock remains a crucial issue for three key reasons. Firstly, housing comprises the biggest individual direct carbon emission within Brent’s boundary and this needs to be urgently addressed as one of the key themes of Brent’s Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy. Secondly, it is vital that the council follows its commitment to lead by example by implementing measures into our existing stock where we have the most control, and to accelerate progress on our target of achieving an average rating of Energy Performance Certificate B in directly owned council stock by 2030. Thirdly, by improving the energy efficiency of our own stock we have the potential to shield some of our most vulnerable and/or fuel poor residents from rising energy bills and the cost of living crisis that is likely to grip the UK for the foreseeable future.
- 4.8 We are gradually gaining a better understanding of what energy efficiency measures are required in different property archetypes in our stock, to be able to potentially mobilise activity more quickly in future. For example, In June 2021, we commissioned a Carbon in Homes Assessment that analysed a total of 2577 social homes in Brent. The assessment set out a list of recommended measures to improve the energy efficiency of the dwellings analysed. Excluding the homes which are already due to receive energy efficiency measures as part

of the Green Homes Grant (Local Authority Delivery Scheme) programme, there remains a pipeline of properties recommended for external or internal wall insulation. We also undertook retrofit pilots in three void properties in our stock last year. The retrofit pilots gave us information on the types of energy efficiency measures these properties will require, and how much this work would cost to implement.

4.9 The Carbon Offset Fund budget allocated to energy efficiency works within the council's own housing stock would be spent according to a hierarchy of prioritisation. This would allow us to effectively target:

- The homes that are currently the Council's worst performing properties in terms of energy efficiency
- Properties which are thought to be occupied by fuel poor residents who will likely struggle to pay energy bills going forward
- Poor performing properties in terms of energy efficiency which are contained within the Green Neighbourhood pilot areas (i.e Church End & Roundwood, Kingsbury, St Raphael's Estate and South Kilburn)
- Properties that are due for asset improvement works in the near future to minimise the need for additional disruption to tenants

B) Energy efficiency works within the council's schools estate (30%)

4.10 It is proposed to allocate 30% of the Brent Carbon Offset Fund to energy efficiency works within the council's Community and Foundation schools estate. This is another significant area of the council's own carbon footprint and will enable us to demonstrate that we are leading by example in retrofitting non-domestic buildings.

4.11 Buildings within the wider property portfolio in the council's own estate have already been the focus of a programme of energy efficiency works through the council's successful £3,200,000 grant to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS). The PSDS provides grants for public sector bodies to fund heat decarbonisation and energy efficiency measures. The scheme is managed by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) delivery body, Salix Finance. This grant allocation did not include school buildings, however, the next phase is planned to open in September 2022 and it is expected that the focus of this funding phase will be on improving the energy efficiency of school buildings. There will again be a match funding element to any bid.

4.12 A recent 'deep dive' retrofit and carbon reduction feasibility study has also taken place across five schools in Brent. Similar to the piece of research commissioned for our housing stock, this work has identified in greater technical detail the types of measures that would be required for different building archetypes across Brent's school estate. This has enabled us to build our knowledge and evidence base for the type of retrofitting that would be required within the schools estate, should funding become available. The report also identified direct opportunities within five schools in the first instance: Anson

Primary School, Byron Court Primary School, Mora Primary School, Northview Primary School and Roe Green Infant and Junior School.

- 4.13 Furthermore, schools have a key role to play in delivering the council's overarching Climate and Ecological Emergency programme. For example, schools were given a high percentage weighting when deciding locations for the council's new Green Neighbourhoods pilot schemes as it is felt that schools could be catalysts to local climate action. The rationale for this is that schools are embedded within local communities and not only have a key role to play in taking action to reduce emissions on school sites but have a substantive reach into local catchment areas through their communications and interactions with parents. We also know that from our interactions with schools via the School Climate Champions Group, that energy efficiency and taking steps to reduce their energy bills is their number one priority at the present time.
- 4.14 The Carbon Offset Fund budget allocated to energy efficiency works within the council's Community and Foundation schools estate would be spent according to a similar hierarchy of prioritisation. This would allow us to effectively target:
- The Community and Foundation schools that are currently the council's worst performing in terms of energy efficiency (Display Energy Certificate rating, energy use per m²)
 - The Community and Foundation schools that are performing poorly in terms of energy efficiency and are within the Green Neighbourhood pilot areas
 - The Community and Foundation schools that have the oldest gas/oil boilers that require replacement so that new carbon neutral technologies are used alongside deeper retrofit requirements to obtain the best results from these technologies as well as reduce having to return to the school in future years to carry out further works.

