

PLANNING DELIVERY GRANT 2007/8

Agenda Item 5 (b)

Contact Details:- Paul Munson/Alan Southerby
Designation:- Head of Sustainable Development/Head of Development
Ext. No:- 2560/
E Mail Address:- paul.munson@braintree.gov.uk/alan.southerby@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 may mean that Government targets are not met and grant is reduced next year. The government has proposed changes to the grant. This is set out in the report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report sets out proposals for the expenditure of planning delivery grant in 2007/8. The proposals are intended to maintain and improve current levels of performance in development control and to progress the preparation of the local development framework

DECISION

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

PLANNING DELIVERY GRANT 2007/8

1. For 2007/8 the Council has received PDG of £363,000. This is the highest allocation to an Essex District Council and is within the top ten per cent of planning authorities nationally. This rewards the improved performance in development control, good progress on the local development framework and e-planning and the continuing high levels of housing completions in the District. In addition approximately £100,000 remains uncommitted from previous years' planning delivery grant awards. This report sets out proposals for expenditure in 2007/8. The Government expects a 75%:25% split between revenue and capital expenditure.

2. The Planning Delivery Grant (PDG) for 2007/8 is proposed to be used to address priority areas that will maintain and improve our service to the public whilst ensuring that we receive maximum grant for 2008/9. In order to do this we need to progress the next stages of the Local Development Framework, maintain and improve Development Control Performance and progress e-government and Customer First initiatives. The spending requirements for 2007/8 are set out in Appendix 1 and address these issues. The "A" list sets out priorities for expenditure. The "B" list represents options to be funded from planning delivery grant or the general revenue budget. The main outcomes will be:

- maintenance and improvement in development control performance
- a robust evidence base to plan for the future sustainable development of the District to include the provision of housing, including additional affordable housing, in accordance with the regional plan, economic development, protection of the countryside and provision of supporting community facilities and infrastructure
- the preparation of the local development framework Core Strategy Preferred Options and Submission Documents
- a reduction in complaints, particularly those relating to delays in dealing with planning applications
- improved access to services by electronic means
- a good grant settlement next year

The proposals on the "A" list amount to £255,000, which will leave £208,000 uncommitted. The proposals on the "B" list amount to £68,000, which if funded from planning delivery grant would leave £140,000 available.

3. The Government has stated that 2007/8 will be the last year in which planning delivery grant will be awarded and has consulted on a new housing and planning delivery grant to take its place. The consultation proposed that the focus for the award of grant would move away from performance targets to delivery of sustainable development outcomes. A major part of the grant would be to reward housing delivery and the consultation paper put forward a number of different options on how this might be assessed. For planning the paper suggested that the focus of the grant would be to support plan making. The paper also referred to research that is to be carried out on planning fees and what strategy is required to ensure that fees meet the full costs of

handling planning applications. Since the publication of the consultation paper no further announcements have been made.

Appendix 1

PLANNING DELIVERY GRANT PROPOSALS FOR 2007/8

“A” List

- | | | |
|-----------|---|-----------------|
| 1. | Local Development Framework | £125,000 |
| | <p>An annual allocation of £125,000 for the local development framework was agreed at Cabinet on 5th February 2007 and by Council on 19th February 2007. Expenditure in 2007/8 will include:</p> <p>Committed Studies (Employment Land Review, Landscape Character Assessment, Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Urban Capacity Study)</p> <p style="text-align: right;">£50,000*</p> <p>Sustainability Appraisal/SEA Baseline annual fee</p> <p style="text-align: right;">£7,000*</p> <p>Core Strategy SA/SEA</p> <p style="text-align: right;">£10,000*</p> <p>Transportation Study</p> <p style="text-align: right;">£30,000</p> <p>(The Highways Agency has stated that a transportation study is required to support the Core Strategy Preferred Options by assessing the effect of proposed developments on the transportation network. We are discussing the scope of the study and ways of undertaking it with ECC. The Highways Agency would contribute towards its costs).</p> <p>SPD (Open Space/Sustainable Construction)</p> <p style="text-align: right;">£18,000</p> <p>(This is a commitment in the Local Development Scheme)</p> <p>The need for other studies may emerge during the Preferred Options stage. 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.</p> | |
| 2. | Monitoring | £8,000* |
| | <p>Service Level Agreement with ECC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">£8,000*</p> <p>(This pays for the costs of monitoring housing completions and land availability and for monitoring employment land)</p> | |
| 3. | Gypsy and Traveller Study | £30,000 |
| | <p>(District Development Committee on 16th November 2006 decided that the Council should identify a range of alternative, permanent and transit sites throughout the District in accordance with the Local Development Framework and related processes, depending on the overall level of provision to be made through the regional spatial strategy process.)</p> | |
| 4. | EPOA Initiatives | £8,000 |
| | <p>Biological Records Initiative for Essex</p> <p style="text-align: right;">£8,000</p> <p>(This is to provide a contribution to a records centre for Essex which will provide a comprehensive database of biological and ecological information for the County and which can be used for the preparation of local development framework)</p> | |

documents and for individual sites and planning applications. Essex is one of the few Counties in the country not to have a biological records centre.)

5.	IT	£9,000
	Additional GIS licences (3) (Capital)	£9,000
6.	Staffing	£62,500
	Parish Liaison Officer (Existing temporary contract to 31.3.08)	£40,500*
	Planning and Environmental Health Enforcement Officer (2-year fixed term contract – It was agreed to fund this post from PDG at Cabinet on 5 th February 2007 and Council on 19 th February 2007)	£22,000*
7.	Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans	£12,000
	(There is a current BVPI commitment to prepare 3 appraisals in 2007/8. This will necessitate entering into a contract with ECC or other consultants to prepare these a cost of £4,000 to £8,000 per appraisal, depending on the size of the area. An appraisal of the Witham conservation has now been commissioned. This indicator is under review by CLG but still needs to be met in 2007/8)	
	Total “A” List	£255,000
	“B” List	
8.	Staffing	£5,000
	Additional day per week for Landscape Officer to implement tree management system £5,000 (Funding is available from the Insurance Reserve fund to purchase the system but there will be a need to identify resources to carry out a tree survey of the District and to input data. Funding for an additional day per week for the part-time Landscape Officer will enable this to be achieved)	
9.	Witham Heritage Scheme	£20,000
	(This is an initiative by English Heritage to provide funding to improve historic buildings and shopfronts in Newland Street, Witham. English Heritage will make £50,000 p.a. available for 3-years which will be matched by £25,000pa from ECC. A District Council contribution is required to release the English Heritage funding. A report on this will be submitted to the Witham Local Committee on 11 th September 2007 seeking approval in principle to the scheme and requesting funding from the £50,000 reserve that is available to the Committee. Witham Town Council may also contribute)	
10.	Essex Planning Officer Association Membership	£3,000

The Council is a member of EPOA. The membership fee contributes towards joint initiatives between Essex authorities such as the Essex-wide Gypsy and Traveller study and to planning skills workshops for staff and members.

11. Scanning of Planning Applications	£40,000
Scanning	£20,000
(Scanning to enable all current and past planning applications to be viewed on-line, to reduce backlog and to provide an interactive search facility)	
New Scanner (Capital)	
£20,000	
(Only one scanner is available at present. This does not have sufficient capacity to meet e-government requirements for development control and building control)	
Total "B" List	£68,000

*Existing commitments