

Report of	Meeting	Date
Interim Deputy Chief Executive (Introduced by Executive Member (Customer, Streetscene and Environment))	Executive Cabinet	Wednesday, 13 September 2023

## Climate Change Business Accreditation

Is this report confidential?	Partly (confidential appendices – 1, 2 & 5)  Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)
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Is this decision key?	Yes
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Savings or expenditure amounting to greater than £100,000	<b>Significant impact on 2 or more council wards</b>
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### Purpose of the Report

1. To provide an overview of the proposed climate change business accreditation scheme, including the application process, judging format and support materials produced.
2. To provide information of financial spends projected for the scheme and planned promotion of the scheme.
3. To provide overview of feedback and comments provided by the Climate Change Working Group regarding the scheme.
4. To seek approval of the climate change business accreditation scheme for publication and execution.

### Recommendations to Executive Cabinet

5. To approve the scheme for public release, associated spend and supported documentation.

### Reasons for recommendations

6. As an additional method for the Council to support and raise awareness of businesses in the borough who are working above the expectation of their field to support in the mitigation of climate change and thus the council's overall ambitious goal to be net zero by 2030.

## Other options considered and rejected

7. To reject the scheme as it stands for review and changes

## Executive summary

8. The formation of a Climate Change Business Accreditation Scheme was an original action from Overview and Scrutiny which was integrated into the Climate Change Strategy and expanded following support requests from local businesses.
9. The accreditation scheme has been devised to allow all businesses to enter without focus on specific sectors or business size. The scheme has been developed alongside the business engagement team and relevant documentation has been produced including application and marking forms and terms and conditions.
10. The current proposal for the scheme will allow for annual release and is currently estimated to have a low expenditure cost of ~£2000 per scheme run.

## Corporate priorities

11. The report relates to the following corporate priorities:

Housing where residents can live well	<b>A green and sustainable borough</b>
An enterprising economy with vibrant local centres in urban and rural areas	Healthy, safe and engaged communities

## Background to the report

12. The establishment of an Accreditation Scheme for businesses was a recommendation of the Overview and Scrutiny Green Task Group and is included in the Council's Climate Change Strategy as the action:  
"Develop a 'green accreditation' system for Chorley businesses"
13. This accreditation scheme is a project within the larger focus of increasing collaboration and engagement within the climate change programme through the strategy.

## Overview of the Climate Change Business Accreditation Scheme

14. The climate change business accreditation scheme is designed to allow businesses of all sizes and sector type to apply and to be successful in the judging process, ensuring scheme equality. With over 3000 businesses in Chorley, uptake is expected to be high.
15. Following the launch, businesses will apply with the open format application, shown in Appendix 1. The accreditation and the application criteria are focused on what measures businesses have taken towards climate mitigation and sustainability including lowering their carbon footprints, improving recycling rates, community engagement and innovative actions or methods to support specialist sustainability work within their sector.

16. An accreditation support document has been developed alongside the application informed by engagement with our businesses to provide a guide to judges whilst marking applications. The support document provides a reference guide to support businesses in covering all important information whilst applying and will also form as a guide for businesses who are in the early stages of making climate conscious decisions or were unsuccessful during the application process. The support document is provided within Appendix 2.
17. To ensure the scheme remains competitive and meaningful, of all applications received, only 10 will be selected per year to be accredited. Once accredited, businesses will not need to renew the accreditation but as a council we will review and be kept up to date on the progress of accredited businesses in their work to address climate change which will be used as case studies over the coming years as examples of best practice.
18. Whilst the scheme is led by Chorley Council, Council officers and Elected Member input will be limited during the judging stages of the scheme to ensure impartiality. This recommendation is upon advice from the Business Engagement Team and previous Red Rose Judges.
19. Currently no sponsors are required for the scheme due to the low costs and judging being voluntary.
20. Once established, this scheme can be run annually, with dates and deadlines kept largely the same.
21. The awarded businesses will be informed through either direct calls or emails depending on business preference. Those businesses will have the opportunity to have their award plaque presented to them by a relevant Elected Member at their place of business with photos taken.
22. Awarded businesses will be announced publicly on the Council's social media pages and through a press release, along with the list of accredited businesses kept on the Council's Climate Change webpage. It is expected that local news outlets such as the LEP will also generate interest following winners announced. Awarded businesses will be provided with a digital version of the plaque award for online promotion, a physical plaque to display, information of the businesses on the Council's website and relevant case studies produced.
23. Terms and conditions and a Governance Framework for the scheme have been developed to ensure protection and continuance of the scheme. These documents are within Appendix 3 and 4, respectively. All data will be held by the council following an agreed privacy notice with the accreditation being a voluntary scheme.
24. The Climate Change Business Accreditation scheme currently has no finalized name for the scheme however officers propose a number of recommended titles below:
  - a. Chorley Climate Commercial Champion
  - b. Sustainable Business Chorley
  - c. Sustainable business achiever Chorley
  - d. The Chorley Sustainability Quality Mark
  - e. Chorley Business Eco Accreditation

