

Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Waste and Recycling Committee

Date: 21 January 2026

Subject: Administration of the Renew Community Fund

Report of: Michelle Whitfield, Head of Communications and Behavioural Change, Communications & Engagement Team

Purpose of Report

To provide the Committee with an assessment of options to change the way the Renew Community fund is administered to provide more local support.

Recommendations:

The Committee is requested to:

1. Approve the proposed approach to change the way the Renew Community Fund is administered and to support the recruitment of a dedicated officer.

Contact Officers

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Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

Recommendation - Key points for decision-makers

Insert text

Impacts Questionnaire

Impact Indicator	Result	Justification/Mitigation			
Equality and Inclusion					
Health					
Resilience and Adaptation					
Housing					
Economy					
Mobility and Connectivity					
Carbon, Nature and Environment	G				
Consumption and Production	G				
Contribution to achieving the GM Carbon Neutral 2038 target		The resultant waste strategy adopted later in 2025 will set a route map for the sustainable management of household waste for nine of the ten GM districts. For example, it will detail how plastics recovery will be further increased to remove them from residual waste (subject to markets) and assess methods to prevent the emission of CO2 to atmosphere.			
Further Assessment(s):	N/A				
	Positive impacts overall, whether long or short term.		Mix of positive and negative impacts. Trade-offs to consider.		Mostly negative, with at least one positive aspect. Trade-offs to consider.
				Negative impacts overall. Trade-offs to consider.	

Risk Management

No risks arise from the report.

Legal Considerations

There are no legal considerations within this report.

Financial Consequences – Revenue

Financial consequences for revenue budgets are set out in the report.

Financial Consequences – Capital

There are no implications for the capital budget that arise from the activities set out in this report.

Number of attachments to the report:

N/A

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

N/A

Background Papers

N/A

Tracking/ Process

Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution

No

Exemption from call in

Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency?

No

Bee Network Committee

N/A

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

N/A

1. Introduction/Background

The Renew Community Fund is in its fifth year. The annual Fund of £220,000 (£200,000 from 2026), has funded 110 projects to date. The Fund is administered by Lancashire Wildlife Trust under the Greater Manchester Environment Trust (GMET), a registered charity that was set up to coordinate funding for nature-based projects across Greater Manchester including the Green Spaces Fund.

GMET operate an online application form using flexigrant, a grant management platform where groups fill out an application form to bid for funding. Each application is scored twice by officers from GMET, SUEZ and GMCA before going through a verification process. GMET handles the due diligence checks and finance, awarding the grant at specific times throughout the project. The annual administration fee paid to Lancashire Wildlife Trust is £32,000 and this is funded by SUEZ.

As the Renew Community Fund has grown in popularity funding more and more repair cafes, bike repair projects and the Manchester Library of things, SUEZ and GMCA want to explore alternative ways of administering the fund to enable it to develop and help grow the community reuse and repair sector. To do this, we need to be more flexible and adaptable to meet the needs of the community and voluntary sector.

2. Options

GMCA and SUEZ have explored several options based on SUEZ own experience of managing similar funds in other contracts.

2.1. Grantscape

Grantscape; a registered charity, currently administers the SUEZ Communities Trust Fund which awards funding from the Landfill Tax.

This follows a similar model to the one administered by GMET with an online application process and Grantscape handle all the necessary due diligence and financial checks and paperwork before projects are scored to determine who would receive funding. Grantscape have national reach but currently have a limited presence in Greater Manchester. They have one North West representative and do propose hiring an additional officer if they were to administer the Renew Community Fund. The application process is also less flexible and difficult to customise and develop.

- **Cost:** Their model is a 10% administration fee of the total fund, therefore equivalent to £20,000 per annum.

2.2. ActionFunder

ActionFunder; an online platform that streamlines the grant process. The online portal is two way, meaning the community groups create an account online which enables officers to communicate directly with them. Groups can also search for volunteer opportunities online helping to support other local groups in the area. ActionFundertake care of all due diligence, legal, and financial checks. It is also easy for community groups to provide feedback and updates on their projects by uploading photos and videos which helps create end of project reports.

SUEZ currently use ActionFunder for community funds in Surrey and Aberdeen and are considering using the platform in Luton and Kensington and Chelsea too.

A potential limitation is the level of customisation that can be made to the application form to enable scoring and selection.

Cost: The total annual cost would be around £10,950 through a monthly subscription and admin fee. This includes a dedicated Customer Service Manager to provide training on the system and regular progress reviews.

2.3. Manage the Fund In House

A third option is to employ a staff member to manage the Fund directly and create an online application form in-house, a model like that of Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority and North London Waste Authority.

This option would give GMCA the greatest control over the process. A dedicated role could actively engage with the community, support applicants, and get feedback from funded groups. This support is currently being absorbed by the GMCA team. However, without support from an external grant manager, GMCA or SUEZ would be liable for carrying out due diligence and financial checks which carries a greater risk and the initial set up costs (estimated to be £20k for a web-based platform) and time involved means this option was discounted.

2.4. Blended Approach Using an Online Platform and Dedicated Resource

The final approach considered was using ActionFunder, in addition to a dedicated resource to liaise with the grant recipients and provide direct support to the projects.

ActionFunder provides a ready-made digital platform for grant management at a low cost. A dedicated GMCA post will provide direct on the ground support, build relationships with the community and voluntary sector and enable us to be more responsive to adapt and grow the Fund according to local needs. They can also encourage new applications from communities who may not be aware of the Fund, whilst identifying opportunities to help grow the reuse and repair sector. For example, feedback from community groups who run repair cafes suggest that a small grant of £500 is all they need to set up a new repair café, whilst under current Renew Community Fund terms and conditions, the lowest amount of funding amount available is £2,000.

SUEZ have agreed they will part fund the officer using the balance of the budget that was previously paid to Lancashire Wildlife Trust once the costs of ActionFunder have been deducted. This will give a contribution from SUEZ to the post of c. £20k per annum with GMCA funding the remainder of the costs.

3. Recommended Approach

It is recommended that the Committee approve the approach in paragraph 2.4, enabling GMCA and SUEZ to adopt ActionFunder as the grant management platform and support the recruitment of a dedicated Community Fund Officer.