

Appendix A - Sustainable City Grants Review Summary of Consultation Responses

1. Respondents

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
An individual resident who lives within the city boundary.	59.4%	22
A voluntary organisation funded by the City Council's Sustainable City Grants in the past 3 years	29.7%	11
A voluntary organisation funded by other City Council grants in the past 3 years	10.8%	4
A voluntary organisation not funded by the City Council in the past 3 years	0.0%	0
A user of a voluntary organisation which has been funded by the City Council's Sustainable City Grants	0.0%	0

Answered question: 37 respondents

Did not answer question: 1 respondents

2. Names of Organisations Responding

Transition Cambridge, Cambridge Carbon Footprint, Cambridge Friends of the Earth, Cambridge Re-Use, CycleStreets, The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire & Northamptonshire, Close the Door campaign, Oblique Arts, Cambridge CVS, Centre 33, The Friends of Histon Rd Cemetery, BeNeRa (Bentley/Newton/Raleigh residents association)

3. What would be the level of impact on your organisation if the annual budget for Sustainable City Grants was reduced from £50,000 to £30,000?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
No impact	20.0%	3
Reduce services	60.0%	9
Stop services	20.0%	3
Group would fold	0.0%	0

Answered question: 15 responses

Did not answer question: 23 responses

4. Given the City Council's overall financial context and the amount of funding generally awarded during the main grant round in recent years, do you agree that the annual budget for Sustainable City Grants should be reduced from £50,000 to £30,000?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	32.0%	8
No	68.0%	17

Answered question: 24 respondents
 Did not answer question: 14 respondents

Comments by those who answered 'Yes'

Summarised comments	City Council response
<p>The Council is under increasing financial pressure. Discretionary spending on issues such as sustainability should be reduced, and spending should be focussed on basic services or helping those local residents who need help most</p>	<p>The context for this review is the very challenging financial situation facing local government. The Council's Mid-Year Financial Review published in October 2013 set out a significant savings requirement of around £6m over the next 4 years. Difficult decisions have already been taken which have delivered the savings requirement for 2014/15 but on-going reviews and more difficult decisions are needed in order to deliver additional savings for 2015/16 and beyond.</p>
<p>Given the pressure on the Council's finances, this whole budget area should simply be stopped and the money either saved or re-allocated to more deserving causes. Sustainability or reducing climate change is simply not a priority that many residents would support in the current economic downturn.</p>	<p>We are working hard to ensure our statutory services are as efficient as possible (such as refuse collection, street cleaning, development control and environmental health). Sustainability remains a priority for the City Council, but it is likely however that a large proportion of the savings we have to make will need to come from discretionary services, which include voluntary sector grants such as the Sustainable City Grants. It is anticipated that the proposed commissioning approach will maximise the impact of the remaining funding on sustainability issues.</p>
<p>We can see the logic of the reduction in the financial context. We understand the council's financial situation and see that cuts have to be made where possible.</p>	<p>The Sustainable City Grants are one aspect of the City Council's wider approach to climate change and sustainability issues. The Council's current Climate Change Strategy sets out a five-year programme of activity to address climate change, through actions such as:</p>
<p>The City Council should use its own powers to do more to tackle climate change, rather than giving grant funding to voluntary groups, e.g. refuse permission to cut down trees, doing more to promote re-cycling etc</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing emissions from the Council's own estate and operations. • Improving the energy efficiency of Council homes. • Securing high sustainability standards in new developments through the Local Plan and planning policy. • Providing advice and financial support to residents to improve the energy efficiency of their homes. • Promoting recycling and providing recycling services.

