

Brighton & Hove City Council

Policy and Resource Committee

Agenda Item 23

Subject: Re-assignment of EcoTowns Funding

Date of meeting: 7 July 2022

Report of: Executive Director Economy Environment and Culture

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Ward(s) affected: South Portslade

For general release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 In 2010-11 £750k of EcoTowns Grant was secured to support sustainability initiatives in the Shoreham Harbour Area and was split between Brighton & Hove and Adur District. It was agreed that the capital funding element of £460k was awarded to Brighton & Hove and directed toward an Eco Visitor Centre linked to the carbon neutral Portzed development (9-16 Aldrington Basin).
- 1.2 This report seeks to re-assign the capital funding from the unimplemented Portzed scheme to wider climate change and biodiversity projects across the Shoreham Harbour area; and to agree indicative governance arrangements.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Committee agrees re-assignment of EcoTowns capital funding to climate change and biodiversity projects across the Shoreham Harbour Area.
- 2.2 That Committee agrees indicative governance arrangements set out in paragraph 3.7 and delegates authority to the Assistant Director for City Development and Regeneration to agree the detail with the relevant authorities in consultation with the Chair of Policy and Resources Committee.

3. Context and background information

- 3.1 In 2010-11 £750k of Government EcoTowns funding was secured to support sustainability initiatives in Shoreham Harbour. It was split across the two main local authorities. Adur Council received £290k revenue funding (primarily used to deliver the Shoreham Harbour Joint Area Action Plan); and Brighton & Hove City Council received £460k capital funding for sustainability projects.

3.2 The grant was made under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003, which provides that the payer may determine the purpose of the grant and the circumstances in which it must be repaid.

The conditions of the grant are that:

- It may be used only for the purposes that a capital receipt may be used. These purposes are set out in Regulation 23 of the Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) Regulations 2003 and would include the use of the grant to meet capital expenditure.
- The annual declaration is made as per paragraph 3 of the conditions.

3.3 In 2012, the BHCC funding was indicatively allocated to the PortZed development, 9-16 Aldrington Basin; towards an Eco Visitor Centre within the development, which was granted planning permission in 2014 (and subsequently amended in 2015). The development commenced in 2017 but has not proceeded since. Furthermore, the site owner has progressed a new development scheme to be brought forward on the site; and indications are that the scheme will no longer be carbon neutral.

3.4 For the reasons set out above, the capital grant has not been spent and remains held on the balance sheet by the city council.

3.5 Since the Eco Towns Grant was awarded there has been significant progress on joint working across the Shoreham Port Area. The Shoreham Harbour Joint Area Action Plan was adopted in 2019 by all the partner authorities (Adur District Council, BHCC and West Sussex County Council) and the Port Authority. The Plan sets out nine overarching objectives including a number that address the climate and biodiversity crisis including:

- Minimising carbon emissions and creating a renewable energy hub;
- Promoting sustainable transport choices including improved pedestrian, cycling and public transport facilities and choices;
- Reducing risk of flooding and adapting to climate change; and
- Adding to the natural capital of Shoreham Harbour Regeneration Area with net gains in biodiversity and multifunctional green infrastructure network.

3.6 Alongside this, Shoreham Port Authority (SPA) has achieved certified EcoPort status and has adopted sustainability goals and projects to achieve these. These include producing less carbon (e.g. electric vehicle fleet) and renewable energy production via solar, wind, water source heat pump technology and a green energy hub.

3.7 These clearly defined objectives will provide a robust framework for future decisions for a re-assigned Eco Towns Grant. It is proposed that Governance of the fund is carried out through the existing bodies used to take forward projects in the area and determine past spend of the revenue element of the grant:

- **Shoreham Harbour Project Board** – Senior Officer representation from each authority and SPA. The Officer Project Board will prepare and agree options and proposals for spend of the Eco Towns Grant to go to Shoreham Harbour Leaders' Board for agreement.

- **Shoreham Harbour Leaders' Board** – is composed of senior elected councillors of the member authorities and the Chief Executive of SPA. The Board has decision making powers and will have oversight of implementation of capital spend.

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 4.1 The alternative option is for no change and to leave the Eco Towns Grant tied to Portzed development scheme which is very unlikely to be implemented. In considering the two options, the current proposals will result in a better outcome in terms of climate change and biodiversity outcomes for Shoreham Harbour, the City Council, residents and businesses.

5. Community engagement and consultation

- 5.1 Extensive engagement was carried out during the preparation of the Shoreham Harbour Joint Area Action Plan. This engagement helped to shape the objectives and policies in the Plan; which was prepared jointly by the city council, Adur District Council and West Sussex County Council.
- 5.2 There has been consultation with officers at the partner authorities on the current report.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 It is proposed that £460,000 Eco Towns capital grant held by Brighton & Hove City Council is released to fund wider climate change and biodiversity capital projects in the Shoreham Harbour Regeneration Area; to be agreed by the existing Shoreham Harbour cross-authority Governance structures.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The council has held the grant balance for several years for which grant conditions set out in section 3.2; the funding must be used for the purpose that a capital receipt would be used for which includes capital spend; and that an annual declaration is made by the section 151 officer. Where a suitable capital project is identified for use of this grant, a report will be brought back to this committee for approval within the capital programme along with any other funding required.

John Lack:

Date consulted: 14/06/22

8. Legal implications

- 8.1 As set out in the report, the grant funding can be spent only in accordance with the grant conditions. The legislative background to the use of the funding is also referenced in the body of the report.

Hilary Woodward:

Date consulted: 16/06/22

9. Equalities implications

- 9.1 Equalities principles will underpin decision-making on the future spend of the Eco Towns Grant.

10. Sustainability implications

- 10.1 The Eco Towns capital grant will be spent on furthering sustainability goals and objectives in the adopted Shoreham Harbour Joint Area Action Plan.

11. Other Implications

- 11.1 None identified

Supporting Documentation

1. Appendices

- 1. Eco Towns Grant Determination 2010-11

2. Background documents

- 1. Shoreham Harbour Joint Area Action Plan 2019