

The Cabinet

8th June 2005

Executive Summary

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Cllr Mrs Peach : Cabinet Member for Planning & Economic Development

THE PLANNING DELIVERY GRANT 2005/2006

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet of the Government's allocation of Planning Delivery Grant (PDG) to this Council for 2005/2006 and to make recommendations about its expenditure.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Government has made an additional £350 million available to Local Authorities over the 3 year period 2003/2004 – 2005/2006, in the form of Planning Delivery Grant (PDG). The purpose of the grant is to provide support towards any expenditure lawfully incurred or to be incurred by a local authority, particularly, but not exclusively in respect of the planning function.

3. PDG Allocation for 2005/2006

- 3.1 This year the allocation criteria, has broadened again to embrace BVPI 205 which covers the quality of Planning Services. Salisbury District Council has been allocated £517,573.59, which excludes any award for the LDF process, which will be determined later. Current information is that this will be a minimum of £52000.

4. Proposed Expenditure of PDG

- 4.1 At the full Council meeting of 29th March it was resolved:

that the Planning Delivery Grant for 2004/2005 be welcomed and sufficient funding be set aside from that Grant to give effect to [these] recommendations [concerning Development Control]. (Minute 84(E)).

- 4.2 In light of this resolution, it is recommended that a sufficient proportion of the Council's PDG for 2005/2006 be set aside to support the continuing improvement in the Planning Service in accordance with Annex 1

5 Staffing issues Development Services

- 5.1 (a) Management Team and Cabinet have authorised two Officers in Development Control to be funded from PDG, over complement so as to address the gaps that have appeared through a high level of staff turnover. Based on ODPM figures these posts need to be embraced within the current establishment and funded from the fee increases in force from the 1st April 2005. In addition this will release monies from PDG to be either spent on improving the service or for corporate benefit.
- 5.2 (b) Part 8 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Bill 2003 will be enacted on 1st of June 2005 and gives gives local authorities in England and Wales the powers to deal with complaints about High Hedges, if mitigation between neighbours has failed.
- 5.3 Under the Act a complainant must accompany the application with a fee (if any) as the local authority determines
- 5.4 Based on current enquiries with a fee of £500 the probability is that this post would be self funding.
- 5.5 However High Hedges legislation similar to that, which will come into force in the UK, became law in Wales at the end of 2004. The current experience in Wales has been that whilst a lot of people have a grievance in regards to a high hedge, relatively few of these have materialised into formal complaints received by the LA
- 5.6 It is therefore concluded that members note the possible requirement and if the demand arises post June 1st then a further report be brought to cabinet for authorisation.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 It is recommended that:
 - a) the award of £517,573.59 of Planning Delivery Grant for the Development Control Service 2005/2006 be noted;
 - b) the expenditure of this sum be apportioned as contained in Annex 1 be approved with minor variations delegated to the HDS;
 - c) that the over complement posts (Senior Planning Officer and Planning Officer) presently funded by the PDG be accepted onto the permanent establishment, funded by the increase in planning fees and the year on allocation of PDG be re-utilised.
 - d) That the principle of employing a full or part time arboriculturalist to deal with the impending High Hedges legislation be noted and if the demand for a further post materialises then a further report be brought to cabinet for authorisation.

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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet of the Government's allocation of Planning Delivery Grant (PDG) to this Council for 2005/2006 and to make recommendations about its expenditure.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Government has made an additional £350 million available to Local Authorities over the 3 year period 2003/2004 – 2005/2006, in the form of Planning Delivery Grant (PDG). The purpose of the grant is to provide support towards any expenditure lawfully incurred or to be incurred by a local authority, particularly, but not exclusively in respect of the planning function.
- 2.2 For development control the allocations were originally assessed against Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) 109, which measures the authority's speed in processing planning applications. This BVPI stipulates that authorities should deal with:
- a) 60% of major commercial applications within 13 weeks;
 - b) 65% of minor commercial applications within 8 weeks; and
 - c) 80% of other applications within 8 weeks.

