

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – Planning Delivery Grant








Summary of Purpose and Recommendations:

To allocate the Council’s Planning Delivery Grant for 2004/5

Cost to Council: £ nil (£523,033)

Within existing budget? Yes

Contribution to Corporate Plan (Minor/Moderate/Major/Neutral):

	+		-		+		-
	major			Priorities			
	major			Clean Streets and Public Space	moderate		
	major			Crime and Disorder	moderate		
	major			Housing	moderate		
				Managing our Finances		neutral	

Comments on Impacts on Corporate Objectives and Priorities:

This grant money will enable the planning service to improve its performance, work much more actively with our Parish Council partners and effectively review our policies which effect all type of well being.

PLANNING DELIVERY GRANT

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Council has been awarded £523,022 as its grant allocation for 2004/5. This is as a result of improving development control performance and being on track with progressing our Local Plan in 2002/3.
- 1.2 The purpose of the grant is to improve planning services and in particular to achieve government set development control targets and to progress work on the new Local Development Frameworks which are replacing Local Plans.
- 1.3 In the press release accompanying the allocation figures a number of comments are made about the use of the money. These include:
- ‘There is no room for complacency and authorities should be aware that they will not receive further reward unless they continue to improve or maintain high levels of performance’.
- ‘The grant is not ring-fenced and authorities are free to spend allocations as they see fit. However authorities will only receive further reward if they invest in planning and continue to improve or deliver good performance’.
- ‘All evidence indicates that authorities are capable of improving both the speed and quality of the service they offer. The Planning Delivery Grant will further incentivise performance and reward the authorities who deliver improvement’.
- 1.4 A recent letter from the ODPM’s office explains how the grant will be allocated next year and makes it clear that a Council will not be penalised if all of one year’s grant cannot be spent in that year. Further guidance is to be issued on the carrying over one PDG to future years.

2. ALLOCATION OF THE GRANT

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to ask Cabinet to make a recommendation to the Council on how the grant should be allocated.
- 2.2 Attached as Appendix 1 is a list of proposals for spending the grant. The majority of these measures are targeted at the priorities set by the government for continuing to improve the performance of development control and the preparation of the new Local Development Frameworks (which will replace the existing Local Plan). In addition a substantial sum is intended to improve our partnership working with Town and Parish Councils, both in routine development control matters and assisting them to produce local Parish Plans.

- 2.3 The figures given in the Appendix is the spend on these items in a full year. Given that this financial year is now well underway, the difficulties of recruitment, the need to agree detailed measures with our partners and to find accommodation for these extra staff, a significant amount of this expenditure will not be made in 2004/5. It is anticipated that at least £150,000 of the total sum will not be spent in the current financial year. As set out in paragraph 1.4, the Council will not be financially penalised for this.
- 2.4 The expenditure proposed in the Appendix is either one-off project based spending or staff on temporary contracts for 2004/5. Future spending will be governed by the level of grant made available in latter years, but this will continue to be based on our ability to meet government targets. It is unlikely that we will know our 2005/6 grant allocations until February 2005, which makes longer term planning for staff retention very difficult.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 These are, self evidently, a key consideration in the decision to be taken. The Planning Delivery Grant is committed for one more year (2005-6) when £170 million has been earmarked, compared with the £130 million available this year. After this, government officials are saying that there will be an on-going commitment to maintaining investment in planning, but there are no details of how this will be achieved.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Investment in the planning service is directly linked to environmental protection and enhancement, as well as promoting economic and social well-being.

5. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The work on the new Local Development Framework will take full account of the Crime and Disorder Implications of any new proposals.

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1 There has been no consultation to date, but it is intended that the Planning Development Control Committee and the Economy and Planning Review Panel will consider the issues in advance of the Council meeting on 14 June 2004. The outcome of discussing the proposals for better partnership working with Town and Parish Councils will be reported at the meeting.

7. PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS

- 7.1 Councillor Heron and Councillor Wyeth (Chairman of Planning Development Control Committee) support the recommendations.

8. RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 That the Cabinet recommend to the Council that the spending proposals set out in Appendix 1 be approved whilst recognising that there will be an underspend on this total figure of at least £150,000 in the 2004/5 financial year.

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Background papers:

None.

NEW FOREST PLANNING DELIVERY GRANT 2004 (£523,022)

Objectives for application of grant:

- ◆ Improvement of planning engagement and relationships with local councils and customers
- ⌘ Improvement of planning applications performance to meet 2005 targets
- ⊕ Maintenance of high environmental quality, and customer care together with fast turn-around of applications
- * Delivery of new planning policy framework in accordance with new Planning Act requirements and 2005 targets
- Delivery of requirements of new national planning policy statements in relation to Local Development Framework
- Full e-govt target compliance
- † Increased dialogue with local community in conjunction with LDF, Community Strategy and NFDC Corporate Plan objectives

	Area of Work	£	Notes	Method
1 ◆ ⌘ ⊕	Retain existing temporary Development Control staff a) Admin Assistant Registration (f/t) b) Admin Assistant Registration (p/t) c) Assistant Planning Officer (p/t) d) Assistant Planning Officer (f/t) e) Assistant Planning Officer (f/t) Total:	80,000) To deal with on going) high level of planning) applications within) current performance) standards.	Temporary Contracts
2 ◆	Additional Development Control posts to work with local Councils	80,000	Additional resource for Development Control to work with Town and Parish Councils prior to consideration of planning applications by Planning Committee	Temporary Contracts or Agency
3 ⌘ ⊕	Recruit additional planning officer post	30,000	To help further improve performance on major applications.	Temporary Contract or Agency
4 ⌘	Extra Development Control consultancy advice	40,000	To relieve pressure on existing staff particularly on appeals and enforcement issues.	Temporary Contract or Agency
5 ◆	Development Control training	10,000	To train extra planning staff to ease recruitment difficulties.	One off spending
6 ⌘ ⊕	Retain existing temporary part-time Architect	15,000	To provide a direct input into selected major planning applications and to undertake conservation work to release in-house staff time into Planning Applications advice and negotiation	Temporary Contract
7 ⌘ ⊕	Continued use of landscape consultants for environmental improvement scheme design - Hythe and Milford	27,000	To provide continuity in Hythe Promenade contract and to release in-house staff time into Planning Applications advice and negotiation	One off Consultancy
8 ⊕ *	Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal of Local Development Framework (LDF)	20,000	Use of consultants to undertake external appraisal of planning policies in accordance with SEA and SA requirements of new Planning Act. Work will extend beyond 2004/5	One off Consultancy

	Area of Work	£	Notes	Method
9 ◆ ✱ ✦	Community involvement in LDF	25,000	Workshops and facilitation for community dialogue both for LDF and ongoing Community Strategy development as required by new Planning Act	One off Consultancy
10 ✱ ■	Town Centre Assessments as required by new PPS6	40,000	6 town centres to be economically appraised as required by revised PPS6. Specialist consultancy in conjunction with Economic Development Officer. Policies for retail and economic development in LDF. Work will span over 2 years	One off Consultancy
11 ◆ ✱ ■	Open space audit	40,000	Consultant input to updated and revised open space and recreation projections and assessments in accordance with new PPG17. Input to LDF	One off Consultancy
12 ○	E govt	30,000	Range of IT requirements required to fully enable E-govt systems in Planning that are not otherwise planned in other IT expenditure programmes. Includes additional software licences, scanners, field survey tablets etc. Also customer e-facilities including IT equipped reception	Equipment Purchase
13 ⌘	Continued use of external legal services	25,000	To speed up processing of legal agreements and take on appeal work to release in-house legal resources to improve planning application performance	Consultancy or Temporary Contract
14 ◆ ✱ ✦	Support for Town and Parish Councils	60,000	Resource (grant aid or staff) to local Councils to assist directly with preparation of Town and Village Plans. Work locally to deliver Community Strategy and Corporate Plan objectives through locally generated policy and proposals.	Grant aid or Temporary Contract
	TOTAL	522,000		