

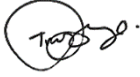
Individual Cabinet Member Report – transfer of capital scheme from provisional to approved programme

(If any background papers attached to this request are exempt please add the following paragraph here: The attached background papers are NOT FOR PUBLICATION in accordance with paragraphs.....of Schedule 12A of Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1972. PLEASE DO NOT INCLUDE ANY EXEMPT INFORMATION ON THIS FORM).

Name of Cabinet Member	Councillor David Rouane – Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Nature Recovery
Delegations Checked and certified by	Darius Zarazel, Democratic Services Officer
Name of officer requesting the decision	Kim Hall – Senior Climate Action Officer
Contact details of officer	Kimberly.Hall@southandvale.gov.uk
Details of decision required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To approve the continuation of a strategic partnership with Trust for Oxfordshire’s Environment (TOE) following a successful pilot scheme to support community-led biodiversity projects in South Oxfordshire and enter into a grant agreement for 2024/25. To approve the transfer of £56,250 for 2024/25 of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding from the provisional capital programme to the approved capital budget programme to fund at least three projects delivering new wildlife habitats, tree planting and improved access to the countryside. To transfer £56,250 to TOE subject to the completion of a funding agreement that sets out the assessment criteria for release of funds to applicants and monitoring requirements to the district council.
Recommended Action	That the Council continues to support a strategic partnership with TOE to deliver biodiversity and public access projects, fully funded from CIL receipts, and that the budget is transferred from the provisional capital programme to the approved capital programme.

<p>Reasons for recommended decision</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To meet the council’s net zero carbon emission and biodiversity goals, there is an immediate requirement to support nature recovery projects within South Oxfordshire • In 2023/24, £56,250 from CIL receipts was allocated to a capital scheme to support a strategic partnership with TOE, delivering community-led biodiversity projects in South Oxfordshire. This included a £50,000 funding pot to be distributed through grants to community organisations, and a 12.5 per cent administration fee of £6,250. • A contract between the Council and TOE was signed in July 2023, allowing 12 months to allocate the funding to at least three projects. Within the first six months of the partnership, 90% of the funding has been successfully allocated to six organisations, creating new wildlife habitats and improving access to the countryside. Details of these projects can be found in Appendix 1. Officers anticipate the final sums will be awarded following the next application round to be decided in June 2024. • The pilot scheme has already proved to be a success, with projects well distributed throughout the district. Due to TOE’s expert assessors and robust processes, Officers are confident that the projects selected will deliver quality outcomes for nature recovery. • TOE advises us that they have been working with organisations to help develop a pipeline of new projects ready for funding. The popularity of these funds therefore clearly demonstrates an ongoing need for grants and mentoring to deliver biodiversity and public access projects in South Oxfordshire. • New allocations for four more years of funding to support a strategic partnership with TOE (£56,250 each year up to and including 2027/28) were approved at the February council meeting. A new contract will need to be agreed and renewed subject to annual budget approvals and monitoring to ensure the continued successful delivery of the fund.
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<p>Financial details</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Oxfordshire has allocated £56,250 per year for the next four years to 2027/28 in the provisional capital programme for a strategic partnership with TOE, fully funded by CIL. The money will be transferred to TOE to fund a specialist grant scheme to deliver at least 3 projects in South Oxfordshire, for new wildlife habitats, tree planting and access to the countryside. • Of this total, £50,000 each year will be earmarked for biodiversity and public access grants, and £6,250 will cover TOE’s annual admin fees to be outlined in the contract.
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Alternative options considered and rejected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not commence this project – rejected as this project is a corporate priority for delivery. Use the council’s own grants team to administer a £50,000 grant scheme – rejected due to the lack of resources within the Council to facilitate the grants process beyond the basic administration of the scheme, which would necessitate the use of specialist advisors to help develop, evaluate and monitor good quality biodiversity projects within an acceptable timescale. Wait until all funds are allocated before agreeing to further funding – rejected as it is important to maintain continuity for organisations applying for funds and being able to plan ahead when developing new projects. 			
Details of background documents	N/A			
Declarations / conflict of interest	Declarations of any other Cabinet Members consulted by the Cabinet Member making the decision.			
Consultation (officers/ward councillors)	Section	Name	Outcome	Date
	Legal legal@southandvale.gov.uk		No response received on the ICMD. Legal have agreed the scope and prepared a new grant agreement with TOE for 2024/25. The agreement is ready for signing once approval received.	
	Finance Finance@southandvale.gov.uk	Mark Hewer	Confirm that a CIL allocation has been added to the provisional capital programme of £56,250 per year for the next four financial years to 2027/28. The proposed use of funds is in accordance with that allocation and CIL spending regulations.	22.04.24
	Climate and ecology climateaction@southandvale.gov.uk	Jessie Fieth	Approved	24/06/24
	Diversity and Equality equalities@southandvale.gov.uk	Lorne Grove	Approved	1/07/24
	Communications communications@southandvale.gov.uk	Lucy Billen	We will continue to promote and publicise this as a positive climate action	21.6.24
Head of service’s approval	 Approved			Date 04/07/24
Cabinet Member's approval	David Rouane, approved by email			Date 16/07/24