Comments by those who answered 'No'

Summarised comments	City Council response
<p>Climate change and sustainability are vitally important issues for the future and should be prioritised by the Council above other issues.</p>	<p>Sustainability remains a priority for the City Council, as demonstrated by the commitments and activity set out in the Council's current Climate Change Strategy and other environmental policies such as the Nature Conservation Strategy, the developing Arboricultural Strategy and the developing Environmental Policy. However the Council faces a significant savings requirement and it is likely that a large proportion of the savings we have to make will need to come from discretionary services, which include voluntary sector grants such as the Sustainable City Grants. It is anticipated that the proposed commissioning approach will maximise the impact of the remaining funding on sustainability issues.</p>
<p>The City Council has expended considerable effort in establishing a strong reputation in the sustainability arena, which will be undermined by reducing the Sustainable City Grants funding.</p>	
<p>The quality of life for Cambridge residents is intimately bound up with the quality of the local environment. Funding of voluntary groups to both engage with the policy making process in these areas and to implement practical projects to improve the local environment and enhance biodiversity is important in these times of rapid development in Cambridge.</p>	
<p>Creative, grassroots sustainability initiatives should be supported as much as possible by the City Council. Such groups are underfunded, given the scale of the challenges faced. This is a very small overall part of the Council budget, but the small grants of £1k-5k that it has enabled can make a very significant difference to the work of these organisations, for whom such grants can be the difference between a worthwhile project going ahead or not</p>	<p>We recognise the contribution that voluntary and community groups have made to promoting sustainability, and acknowledge that local projects such as Cambridge Carbon Footprint's Carbon Conversations project have been rolled out nationally. The Sustainable City Grants have helped support and stimulate some of this activity in the city over a number of years. Although a more limited amount of funding will be available overall, we believe that by adopting a commissioning approach we will be able to work with voluntary groups to identify innovative projects that will deliver the Council's environmental objectives.</p>
<p>The Sustainable City Grants have supported pilot projects which have been rolled out more widely locally, regionally and nationally. By reducing the total amount of funding available, the City Council will reduce the likelihood of such projects developing in future.</p>	
<p>The £30,000 awarded in October each year can be explained by a number of factors other than low demand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council officers assess each application against the criteria for the grants and make recommendations to the Executive Councillor as to how much funding each applicant should receive. In some cases the amount awarded is lower than the amount originally applied for. Consequently, in the total amount applied for exceeds the total amount awarded. • An annual grants round may not suit the way that some local groups operate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As the Sustainable City Grants are public money, all applications are currently carefully assessed the Council's environmental objectives. Projects which do not fully meet these criteria do not receive the full funding applied for. In some cases the Council may also take the view that the project outcomes could be delivered with less grant funding, so a lower amount is awarded than has been applied for. • While it may not entirely suit the way that some local groups may prefer to operate, an annual grants round enables

Summarised comments	City Council response
<p>Some groups develop projects at short notice in response to opportunities or the availability of volunteers, so applying for funding six months in advance is not always attractive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness of the grants amongst voluntary and community groups, particularly amongst groups receiving funding from other City Council grant schemes. 	<p>the City Council to compare the applications received and support the projects which have the most merit. If grants are allocated in a piecemeal manner over the course of the year there is the risk that this may not always be the case.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The grants have been available for a number of years and are actively promoted by the council to local voluntary and community groups prior to each application round.
<p>A range of views were expressed on what level of funding should be allocated to the Sustainable City Grants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing the total amount of grant funding to reflect the importance of sustainability issues Keeping the Sustainable City Grants budget at £50,000 and finding the £20,000 saving should be found in other areas of Council spending. Reducing the total funding available, but retaining a small grant allocation for innovative projects that local groups may come up with during the financial year. 	<p>We have considered adopting a mixture of a commissioning approach and a smaller grants pot for innovative projects. However, it is our view that this would not maximise the impact of the reduced funding in the way that a commissioning approach would, and would be less efficient for the Council to administer.</p>

5. Do you agree that the City Council should use the funding to commission voluntary sector organisations to deliver activities that would help achieve our environmental objectives, rather than holding an annual grants application round where voluntary groups can put forward suggested activities for funding?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	50.0%	12
No	50.0%	12