C) Other – such as grant schemes and project delivery for schemes which meet GLA criteria (10%)

- 4.15 We are proposing that the final 10% of the Carbon Offset Fund be held in reserve to provide flexibility to enable us to capitalise on future, as yet unknown opportunities that are compliant with the GLA guidance and that support Brent's Climate and Ecological Emergency programme. For example, as previously stated, it is now common that any external grant scheme that the council seeks to bid for will require a degree of match funding. Having some money available from the Carbon Offset Fund to potentially utilise for this purpose is likely to be beneficial.
- 4.16 Similarly, there can occasionally be a need to find additional funding for a specific carbon reduction project that the council is seeking to deliver, and there are increasing numbers of requests from London Councils for small contributions to help facilitate the seven pan-London climate change workstreams. Given that it is not always possible to fund initiatives like these through existing council budgets, having the option to utilise Carbon Offset

Fund money, provided it aligns with the provisions set out by the GLA, would be helpful to support us in maximising the opportunities for this programme.

- 4.17 Proposals for allocations from the Brent Carbon Offset Fund aligned to these three focus areas would be reviewed and authorised by the Environmental Strategy & Climate Change team to ensure compliance with the GLA's guidelines before being sent to the Corporate Director of Resident Services, in consultation with the Lead Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Action for approval.

5.0 Upcoming Opportunity - Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Bid Application

- 5.1 Should the proposed policy for administering Brent's Carbon Offset Fund be adopted (as set out in the section above) an example of how this policy could work in practice has arisen through the immediate opportunity to submit a grant funding bid to the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF). If 60% of the existing Carbon Offset Fund was to be allocated to council housing stock, this would enable a potential £900,000 to be available as a match funding contribution for the council's bid to this scheme.

Background

- 5.2 The SHDF is a grant scheme available to Registered Providers (RPs) of Social Housing in England, including Local Authorities, to improve the energy performance of their housing stock. The grant is funded by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), with Wave 2 has recently launched with a closing deadline of 18 November 2022.
- 5.3 SHDF would allow Brent Council to apply for a grant to cover up to 50% of the costs associated with undertaking retrofit works to some of its worst performing properties. In order to access the grant however, Brent Council needs to evidence that it can provide the necessary match funding to complete the retrofit project it submits.
- 5.4 The current target for our own stock within the 'Homes, Buildings and Built Environment' theme of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy states that, by 2030, '*we will do all in our gift to achieve an average rating of Energy Performance Certificate B in directly owned council stock.*' Clearly, this is an incredibly challenging target and all councils in England are facing similar challenges – and we must seek to apply for government funding when it is available in order to work towards this target.
- 5.5 This grant scheme follows two previous rounds of grant funding: the £62m SHDF Demonstrator and SHDF Wave 1 that saw a total of £179m offered to 69 decarbonisation projects. A further £800m has been committed to the SHDF over the next three-year period.

SHDF Wave 2 grant eligibility criteria

- 5.6 The grant criteria set out by BEIS for Wave 2 are well aligned with the proposed hierarchy of Carbon Offset Fund spending set out in Section 4 above. In summary:
- Local authorities must propose a project that includes a minimum of 100 social homes to receive energy efficiency improvements to their building fabric
 - The properties submitted to the bid must be among the council's worst performing stock i.e. the biggest contributors to carbon emissions and the most expensive to keep warm
 - Post-retrofit, the properties must achieve a minimum of EPC C energy efficiency rating and there must be no increase in fuel bills to tenants
 - The project must be delivered within a two-year time frame from Spring 2023 – Spring 2025
 - Crucially, registered providers must evidence that they can provide the necessary match funding to complete the retrofit project it submits. Given the high costs of retrofitting properties, this is likely to be a substantial amount hence the need to utilise the Brent Carbon Offset Fund
- 5.7 Given the criteria of SHDF, securing this funding would allow us to make energy efficiency improvements to the worst performing properties within the council's stock, reducing carbon emissions, helping residents to save money on their fuel bills and supporting some of our most vulnerable residents to keep their homes warm through Winter. The council would be leading by example by implementing energy saving measures in its own stock and accelerating progress towards its target of achieving an average rating of Energy Performance Certificate B in directly owned council stock by 2030.

