

Executive
1 October 2020

Title: Use of Delegated Powers – One Off Budget to Procure Independent Support for a Citizens Assembly

Lead Officer: Dave Barber – Programme Director for Climate Change

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Alan Rhead

Public report / Confidential report

Wards of the District directly affected: All

Contrary to the policy framework: No

Contrary to the budgetary framework: No

Key Decision: Yes

Included within the Forward Plan: Yes (1,147)

Equality Impact Assessment Undertaken: No – An impact assessment will be undertaken during the implementation to identify any specific matters arising

Consultation & Community Engagement: N/A

Final Decision: Yes

Officer/Councillor Approval

Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive	1/9/20	Chris Elliot
Head of Service	27/8/20	Dave Barber
CMT		Leadership Group Coordination
Section 151 Officer	1/9/20	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer	1/9/20	Andrew Jones
Finance	1/9/20	Mike Snow
Portfolio Holder(s)		Councillor Alan Rhead

1. Summary

- 1.1. The Executive approved the Climate Emergency Action Programme (CEAP) at its meeting in February 2020. The CEAP includes a proposal to conduct a Citizens' Assembly. This report asks Executive to formally note the approval of additional one off funding of £35,000 from the contingency reserve to commission a Citizens' Assembly to help inform proposals to achieve a Zero Carbon District by 2030 (Work Package 3 of the CEAP).

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. The Executive are recommended to formally note the approval of additional one off funding of £35,000 from the contingency reserve approved under the Chief Executive's delegated authority CE(4), to enable consultants to be appointed to prepare and manage a Citizens Assembly (or similar citizen's engagement process).

3. Reasons for the Recommendation

- 3.1. A key priority for the first year of the Climate Emergency Action Programme is the establishment of a Citizens' Assembly during 2020. The Citizens' Assembly provides a positive way to engage with the community in a high profile way to obtain positive backing on the CEAP proposals. In supporting this as a method of undertaking some initial citizen's engagement, it was also accepted that other methods are likely to have value in terms of ongoing engagement as the CEAP unfolds. Specifically, it was agreed that a Citizens' Assembly should inform answers to "how" questions, to help the Council understand the best way to plan and deliver the areas of work set out in the CEAP.
- 3.2. To set up and deliver an effective engagement process, the Council needs to engage consultants to provide an independent approach. The consultants will be responsible for:
 - (a) Planning and setting up the engagement process to provide answers to the lines of enquiry that Council is seeking answers to.
 - (b) Running the process, ensuring participants are well informed regarding the issues and all have a fair opportunity to contribute to an in-depth enquiry in to those issues.
 - (c) Reporting the key outcomes from the assembly
- 3.3. A major challenge will be the timescales involved if the Citizens' Assembly is to inform the budget setting for 2021/22. For this reason, officers took the view that a budget for the Citizens' Assembly needed to be agreed under the Chief Executives delegated authority CE(4). This has allowed a procurement process to take place and a consultant has been appointed, with the first engagement meetings getting underway in October. The cost of the work is £35,000 which has been set aside from the Contingency Reserve
- 3.4. It should be noted that through the discussions with potential consultants (including those appointed), there is a need to limit the size of the Citizens'

Assembly to 30 people to enable it to be managed using virtual online tools rather than face to face meetings. Whilst this is a smaller sample size than had originally been envisaged, it is sufficiently large to enable participation from a comprehensive cross section of the District's communities and will provide a legitimate source of advice for future Council decisions relating to the Climate Emergency.

4. Policy Framework

4.1. Fit for the Future (FFF)

4.1.1. "The Council's FFF Strategy is designed to deliver the Vision for the District of making it a Great Place to Live, Work and Visit. To that end amongst other things the FFF Strategy contains several Key projects. This report shows the way forward for implementing a significant part of one of the Council's Key projects."

4.1.2. "The FFF Strategy has 3 strands, People, Services and Money, and each has an external and internal element to it, the details of which can be found [on the Council's website](#). The table below illustrates the impact of this proposal if any in relation to the Council's FFF Strategy."

4.2. FFF Strands

4.2.1 External impacts of proposal

People - Health, Homes, Communities – The engagement process is a key element of the CEAP and will inform priorities and actions for future work to achieve net zero carbon for the District Council.

4.2.3 Impacts of Proposal

Maintain or Improve Services – The engagement process set out in the report provides an important method of engagement with the District's communities and will allow the Council to shape its responses to the Climate Emergency in a way that improves our services to customers

Firm Financial Footing over the Longer Term – The engagement process set out in the report provides an important method of engagement with the District's communities and will allow the Council to plan how to utilise its finances in the long term to deliver priorities relating to the Climate Emergency.

4.3. Supporting Strategies

4.3.1. The proposals set out in this report directly address the Climate Emergency Action Programme (CEAP), including the commitment within the CEAP to undertake citizens' engagement to inform future work to address the Climate Emergency.

4.4. Changes to Existing Policies

4.4.1. No changes to existing policies

4.5. **Impact Assessments**

- 4.5.1. The participants in the engagement process will closely reflect the make-up of the District as a whole in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, disability, geography and income levels. To ensure this is done comprehensively, an Oversight Panel will be formed to advise on how the question(s) for the Citizens' Assembly to address should be framed and what stratification model should be used in recruiting to the Assembly.

5. **Budgetary Framework**

- 5.1. In consultation with Section 151 Officer, the Chief Executive has used his delegated authority under CE(4) to utilise £35,000 from the contingency reserve to support the proposals set out in the report. All reports that have financial implications must be submitted to Finance for consideration and approval before being submitted for inclusion on the agenda.

6. **Risks**

- 6.1. As the budget for this work has already been established and consultants have been appointed, the residual risks are minimal. The greatest risk is that the timetable to deliver the outcomes from the Citizens' Assembly will overrun and will therefore prevent the findings from the Assembly feeding in to Service Area Plans and budget setting for 2021/22. To mitigate this risk, officers are in the process of agreeing a timetable with the consultants and have agreed that if necessary an interim report can be provided. Further, the findings of the Citizens' Assembly and other community engagement will inform the Council's Climate Emergency work for a number of years to come and will therefore continue to be of value.

7. **Alternative Option(s) considered**

- 7.1. A range of potential engagement methodologies have been considered. It is recognised that engagement needs to be an ongoing process and is therefore likely to involve a number of different methodologies over time. At this stage, the Council is looking to engage through a Citizens' Assembly. This is seen as important because it is perhaps the only methodology that:
- (a) has a sufficiently large sample to provide balanced representation of the District's population thereby ensuring the views of different communities are shared.
 - (b) provides for in-depth enquiry in to complex issues.