In the 2003-2004 a basic £75,000 was made available to all authorities, with additional sums being paid for performance against development control targets during the period to June 2001. During the accounting period, SDC's Planning Office introduced the FASTRACK system, which improved its performance figures and resulted in the Council being awarded £34,688 additional PDG, to give a total sum for 2003/2004 of £109, 688.

- 2.3 In 2004/05 the allocation criteria was broadened and based on performance against development control targets, plan making performance, housing delivery in areas of housing need, location of Enterprise Areas and performance at appeal. For Salisbury District, only the first two measurements were relevant.
- 2.4 Salisbury District Council received £173,982. Of this sum, £114,163 was allocated for having an up-to-date local plan in place and £53,059 was for improvement in development control performance on major applications during the accounting period (October 2002 to September 2003).
- 2.5 Although the grant was not ring fenced, it was allocated on the basis that it should be used to drive up performance in the delivery of planning functions. This Council has taken the decision in the past to spend all of its PDG on the planning operation.

3. PDG Allocation for 2005/2006

- 3.1 This year the allocation criteria, has broadened again to embrace BVPI 205 which covers the quality of Planning Services. The level of grant potentially available to individual authorities is much greater than last year, although it has been capped at £700,000. Salisbury District Council has been allocated £517,573.59, which excludes any award for the LDF process, which will be determined later. Current information is that this will be a minimum of £52000.
- 3.3 SDC's position compares with other Wiltshire authorities as follows:

TABLE 1: PDG ALLOCATIONS WITHIN WILTSHIRE						
Authority	e- Planning	Plan making	Enterprise areas	Cap Adjust	Dev Control	Final allocation
Kennet	£50000			£11,061	£551,886	£612,948
N. Wilts	£50000			-£28,802.43	£678,802	£700,000
Salisbury	£50000			£9,340	£458,232	£517,573
Swindon	£00		£10,000	£7,612	£404,200	£365,689
W Wilts	£00			£6,145.17	£334,363	£414,330

4. Proposed Expenditure of PDG

- 4.1 At the full Council meeting of 29th March 2004 a number of recommendations concerning improvements to the Council's Development Control arrangements were approved. It was further resolved:

that the Planning Delivery Grant for 2004/2005 be welcomed and sufficient funding be set aside from that Grant to give effect to [these] recommendations [concerning Development Control]. (Minute 84(E)).

- 4.2 In light of this resolution, it is recommended that a sufficient proportion of the Council's PDG for 2005/2006 be set aside to support the continuing improvement in the Development Control Service. In addition an allocation should be reserved to fund the transition to the new plan making arrangements based on Local Development Frameworks (LDFs). The new

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act is now on the Statute Book and work has already commenced. The Council's first Local Development Scheme (LDS) was submitted to Government Office for the South-West at the end of March this year and survey work for the LDF is about to commence. Consultants have also been engaged to carry out a number of conservation area appraisals (now the subject of BVPI 219).

4.3 Looking Forward

- 5.1 2005/2006 will be a challenging year for the Council's Planning Office. The need to show sustainability in development control performance is well understood and, in addition, the Government will be monitoring the degree to which the Council meets its targets for the preparation of the new Local Development Frameworks (LDFs). Performance in these areas will determine the amount of money that is made available in the final round of PDG settlements, in 2006/2007.
- 5.2 The Planning Service is addressing issues of recruitment and retention, maintaining performance and enhancing the quality. Further work is required on e-planning to ensure full compliance with BVPI205 instead of the 94% achieved this year. In addition corporate linkages with the Customer Services unit are being explored to ensure that the service provision is as effective and efficient as possible and monies are identified to progress the Vision for Salisbury work currently being undertaken.
- 5.3 Also identified as an issue is the engagement that we have with stakeholders and in particular Parish Councils. It is accepted that this engagement needs to be part of the improvement strategy of the Development Services Unit and monies allocated accordingly. A full breakdown of commitments to improving the planning service is attached as Appendix 1.