Current bid status

- 5.8 Using data from the Carbon in Homes Assessment referenced in paragraph 4.7, around 300 properties have been identified as eligible for submission to the bid.
- 5.9 In making an application to SHDF, the Council will need to include EPC ratings, types of retrofit measures and estimated energy performance improvements along with the anticipated cost break down of works. To facilitate this, a sample of 30 retrofit surveys of council properties which have a poor energy efficiency rating have been commissioned to be undertaken. This will also improve our information database on the energy efficiency of Brent Council's social housing stock.

Proposed way forward

- 5.10 As stated above, the scale of the bid will predominantly be determined by the amount of match funding available. All councils are typically extremely limited in providing upfront funding for retrofit works, and the requirement of 50% match funding for the SHDF thereby provides a significant challenge.

- 5.11 Given that it is unlikely that Brent will be in position to submit a bid for all 300+ eligible properties identified, officers would follow the hierarchy of prioritisation set out in the Carbon Offset Fund Policy (paragraph 4.9) for the prioritisation of properties to be submitted.
- 5.12 Officers are proposing that Cabinet agree to use the Brent Offset Fund pipeline for a portion of the match funding element of a SHDF bid. Other sources of match funding have been identified from the Housing Capital budget; and funding ring fenced for energy efficiency works to two of the council's tower blocks. Without additional top up from the Carbon Offset Fund, these latter two sources of match funding are unlikely to cover the significant amount required to put in a substantial application to the grant fund.
- 5.13 At this stage, the usage of the Carbon Offset Fund for this purpose is provisional and dependent on BEIS awarding the council funding following a successful application. However, it is essential for the purposes of making an application to the grant that we can demonstrate that we have the match funding available, should Brent be successful in its bid for funding.
- 5.14 Given the tight timings involved, by adopting the proposed framework for allocating Brent's Carbon Offset Fund, this would delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Resident Services for completion and finalisation of arrangements for the overall scope and size of the bid.
- 5.15 To demonstrate how the grant funding would be allocated to Local Authorities and the need for a significant match funding contribution, an example scenario of what a bid *could* look like is included below. More accurate costings for the project will be devised once we receive the results of the sample of retrofit surveys.

Example Submission – 78 Tower block properties plus 50 On Street properties

Number of properties	Type of property	Grant funding available from BEIS*	Match funding required from Brent**	Source of match funding	Total cost
78	Tower block unit	(Average of £10k per unit) £780,000	(Average of £15k per unit) £1.17m	Ring fenced funding for Tower block work	£1.92m
50	Street property	(Average of £10k per unit) £500,000	(Average of £15k per unit) £750,000	Housing Capital budget and Carbon Offset Fund	£1.25m
Administration costs***		£280k	£280k	Housing Capital budget and Carbon Offset Fund	£560k
Total project costs					£3.23m

* Grant funding allocated is based on the starting EPC band of the property and the type of wall insulation required. For more information on the allocation of funding for SHDF see the BEIS website.

** The match funding amount required is based on contractor estimates of £25k per property

*** Administration costs can be no more than 15% of total project costs and must be match funded 50%

6.0 Part B - Brent 'Together Towards Zero' Small Grants Scheme

Background

6.1 One of the five key themes within the council's Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy is 'Supporting Communities' with the overarching objective of ensuring that everyone who lives, works or studies in Brent will have improved access to clear and understandable information on the need to tackle the climate and ecological emergency, and as many people as possible will be actively engaged in taking action to help the borough become carbon neutral by 2030.

6.2 As part of the year one delivery plan for the strategy, the council developed and launched a new small grants programme, the '*Together Towards Zero*' small grants scheme for green community projects. The purpose of this scheme has been to provide Brent residents and communities with an accessible source of funding for local projects and initiatives which will support our plans to tackle the climate and ecological emergency, and to improve local areas by making them greener, cleaner and more environmentally friendly.

