



MILFORD ON SEA NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN - REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Under the provisions of the Localism Act 2011, town and parish councils have powers to produce Neighbourhood Plans. Milford on Sea has expressed its wish to do so and has recently completed the first formal stage, which is to have the area of the plan agreed. At present they are the only Parish Council to have declared their intention in this District, but others have asked for more details and the Government has recently increased the incentive by allocating more Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) directly to Parish Councils with adopted Neighbourhood Plans.
- 1.2 The Government offers grant funding to District Councils because they have duties under the legislation to support the production of Neighbourhood Plans. These include support and advice but also to bear the cost of the examination of these plans and the cost of a referendum before they can be adopted. The total grant available for each plan is currently £30,000, payable in three stages. The first payment of £5,000 can be applied for when the plan area is formally agreed. Milford on Sea has just reached this stage. The second payment of £5,000 can be applied for prior to the examination being held and the final £20,000 is paid after the referendum has been held.
- 1.3 Milford on Sea has formally requested that the District Council assist them with the costs of producing their Plan.

2.0 THE REQUEST

- 2.1 In a letter dated 21 December 2012 the Parish Clerk sets out the budget that his Council has prepared for the production of the Plan. It anticipates that they will spend £19,100 on items including an administrator to help manage the process, a facilitator, meeting room hire, document production and other administrative expenses.
- 2.2 The letter says that they will continue to explore other funding opportunities and, if there is an underspend, the budget will reduce accordingly. The letter asks if the Local Planning Authority might be able to fund the £19,100 of Parish Council expenses.

3.0 CONSIDERATION AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Milford on Sea Parish Council is making good early progress in the production of the Plan and their budget estimates and provisional timetable appear realistic. The District Council are obliged to assist them in this process and a Planning Policy Officer has been assigned to help them with their work. This

involves him attending meetings, giving them advice and ensuring that they comply with the legislative requirements. Over the process of the plan preparation it is very likely that the time the dedicated officer will spend, along with input from more senior officers, will amount to around £10,000 of District Council staff time.

- 3.2 Neighbourhood planning is a key Government initiative as part of a suite of localism measures. Milford on Sea are approaching the task very professionally and are seeking to define sites for affordable housing development as an alternative to site MoS 1 which was proposed by the District Council.
- 3.3 The District Council can claim the Government grant set out in paragraph 2.1 above. £5,000 of this should be available shortly but the remaining £25,000 depends on the plan progressing to examination and a referendum. If this happens then the District Council estimates that it will need to spend £12,000 to cover the examination costs and a further £8,000 for a referendum. In effect, this leaves £10,000 for covering its own staffing costs or supporting the Parish Council.
- 3.4 In making the decision on this request the District Council needs to be mindful that other Parish Councils may decide to produce Neighbourhood Plans in the future. Each request for funding assistance should be considered on its own merits, but, as this is the first such plan it will be seen as a pilot. It is proposed that the amount of £10,000 mentioned in paragraph 3.3 should equally contribute to the costs of the District Council and Milford on Sea Parish Council. Other Parish Councils which might prepare similar plans in the future might look at this decision and feel they should be treated in a similar way. However, the recommendation is made in the light of this being a new initiative which will be reviewed at the end of the process. Therefore the decision that the Cabinet makes should not be regarded as a precedent.

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The purpose of a neighbourhood plan is to produce environmental outcomes, when planning new developments, which are acceptable to the local community as verified through a referendum. This is a key part of the Localism agenda.

5.0 CRIME & DISORDER AND EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None

6.0 PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS

- 6.1 The Council wishes to support the Localism Bill and consequently I am in favour of providing support to Milford on Sea Parish Council as outlined in this report. As this is a totally new process for all parties, we will reserve judgement on any future applications until we know the final outcome of the Milford on Sea Plan.

7.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 That Milford on Sea Parish Council be offered reasonable Planning Policy Officer support and £5,000 towards the expenses they will incur in the production of their Neighbourhood Plan;
- 7.2 That a further report be made to the Cabinet in due course identifying learning points for any further neighbourhood plans.

For further information contact

Chris Elliott
Head of Planning and Transportation
Tel 023 8028 5588
E Mail: chris.elliott@nfdc.gov.uk

Bob Jackson
Executive Director
Tel: 023 8028 5588
E-Mail: bob.jackson@nfdc.gov.uk

Background Papers

Letter from Milford on Sea
Parish Council dated 21 December 2012