Comments by those who answered 'Yes'

Summarised comments	City Council response
<p>Commissioning would be a more efficient and cost effective use of the Council's resources. If support is well directed towards those who are likely to deliver well, such a scheme has a good chance of enhancing the capacity of local environmental organisations and helping to achieve the Council's</p>	<p>Following the review, it is our view that the proposed commissioning approach would be more efficient to administer, and will maximise the impact of the remaining funding on sustainability issues.</p>

environmental goals and support the quality of life of Cambridge residents.	
Yes, but there should be an open opportunity for voluntary sector organisations to bid for these activities, as there may be organisations locally that would be able to deliver and may not be currently receiving funding	The proposed commissioning model would allow local voluntary and community groups to submit expressions of interest in deliver projects which meet the council's stated commissioning priorities. Projects would then be commissioned which most closely meet the priorities.

Comments by those who answered 'No'

Summarised comments	City Council response
Loss of creativity and innovation – Moving to a commissioning process would mean that many imaginative projects that civil society groups come up with are unable to run. The annual grants application round allows a great deal more flexibility, innovative and creative input and work than a commissioning process is likely to allow.	While an open grants process allows groups scope to identify innovative ways of working, projects currently still have to meet the criteria for the grants and not all proposals are supported. Under the proposed commissioning arrangements, the Council will identify the issues that it wishes to address based on its existing environmental projects, but local voluntary and community groups would be invited to submit expressions of interest in deliver projects which meet the council's stated commissioning priorities. This approach will still allow significant scope for creativity for those groups involved in the commissioning process.
A commissioning approach can increase the dependency of voluntary groups on the commissioning body and make them more nervous of campaigning or putting their views across, even where this may be in the public best interest and it could fundamentally change the relationship between the Council and the local voluntary sector, to the detriment of a vibrant and active local voluntary and community group scene.	We recognise that groups might feel less willing to challenge City Council policy if they are receiving funding from us, either in the form of grant funding or commissioned activity. However, the Council welcomes all input and comment into its decision and policy making processes. Any such comments are not a consideration in assessing grants applications currently, and would not be under any future commissioning arrangements.
Where there is a particular service or activity that a voluntary organisation carries out for the City Council, then the move to a Service Level Agreement or commissioning approach can work. However, for smaller voluntary organisations or community groups, maintaining a small grants pot may be better as it would allow for new or existing groups to seek funding for worthwhile projects, without being disadvantaged. The	Although all groups would be able to submit expressions of interest, we recognise that the proposed commissioning approach is likely to lead to fewer, larger grants being allocated to a smaller number of organisations that are able to deliver activities which address our environmental priorities. However, it is our view that this approach would maximise the impact of the available funding.

Summarised comments	City Council response
<p>best approach is likely to be a balance between a SLA / commissioning approach and a grants approach, depending on the service provided and the voluntary organisation involved.</p>	<p>We have considered adopting a mixture of a commissioning approach and a smaller grants pot for innovative projects. However, this would not maximise the impact of the reduced funding in the way that a commissioning approach would, and would be less efficient for the Council to administer.</p>
<p>The proposed change could shift the relationship from a collaborative one, where groups identify issues and work with the Council to address them, to one where the initiative comes solely from the Council. Effectively, this changes such groups into service providers rather than running projects that their supporters have found is needed. In this situation it can feel like work is being shifted from the Council budget to the voluntary sector, or the voluntary sector becomes a low cost replacement for the obligations placed on the Council - either by statute or democratic process.</p>	<p>We recognise the potential for this shift in the relationship between the City Council and voluntary groups in relation to the Sustainable City Grants. However, the model of commissioning that we are proposing would be more collaborative than a pure commissioning approach. It is our intention that the Council would identify the broad issues that it wishes to address based on the priorities set out in its environmental policies, but then it would work with voluntary sector organisations to develop projects that would address these issues, but also the priorities identified by the groups themselves.</p>