Progress made in first phase of scheme

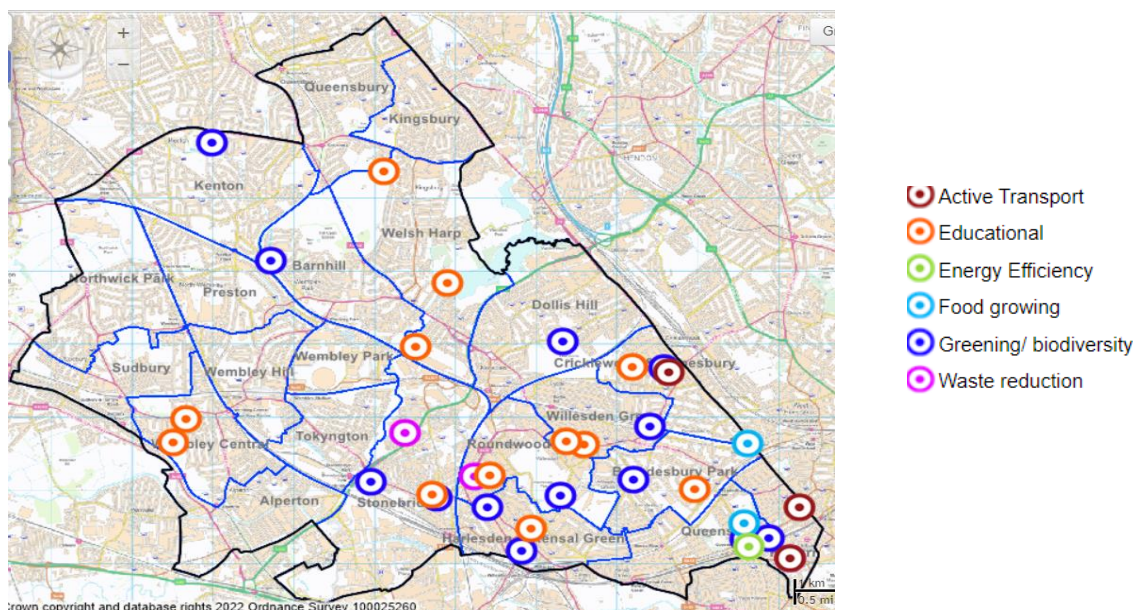
- 6.3 An initial £50,000 funding was made available for applications as part of this grant scheme of which 35 have successfully received funding, totalling £32,490.

Outcome	Number of applications
Funding awarded	35
Declined - does not meet grant criteria	16
Declined - applicant did not supply supporting documents	7
Withdrawn	7
Total	65

Type of project	Number of successful applications
Greening/ biodiversity	19
Educational	7
Waste reduction	3
Active transport	3
Energy efficiency	1
Food growing	2
Total	35

- 6.4 The remaining amount of funding that was available for the first phase but unspent has been carried over into the 2022-23 financial year, and has been topped up with funding from the council's climate budget with £68,000 available for phase two of the scheme.

- 6.5 The Together Towards Zero scheme has not been linked to the Brent Connects areas in the same way that the Love Where You Live Grant scheme is. A map of the location of where applications have been awarded funding is provided below.



7.0 Proposals for second phase on scheme – launching in Autumn 2022

How much can be applied for?

- 7.1 The maximum amount that applicants can apply for has to this point been £1000. It is proposed to increase the maximum amount to £5000 for the second phase of the scheme.
- 7.2 Funding allocations are no longer limited to one application per individual, group/organisation or business in each financial year, however we will seek to prioritise organisations and projects that did not receive funding in phase 1 of the programme. To be eligible for funding, applicants must be one of the following:
- Resident of Brent applying on behalf of their community
 - Constituted community group
 - Established tenant/ resident association
 - Faith group
 - Housing association
 - Social enterprise
 - Local business (for schemes which benefit the community)
- 7.3 Applicants need to:
- demonstrate support of at least 10 local residents for their proposed project (this can be in the form of online and hard copy surveys, WhatsApp groups, emails, letters, texts, videos, photos, signatures);
 - be over the age of 18;
 - ensure the project is based within Brent;
- 7.4 Organisations applying for a grant should ensure that their application complies with the grant funding agreement terms and conditions. The funding is designed to be for a **one-off activity**, ideally contributing to a project with a clear beginning and end. Applicants should consider how the community will maintain and manage the lasting effects of the project once it has completed. If the applicant is applying for a project that would be ongoing over a number of years, the applicant should also consider how the funding would be sustained from other sources in the future. Applicants must have the permission of the landowner to deliver a project.