- f. Chorley Business Green Accreditation
  - g. Chorley Climate Change Commercial Accreditation
  - h. Climate Action Enterprise Accreditation
  - i. Chorley Climate Change Enterprise Accreditation
  - j. Chorley Business Pathway to Net-Zero Accreditation
25. Members within the Climate Change Working Group voted and were in favour of the title 'Chorley Business Pathway to Net-Zero Accreditation'.

### **Overview of the Judging Format**

26. The scheme will be open to applications for a period of 10 weeks. The scheme will be promoted prior to release in order for businesses to prepare and applications will be submitted through the climate change email address.
27. Of all applications submitted, a longlist of finalists will be determined. The scoring for longlist is a drafted excel spreadsheet, with a series of questions which directly correlates to the application and support document. The longlist scoring form is within Appendix 5. A final number score for each application will be provided and the top 20 scoring will be a top 20 finalist and progress to the short-listing interviews.
28. Long list scoring will be completed by volunteer university students from relevant courses. The local universities have agreed to contact relevant students in courses, most students will be master's students due to required experience, Edge Hill and Lancaster feel the uptake for this will be high. This will be voluntary and completed in the Town Hall over a 2 day period, with applications divided equally between the students and each application will be judged twice with an average score calculated. The number of students needed will depend on uptake of the scheme it is expected to be between 20 and 40 students. Students will run through an example application with officers to understand requirement and a random number of applications scored from each student will be spot checked to ensure accuracy in scoring. Upon completion students will be provided with a letter of recommendation and recognition for work completed for the Council.
29. Shortlist judging for the top 10 to be accredited will be determined by 20 minute interviews with each of the long list businesses for judges to ask questions, judge their knowledge and progression of the environmental aims. Judges will be provided with the support document and each businesses application in order to support the judging process however the top 10 will be decided based on the knowledge and intuition of the judges. Ideally the decision of the top 10 will be unanimous, however if a decision cannot be made the Chorley Council Business Engagement Judge will be the chair and veto decision maker.
30. There will be a total of 5 short list judges which will be from different sectors and different locations of employment. The majority of judges will be from outside of the Chorley borough as an additional effort to maintain impartiality. The following judges have provisionally agreed to be judges, following confirmation of judging days;
- a. Phil Owen, Chorley Council, Senior Business Engagement Officer
  - b. Christopher Dent, SustainNet lead, Edge Hill University Environment and Business Professor

- c. Nicola Roberts, Lancaster University, Project Delivery Manager for Eco-Innovation
- d. David Richardson, UCLAN, McCAW Project Delivery Officer
- e. Robin Jones, North West Net Zero Hub, Senior Project Officer for Low Carbon Technology and Renewable Energy
- f. Backup Judges: Stephen Sykes (Low Carbon Chamber Board Member), Ian Wright (Eco-I Project), 3 Professors from Edge Hill University Business School.

