

Key Decision Required:	Yes	In the Forward Plan:	Yes
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CABINET

20 DECEMBER 2019

**REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR
CORPORATE FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE**

A.3 ENERGY SAVING MEASURES IN COMMUNITY CENTRES
(Report prepared by Jennie Wilkinson)

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To obtain agreement for the identification and implementation of energy saving measures in Council owned Community Centres and for the remaining balance in the Big Society Fund to be reallocated to support that.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council has declared a climate emergency and priority to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.

The Big Society fund was launched in April 2011 and to date has awarded over £800,000.00 in grants to a wide variety of organisations and projects in the local area. There is now £78,400.00 remaining in the fund which is not considered sufficient to invite a further round of bids without many of the applicants having no chance of receiving any funding. The Portfolio Holder has expressed his wish to see the remaining money used to support the carbon neutrality agenda and community buildings and it is therefore proposed that the remaining fund is reallocated in order to assess the Council's community centre buildings and support Green Energy improvements to reduce their outgoings and make them more sustainable.

It is unlikely that the fund available will complete all of the measures possible and it is unlikely that any of the existing buildings will achieve Carbon neutrality in their own right. It is proposed that a further report is prepared identifying further works that may be advantageous in terms of viable works to the buildings and that further measures beyond that aimed at carbon neutrality are considered within that project.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That Cabinet agrees to:

- (a) in support of its commitment to carbon neutrality, reallocates the remaining monies within the Big Society Fund to support the Council's community buildings in assessing the most suitable green energy improvements and to implement them where appropriate and cease the big society fund;**
- (b) authorises the Deputy Chief Executive to reach agreement and expend funds on identified works at Community Centres where formal leases and robust**

management practices are in place;

(c) requests that officers prepare a further report detailing further energy efficiency measures that could be implemented at community centres which cannot be funded as above; and

(d) requests that officers ensure that formal leases are set in place for all community centres owned by the Council on similar standard terms, including the requirement in new leases to work to facilitate the activities of public and third sector partners.

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

The Council has a number of Corporate Priorities that would be met by implementing this initiative:

- Engagement with the community
- Effective partnership working
- Support the vulnerable
- Promote healthier lifestyles and wellbeing
- Make the most of our assets

FINANCE, OTHER RESOURCES AND RISK

Finance and other resources

This report is requesting a reallocation of funds already identified and does not therefore require further finance or resources.

Additional works that may be viable will be the subject of a further report.

Risk

The effective running of community centres is essential to the maximising of benefits to the community. Where effective leases are not in place it is hard for the council to ensure that its investment in the buildings and facilities is effective and that services to the relevant communities are maximised. Some of the centres do not have leases and have been resistant to agreeing them.

LEGAL

The Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England and Wales) Regulations 2015 establish a minimum level of energy efficiency for privately rented property in England and Wales. The effect of this is that from the 1 April 2018, a property has to have a minimum rating of E for all new tenancies. As from the 1 April 2023, this minimum rating will apply to all tenancies, both new and existing.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Consideration has been given to the implications of the proposed decision in respect of the following and any significant issues are set out below.

Crime and Disorder / Equality and Diversity / Health Inequalities / Area or Ward affected / Consultation/Public Engagement.

There is the potential for this initiative to provide a benefit across a number of wards and provide activities and opportunities to address and improve the implications listed above.

Council owned community centres are currently located in the following Wards:
Burrsville, Bluehouse, West Clacton and Jaywick Sands, Harwich and Kingsway, Dovercourt All Saints and St Bartholomews.

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

The Council has declared a climate emergency and priority to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.

Legislation requiring energy efficiency in buildings is current and likely to increase in coming years.

Following its launch in April 2011 the Big Society fund has supported over 80 projects totalling more than £800,000.00 worth of grants to clubs, community centres and more. Over the last four years, the fund received a high proportion of applications to support improvements to community buildings. With the remaining budget dwindling, many applicants would be unsuccessful in their bids should a further round of applications be invited. A new use for the remaining money is therefore being sought, with the preference of the Chair of the Fund to support community buildings and promote green energy.

Some of the centres do not have formal lease arrangements and others have leases that have passed their contractual end dates. In these circumstances it can be hard to ensure that investment in the buildings will be optimally effective in delivering community benefits and corporate priorities. It is therefore proposed that expenditure is conditional at each property is conditional on the existence of a current lease and robust management arrangements that ensure the availability of the premises to public and third sector groups.

CURRENT POSITION

On reallocation of the funds, Energy Performance Certificates will be obtained for each of the Council owned community centres together with recommendations of the most effective measures to improve the energy efficiency and reduce the running costs.

Further reports can identify additional viable works to reduce energy use at the sites and the wider carbon neutrality project will seek ways to close the remaining gap to carbon neutrality.