Examples of the types of schemes we encourage residents to apply for

- 7.5 These are examples of schemes we will seek to fund, but ideas are not limited to this list. Applicants are encouraged to think as creatively and innovatively as possible:
- Re-use and repair projects
 - Local recycling / waste reduction initiatives
 - Community gardens
 - Community orchards / tree nurseries

- Environmental education programmes or resources
- Community environmental challenges

Examples of the types of schemes that will not receive funding

- Projects which include funding to support political purposes
- Projects which include funding for individual causes (such as individuals seeking to make energy efficiency improvements only to their properties)
- Projects which involve the purchase of alcohol.
- Requests for on-going commitment such as salaries, rent and annual running costs will not be considered.
- Projects where the application has been submitted; without the required supporting documentation.
- Projects, which do not demonstrably meet the funding criteria or are not related to the environment in Brent.
- Projects, which do not demonstrate evidence of community support.

Assessment criteria

7.6 Applications are assessed by a panel of officers against the criteria below, with recommended approvals being sent to the appropriate Operational Director for approval, and regular updates provided to the Lead Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Action. Payments are made to communities up front via a pre-paid card, rather than in arrears, and successful applicants are those which adhere to the key criteria below:

- ✓ The application is within the £5,000 maximum amount
- ✓ The applicant meets the eligible individual, organisation or business status and the project is based in Brent
- ✓ The project supports the objectives of any of the five themes within the Brent climate and ecological emergency strategy
- ✓ The project makes Brent's local environment greener and more biodiverse; or offers an opportunity for a tangible carbon saving in a community setting
- ✓ The project reaches into the community, allowing as many local residents to participate or benefit as possible
- ✓ The project is clearly deliverable and leaves a positive environmental impact

Monitoring

7.7 If applicants are successful in receiving funding, they will be required to monitor and share information about the project. They will be asked to submit evidence of how the project has been of benefit to the community. This may be in the form of:

- photos or video showing the project taking place with appropriate permissions
- receipts or invoices as proof of project expenditure
- a record of how many people benefited from the project

- a short description detailing the project outcomes, which may put on the council website or other promotional material, with the photos and/or video.
- 7.8 Funds awarded must only be used for the purposes set out in the application form or approval correspondence, unless changes are agreed by the council in writing.
- 7.9 The recipient is required to submit receipts as evidence of expenditure together with monitoring and feedback at the end of the project.
- 7.10 Individual items of equipment purchased with council funding with a value exceeding £1000 must be insured by the recipient and shall become the property of the council if the project or group folds within two years of receiving the award.
- 7.11 The award cannot be used for expenditure made before the date of your offer notification.
- 7.12 Proper and appropriate financial and accounting records must be in maintained e.g. an income and expenditure sheet, receipts, invoices and quotes.
- 7.13 If the recipient owes an outstanding debt to the council, which is unrelated to the award, the council will not pay funding until such time as the entire debt has been cleared. If the recipient has failed to submit the required monitoring information from previous council funding, the council will not consider any new application until this has been rectified.

Summary of proposed tweaks to the scheme criteria for phrase two

- 7.14 It is proposed to up the maximum limit to £5000 to enable applications for more visible and ambitious community environmental projects.
- 7.15 All of the following documents (and links) are already on the relevant section of the [council's website](#). Authority is being sought for a delegation to the Operational Director for Environment and Leisure to approve Together Towards Zero applications up to the overall value of £100k. Plus, to finalise the amendments to the criteria, and associated documents – to include the application form, FAQs, Grant Funding Agreement, Evidence of Community Support Template and Data Protection and Safeguarding Pack ahead of proposed relaunch of the scheme in November 2022 to coincide with the international climate change conference COP27 which will be underway at this time.

