

HOUSING AND PLANNING DELIVERY GRANT 2009/10

Agenda Item 6a

Portfolio Area: Enterprise and Culture
Report Presented by: Cllr N Harley

Background Papers: CLG guidance and announcements
Corporate Implications: Please refer to table at end of report
Options: As set out in report

Risks: Failure to support the delivery of new housing through the local development framework process and the development control system may place future funding from the Housing and Planning Delivery Grant at risk.

Executive Summary

This report sets out proposals for the expenditure of Housing and Planning Delivery Grant for 2009/10. 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

To approve the expenditure of Housing and Planning Delivery Grant as set out in the attached report.

HOUSING AND PLANNING DELIVERY GRANT 2009/10

1. For 2009/10 the Council has been provisionally awarded HPDG of £289,746. Confirmation of this allocation is expected at the end of February. The grant 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 2008/9. In addition approximately £103,506 remains unallocated from previous years, which is being held in reserve against future LDF requirements.
2. We are proposing to use the Housing and Planning Delivery Grant to support planning, the delivery of housing, and enforcement (planning and environmental services). At the same time we need to address priority areas to ensure that we receive an increased grant in 2010/11. The Government is expected to announce the outcome of its consultation on the criteria for the award of grant for 2010/11 at the end of February. It is anticipated that the focus of reward in 2010/11 will be on housing delivery, the availability of a robust 5-year supply of land for housing and the completion of a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment in consultation with the development industry. We are currently working on these issues to ensure that we are well placed to receive an increased allocation in 2010/11. At the same time there is a need to progress the next stages of the Local Development Framework and maintain Development Control Performance. The spending requirements for 2009/10 are set out in order of priority in Appendix 1 and address these issues. The funding requirements for the LDF process will be particularly demanding in 2010/11 as it will be necessary to fund the examination in public of the Core Strategy which will include the Inspector's fees, Programme Officer costs, accommodation costs and legal and consultancy costs. In addition there is a need to complete outstanding studies to support the Council's case at the examination. For these reasons it is proposed to allocate the bulk of the 2009/10 HPDG to the LDF process and an allocation of £240,000 is proposed. This may not be sufficient to cover all costs and it will be necessary to find further funding from the HPDG award for 2010/11. However, we do expect LDF costs to reduce in 10/11 if the Core Strategy is found to be sound.
3. The main outcomes of the proposed expenditure will be:
 - progressing the Core Strategy to the submission and examination stages
 - 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
 - a robust evidence base, including the strategic housing land availability assessment, traffic and transport assessments, a strategic environmental appraisal and an update of the retail study
 - a reduction in complaints, particularly those relating to delays in dealing with planning applications
 - improved access to services by electronic means

- electronic delivery of land charge searches

4. Unlike previous years we have not been notified of a requirement to split expenditure between revenue and capital and the proposals are largely for revenue expenditure. If we are subsequently notified of a requirement then we will carry out resource switching at that time.

Corporate Implications			
Financial:	As set out in report. Report has been prepared in consultation with Finance		
Legal:	None		
Equalities & Diversity:	Provision of new housing will have a benefit for all residents in District. No specific impact assessment carried out		
Customer Impact:	Funding will maintain and improve existing services		
Environment & Climate Change:	No direct implications		
Consultation/Community Engagement:	Local Committees		Partners
	Public		Staff
Key Decision:	Yes		
Public/Private Report:	Public		
Officer Contact:	Paul Munson		
Designation:	Head of District Development		
Ext No:	2560		
Email:	paul.munson@braintree.gov.uk		

**HOUSING AND PLANNING DELIVERY GRANT PROPOSALS FOR
2009/10**

In order of priority:

1. Local Development Framework £240,000

There is a need to continue to fund studies that provide the evidence base for the local development framework, to fund the preparation of and consultation on the Submission Document and to fund the Examination in Public including the appointment of a Programme Officer, Accommodation expenses and the Inspector's fees.

Studies required include the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal, and a stage 2 Highways and Transportation Assessment and an update of the retail study.

Anticipated costs include:

Inspector's Fees	£130,000
Programme Officer	£20,000
Accommodation for public examination	£5,000
Retail Study Update	£15,000
Consultancy Support	£24,000
SEA	£19,000
Traffic and Transport Study	£15,000

The need for further work may emerge as we progress towards submission.

2. Development Control £50,000

Planning Technician (Renewal of a temporary contract)	£25,000
Use of consultants to maintain performance	£25,000

In 2008/9 approval was given to a temporary contract for a planning technician to support the Witham Area team. Funding is required to continue this contract for a third year.

In 2008/9 we stopped using consultants to support the processing of planning applications and to deal with appeals in order to reduce expenditure. However as a result Development Control performance fell and did not meet our targets. We are therefore now using one consultant on a part-time basis to cover maternity leave in order to bring performance back on target. There is also a continuing requirement for specialist advice, for example on retail and lighting issues.

3. Enforcement £26,500

Continuation of Planning and Environmental Health Enforcement Officer (Renewal of a temporary contract agreed in 08/09)	£26,500
---	---------

Members approved an additional enforcement officer in 2008/9 on a temporary contract to deal with both planning and environmental health enforcement. Funding is required to continue the contract for a third year.

4.	Monitoring	£8,560
	Service Level Agreement with ECC	£8, 560
	This pays for the costs of monitoring housing completions and land availability and for monitoring employment land.	
5.	Land Charges	£15,000
	Upgrading systems to match addresses with the Local Land and Property Gazetteer and to enable electronic delivery of responses.	
6.	Essex Planning Officer Association Membership and Training Initiatives	£5,000
	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 Assessment, the Essex Guide to Environmental Impact Assessment and planning skills workshops for staff and members.	
7.	Staff Training	£10,500
	To cover staff training costs not included base budget.	
8.	Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans	£12,000
	There is a current BVPI commitment to prepare 3 appraisals in 2009/10. These cost £4,000 to £8,000 per appraisal, depending on the size of the conservation area. Our proposal is to fund a consultant to advise on the preparation of these appraisals and to train staff so that they can be carried out in-house in future.	
9.	Preparation of a Development Brief for Rickstones Road Pavilion and adjoining area	£15,000
	The terms of reference for a development brief for the Rickstones Road Pavilion and adjoining shops were agreed at the Witham Local Committee on 30 th June 2009. The preparation of the brief was recognised as being dependent on the availability of funding through the HPDG.	
	Total Proposed Expenditure	£392,560
	Resources available:	£393,252