Appendix 1: Detailed capital scheme appraisal report

Ownership of report/ scheme	<p>Kim Hall – Senior Climate Action Officer Email: Kimberly.Hall@southandvale.gov.uk</p>
Details of the scheme	<p>£56,250, fully funded from CIL, has been included in the provisional capital programme for the next four years to fund a strategic partnership with Trust for Oxfordshire’s Environment (TOE). The aim of the scheme is to deliver at least 3 new wildlife habitats, tree planting and countryside access projects per year in South Oxfordshire.</p> <p>This annual allocation comprises a £50,000 grant pot to be distributed to community groups in the district, and £6,250 per annum (12.5 per cent of the grant value), to cover TOE’s administration fees.</p> <p>The contract will be managed by the Climate and Biodiversity Team at South Oxfordshire District Council who will hold regular meetings with TOE representatives to ensure the success of the project.</p>
Strategic objectives	<p>Protect and Restore Our Natural World</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in partnership....to improve access to green spaces in and around our towns, reinforcing access to nature as a priority for community wellbeing • Encourage the use of natural processes to combat risks arising from climate change, such as meadows and trees to reduce flooding. <p>Action on the Climate Emergency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitigate climate change through planning and land use, enhancing biodiversity on our own land and strengthening the planning system to enforce environmental standards.
Purpose of the scheme	<p>Trust for Oxfordshire’s Environment (TOE) will be delivering a grant scheme to distribute Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding to biodiversity and access projects in South Oxfordshire.</p>

Benefits of the Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for the councils' Corporate Plan priorities and contribution towards achieving net zero on council land by 2025. • Visible demonstration of the councils' leadership on tackling the climate and ecological emergencies • Nature-rich urban and rural green space created for the physical and mental well-being of South Oxfordshire residents of all ages • Increased public support for climate action and nature recovery • Nature recovery delivered on publicly accessible land which will be delivered by interested community groups and town and parish councils
Measuring the success of the scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 3 projects delivered in South Oxfordshire to support new wildlife habitats, tree planting and access to the countryside. • All awarded projects completed within a reasonable timescale • All successful projects monitored against the original aims and assessed if they have been delivered to an acceptable standard.
Financial details	Financial details are shown in appendix 2
Hurdles to be overcome	Attracting sufficient fundable applications to award the funds within 12 months of opening each year for applications.

Appendix 2: Financial details

The capital cost of the scheme	Capital cost of the scheme is £56,250 per annum for four years up to 2027/28.
The profile of that expenditure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £50,000 funding for a grant scheme administered by TOE in the capital programme, fully funded by CIL. The money will be used to fund a specialist grant scheme to deliver at least 3 projects in South Oxfordshire, creating new wildlife habitats, tree planting and improving access to the countryside. • £6,250 (12.5 per cent of the grant funding) to cover TOE's annual administration fees to run a grant scheme in an open, fair and transparent manner, including identification of and mentoring support to suitable projects; the necessary administration and management of the application process that will meet the council's agreed funding criteria; and ensure that the projects awarded grants are effectively delivered.
The revenue consequences of the scheme (expenditure and income)	The partnership will be managed by the Climate and Biodiversity Team with minimal revenue consequences.
Details of any specific sources of external finance available for this scheme	None.
Any VAT implications of the scheme	None
Any financial risks associated with the scheme	None
Details of any financial return on the investment	None