8.0 Alternative Options Considered

- 8.1 Officers have discounted the possibility of utilising the Carbon Offset Fund through a Participatory Budgeting process again. The Carbon Offset Fund was utilised as a pilot for this method of decision-making, which has now been adopted as part of the council's central 'You Decide' programme for applications to the Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy. It is felt that

due to the complexities of the Carbon Offset Fund, and the need for the council to remain agile and flexible in the utilisation of this funding, that the proposed policy framework for future allocations is the optimum way to support the council's climate and ecological emergency goals.

- 8.2 As stated in paragraph 3.4, according to the GLA's guidance a recipient or beneficiary of the Carbon Offset Fund could also be a local business, public sector organisation, community organisation or not-for-profit organisation. Businesses have been discounted as an option for the fund as the council now has a separate [Energy Savings Grant Scheme](#) for business which has recently launched.
- 8.3 For the Together Towards Zero Small Grants Scheme, officers considered keeping all of the criteria for the fund the same as phase 1 but have decided that allowing a greater degree of potential flexibility for applications of £5,000 was preferable. This is thought to allow the option for communities to think more ambitiously and innovatively about potential projects, and we would expect this to be case in the second round of the scheme.

9.0 Financial Implications

- 9.1 To date Brent has collected approximately £2m in total carbon-offset contributions. £0.5m has been designated for Brent's first participatory budgeting pilot (CO₂GO), leaving £1.5m to fund the proposals in this report. It is expected that this fund will grow as new developments are built.
- 9.2 The Together Towards Zero Small Grants Scheme has a residual one off budget of £68,000 funded from the existing Environmental Strategy, Commissioning and Climate change budget.

10.0 Legal Implications

- 10.1 The Climate Change Act 2008 (the Act) is the statutory basis for the UK's approach to tackling and responding to climate change. The Act places a legal duty on central government to set legally binding targets to reduce UK greenhouse gas emissions to net-zero by 2050.
- 10.2 The council has powers to administer and distribute grant funding pursuant to s1 of the Localism Act 2011.
- 10.3 Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 enables the council to enter into a legal agreement with developers to mitigate the impacts of a development proposal. The Council enters into section 106 agreements with developers to secure carbon offsetting contributions on the basis that they are to be spent on the implementation of projects to reduce carbon emissions in its area to offset the proposed shortfall in meeting London Plan targets. The proposals set out for the expenditure of those carbon offsetting contributions secured through the section 106 process are in compliance with the terms of the Council's section 106 agreements.

- 10.4 Where the council obtains grant or other funding from government or other body, it must ensure that the funding is administered in accordance with the conditions of any grant funding. Where distrusting funding, the council must deal with all bidders for funding in a fair, open and transparent way. Therefore, the council must allow fair access to the funding by all potential recipients. This requires the council to advertise the availability of the funds and assess bidders and their bids on predetermined and pre-advertised criteria applicable to all in the same way.
- 10.5 Officers propose to apply for funding as part of the Phase 3b Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme. In accordance with paragraph 13 of Part 3 of the Constitution, submission of bids for additional resources from government is a decision for individual Cabinet Members in relation to their portfolio area in consultation with the Leader.

11.0 Equality Implications

- 11.1 The council, as a public authority exercising public functions, is subject to a general public sector equality duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (EqA). The PSED requires public authorities to have 'due regard' to:
- The need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the EqA
 - The need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. This involved having due regard to the need to:
 - Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic
 - Take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it
 - Encourage persons who share the relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low
 - The need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant and protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This includes having due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.
- 11.2 A full Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) was provided upon the adoption of the Climate and Ecological Strategy in April 2021 and has been published on the council's website. The EIA was reviewed as part of the sign-off process for the 2022-24 Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy Delivery Plan and remains pertinent.

12.0 Property Implications

12.1 There are no direct property implications from this report.

13.0 Human Resources Implications

13.1 There are no direct Human Resources implications from this report.

14.0 Environmental Sustainability Implications

14.1 Environmental sustainability considerations are integral to the purpose, content and recommendations in this report.

15.0 Proposed Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

15.1 Information will be provided to all Members on re-launch of phase 2 of the Together Towards Zero scheme in autumn.

15.2 Relevant information on both schemes will be published on the council's website and through appropriate corporate channels as and when necessary.

Report sign off:

Peter Gadsdon

Corporate Director of Resident Services