

HOUSING AND PLANNING DELIVERY GRANT 2008/9

Agenda Item 2a

Contact Details:- Paul Munson
Designation:- Head of District Development
Ext. No:- 2560
E Mail Address:- paul.munson@braintree.gov.uk

Background Papers:- CLG guidance and announcements
Financial Implications:- As set out in report
Equalities Implications:- N/A
Legal Implications:- None
Options: As set out in report
Risks: Failure to support the development control and local development framework process and the delivery of new housing may mean that Government targets are not met and grant is reduced next year.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report sets out proposals for the expenditure of Housing and Planning Delivery Grant for 2008/9. This has replaced the previous Planning Delivery Grant. The emphasis is now on the preparation of the local development framework and the delivery of new housing. The proposals are intended to support the local development framework process, assist the supply of housing, in particular affordable housing, as well as continuing to support the development control and enforcement functions.

DECISION

That the proposed expenditure as set out in the attached report is approved.

HOUSING AND PLANNING DELIVERY GRANT 2008/9

1. For 2008/9 the Council has received HPG of £258,494. This rewards the delivery of new housing in the District and progress on the local development framework. Development control performance is no longer positively rewarded but the overall grant is abated if performance is unsatisfactory. In Braintree's case there has been no abatement reflecting good development control performance in 2007/8. In addition approximately £140,000 remains unallocated from previous years. The Government expects a 67%:33% split between revenue and capital expenditure from this year's grant. The main demands are for revenue expenditure and we are proposing to swap the HPDG capital element with part of the revenue contribution to the Council's capital programme in order to free up more HPDG for revenue expenditure.

2. We are proposing to use the Housing and Planning Delivery Grant to support planning, housing, enforcement (planning and environmental services) and rural affairs services. At the same time we need to address priority areas to ensure that we receive an increased grant in 2009/10. The Government has announced that the grant available nationally will rise from £100m in 2008/9 to £160m in 9/10 and £250m in 10/11. We will be well placed to receive an increased allocation in 9/10 if we progress the next stages of the Local Development Framework, maintain Development Control Performance and facilitate the delivery of new housing. The spending requirements for 2008/9 are set out in Appendix 1 and address these issues. The main outcomes will be:

- progressing the Core Strategy to the submission and examination stages
- revising the local development scheme
- support for initiatives to assist the delivery of new housing, particularly affordable housing
- maintenance of development control performance
- additional resources for enforcement for planning, environmental services and licensing
- continued funding for the rural affairs officer
- a robust evidence base, including the strategic housing land availability assessment, to plan for the future sustainable development of the District to include the provision of housing, including additional affordable housing
- a reduction in complaints, particularly those relating to delays in dealing with planning applications
- improved access to services by electronic means

Appendix 1

HOUSING AND PLANNING DELIVERY GRANT PROPOSALS FOR 2008/9

- 1. Local Development Framework** **£150,000 (R)**

There is a need to continue to fund studies that provide the evidence base for the local development framework and to fund the preparation of and consultation on the Draft Core Strategy and the submission document.

Studies underway include the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, Water Cycle Study, Appropriate Assessment, Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal, and Highways and Transportation Assessment.

The need for other studies may emerge as we progress towards submission. Any surplus funding will be carried forward to contribute to the further stages of the preparation of the framework including the costs of the public examination.
- 2. Monitoring** **£8,560 (R)**

Service Level Agreement with ECC £8, 560

This pays for the costs of monitoring housing completions and land availability and for monitoring employment land.
- 3. Gypsy and Traveller Sites** **£10,000 (R)**

This is to facilitate the delivery of the site at Twin Oaks, Stisted and will include consultants' fees for detailed highways design work and a contribution to the costs of submitting a planning application.
- 4. Housing Initiatives** **£12,000 (R)** **£8,000 (C)**

Purchase of Hometrack Intelligence System £8000
Viability assessments for affordable housing sites £12,000

These will help to secure an increased supply of affordable housing by providing better information about the housing market and the viability of individual sites.
- 5. Development Control** **£55,000 (R)**

Additional Planning Technician (2-year temporary contract) £25,000
Use of consultants to maintain performance £30,000

The Development Control service uses consultants to process planning applications, to handle planning appeals and to provide specialist advice (for example on retail and lighting issues). Consultants help to cover gaps in staffing due to long-term sickness and vacancies and we are only able to maintain performance at target levels through the use of consultants. We are looking to reduce expenditure on consultants by boosting existing staffing levels. The Witham Area DC team is the smallest of the area teams and is the only team without a technician to support it. We are proposing a temporary contract for a planning technician. This post can be used to deal with minor and householder applications and will free up the more senior officers time to deal with applications that would otherwise be dealt with by consultants.

6. Enforcement £51,020 (R)

Continuation of Planning and Environmental Health Enforcement Officer (Year 2 of a 2-year contract agreed in 07/08)	£25,510
Additional Planning and Environmental Health Enforcement Officer (2-year temporary contract)	£25,510

Members approved an additional enforcement officer last year on a temporary contract to deal with both planning and environmental health enforcement. On 7th July 2008 Cabinet agreed that consideration be given to the provision of additional enforcement resources in Licensing as part of the 2009/10 budget process (minute 35 refers). The appointment of an additional Planning and Environmental Health Enforcement Officer on a 2-year contract will help to meet that requirement.

7. Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans £12,000 (R)

There is a current BVPI commitment to prepare 3 appraisals in 2008/9. These cost £4,000 to £8,000 per appraisal, depending on the size of the conservation area. This indicator is under review by CLG but still needs to be met in 2008/9.

8. Essex Planning Officer Association Membership and Training Initiatives £10,000 (R)

The Council is a member of EPOA. This comprises all planning authorities in Essex. Since the inception of Planning Delivery Grant all authorities have contributed to a central fund administered by the Association. This is used for joint initiatives between Essex authorities such as the Essex-wide Gypsy and Traveller study, the Essex Guide to Environmental Impact Assessment and planning skills workshops for staff and members.

9. Scanning of Planning Applications £10,000 (R)

Scanning to enable all current and past planning applications to be viewed on-line, to reduce backlog and to provide an interactive search facility

10. Rural Affairs Officer £15,358 (R)

It was agreed last year that this post would be funded from PDG until October 2008. For the remainder of 2008/9 and for 2009/10 this post will be fully funded from the base budget.

Total Proposed Expenditure £341,938

Revenue (R) £333,938
Capital (C) £8,000

Resources available:

Carry over from 2007/8 £137,737
New HPDG 2008/9 £258,494*

Total £396,231**

Revenue £311,091
Capital £85,140

Balance (to be held against future LDF requirements) £54,293

***CLG have indicated that this should be split 67:33% between capital and revenue i.e. £173,191 revenue, £85,303 capital**

****The capital programme for 2008/9 currently includes a revenue contribution of £157,410 which could be replaced in part by the HPDG capital allocation of £85,140. The released revenue contribution (of £85,140) can then be used towards funding the revenue commitments of the Housing and Planning Delivery Grant, as identified in this report, giving greater flexibility of use of these funds**