### **Projected timeline following approval**

- 31. The current timeline subject to approval is as follows::
  - a. September 2023 for final designs from the design team and initial promotion of the scheme online
  - b. October 2023 release of the scheme and acceptance of applications for a 10 week period.
  - c. January 2024 closure of applications, and long list judging down to 20 applicants
  - d. January 2024 long list applicants are informed and advised to prepare for short list interviews
  - e. February 2024 long list interviews take place over a 2 day period in person at Strawberry Fields DOP. Decisions of the top 10 will be made at the end of the second day in person.
  - f. Announcements of those accredited and awarding of the plaques will be completed in March 2024.
- 32. The final dates will be confirmed following the approval of the scheme as dates are cascading from due to the firm application period.

### **Projected Financial Cost**

- 33. With this scheme being completed largely online with no awards ceremony, it is envisaged that costs will be below £2,000 including a prudent amount for sponsored social media posts.
- 34. Estimated costs are covered below, however final prices will be collected and presented to this group following approval of the scheme:
  - a. Hospitality costs for student and final judges - £300
  - b. Design work - £500
  - c. Production of the plaques - £500
  - d. Sponsored media posts and any in person promotion - £300
  - e. Additional printing costs for supporting documents for judges and students £50

### **Promotion of the Climate Change Business Accreditation Scheme**

- 35. Following approval of the scheme this work will run through design to ensure all application and support documentation is correctly branded for the Council and the plaques and award material is also designed for production.
- 36. Following the launch, this work will be promoted online with the council's social media pages, directed emails, press releases, promotion through the relevant channels and networks and if required sponsored social media posts.

37. With the application period being either 10 or 12 weeks, this will allow for sufficient time to evaluate interest and run further in person promotion events or sponsored posts.

### **Comments from the Climate Change Working Group**

38. The final iteration of the format and documentation of the Climate Change Business Accreditation was presented to the members of the Climate Change Working Group in July 2023.
39. Overall Members approved the scheme and found that it would be beneficial to the community and will support the Council's net-zero goals and climate change community engagement.

### **Climate change and air quality**

40. The work noted in this report has an overall **positive impact** on the Council's Carbon emissions and the wider Climate Emergency and sustainability targets of the Council.
41. In particular the report impacts on the following activities:
  - a. **net carbon zero by 2030,**
  - b. energy use / renewable energy sources
  - c. waste and the use of single use plastics,
  - d. sustainable forms of transport,
  - e. air quality,
  - f. flooding risks,
  - g. green areas and biodiversity.
42. This work promotes the progression of businesses within the borough to take steps to lower their personal footprints which will in turn lower the overall footprint of the borough.

### **Equality and diversity**

43. No impact, this work is looking to improve equality and diversity across the borough by addressing the impacts of climate change and promoting sustainability to its residents and businesses.
44. All work completed within the Climate Change Programme is covered within the Climate Change Strategy Integrated Impact Assessment.

### **Risk**

45. The risks associated with this work are concerning the failure to mitigate the impact of climate change locally, and the challenge to achieve the targets and ambitions of the Council to deliver on the net zero carbon emissions goal of 2030. Possible delays in delivering the actions relating to nature recovery and sustainability in the environment when working with external stakeholders.
46. Any portion of this work which requires in person working such as judging interviews will have a detailed risk assessment completed to ensure the safety of all those involved.

### **Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer**

47. The costs of this scheme will be met from Climate Change reserve. If the scheme becomes established there may be a requirement to establish a budget to cover any regular costs, but this is not envisaged in the near future.

### **Comments of the Monitoring Officer**

48. The scheme does not involve contractually binding arrangements with participating businesses. Processing of any personal data will be done on the basis of legitimate interests because the Council intends to retain any personal data provided, following termination of accreditation. Such personal data will be considered should the business re-apply in future for accreditation. The person involved in running the business should also be referred to an appropriate privacy notice.

### **Background documents**

There are no background papers to this report all relevant information is attached within the appendices

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1- Climate change business accreditation application form

Appendix 2- Support document for climate change business accreditation

Appendix 3 – Terms and Conditions of the scheme

Appendix 4 – Governance framework of the scheme

Appendix 5 – Long list marking criteria

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This decision will come into force and may be implemented five working days after its publication date, subject to being called in in accordance with the Council's Constitution.