Staffing issues Development Services

- 5.4 (a) Management Team and Cabinet have authorised two Officers in Development Control to be funded from PDG, over complement so as to address the gaps that have appeared through a high level of staff turnover. The ODPM have published figures that enable planning authorities to assess resource to workload. At present Development Services have 16.8 members of staff (including the two over complement), involved in the processing of planning applications and the requirement is 18.5. In addition with the increase in planning applications of 5% projected, this will result in a further requirement for one member of staff, by the end of the year.
- 5.5 On the 1st April the fees related to planning applications were increased across the board between 10 and 20%. This is part of the initiative of central government to lessen the burden on the corporate centre of the council for the development control service. In conjunction with the Head of Financial Services it has been calculated that an average increase in income of 3.5%, is considered achievable, which would enable these posts to be financed and to be part of the establishment. In addition this will release monies from PDG to be either spent on improving the service or for corporate benefit.
- 5.6 (b) Part 8 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Bill 2003 was laid before Parliament on the 22nd March 2005 and will be enacted on 1st of June 2005.
- 5.7 The Act gives local authorities in England and Wales the powers to deal with complaints about High Hedges, if mitigation between neighbours has failed.

- 5.8 Under the Act a complainant must accompany the application with a fee (if any) as the local authority determines. The legislation has left the issue of fee setting to each Local Authority to decide. In draft consultation a figure of between £280 and £350 was discussed, however the majority of Local Authority respondents favoured a level between £300 and £600 as being commensurate with the resource required to deal with the complaint.
- 5.9 The current Arboricultural Officer is already stretched providing the public with our current minimal Service, and to provide the new statutory requirement in relation to hedgerows and the enhanced quality outcomes demanded by both the Audit Commission and the ODPM will be beyond current capability. The appointment of a new post will allow the Council to meet its new statutory requirement.
- 5.10 Based on current enquiries with a fee of £500 the probability is that this post would be self funding.
- 5.11 However High Hedges legislation similar to that which will come into force in the UK, became law in Wales at the end of 2004. The current experience in Wales has been that whilst a lot of people have a grievance in regards to a high hedge, relatively few of these have materialised into formal complaints received by the LA. LA's have received many calls in respect of the legislation, but in practice the general public is unwilling to pay a fee to have the issue formally resolved. In many instances the public have been unhappy that if they were to win their case, they would then enter into a private action in order to recoup the costs (fee etc) of their case, which it has generally felt is unfair.
- 5.12 It is therefore concluded that members note the possible requirement and if the demand arises post June 1st then a further report to be brought to cabinet for authorisation.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 It is recommended that:
- a) the award of £517,573.59 of Planning Delivery Grant for the Development Control Service 2005/2006 be noted;
 - b) the expenditure of this sum be apportioned as contained in Annex 1 be approved with minor variations delegated to the HDS;
 - c) that the over complement posts (Senior Planning Officer and Planning Officer) presently funded by the PDG be accepted onto the permanent establishment, funded by the increase in planning fees and the year on allocation of PDG be re-utilised.
 - d) That the principle of employing a full or part time arboriculturalist to deal with the impending High Hedges legislation be noted and if the demand for a further post materialises then a further report will be brought to cabinet for authorisation.

7. Implications:

Financial : As set out in the report.

Legal : None at this stage.

Human Rights : None at this stage.

Personnel : As set out in the report.

Community Safety : None.

Environmental : None.

Core Values : Excellent service; Thriving economy; Protecting the environment.

Wards affected : All.

PLANNING DELIVERY GRANT							
TABLE OF EXPENDITURE AND COMMITMENTS							
2003-2004							
	Proposed						
Category	EXPENDITURE	Actual	INCOME	Carry Over	Remaining	Notes	Project No.
			109688			Planning Delivery Grant	
Agency Staff							
Support	10339.72	10339.72				To include e-govt scanner man	1
Professional	11753.11	11753.11				To offset shortfall in professional staff	2
Equipment	3559	3559				Telephone Exchange to allow core activity	3
	8000	8488.97				Computer Screens to improve work station	4
Salaries (Student Planner)	3331.15	3331.15					5
Other	30.19	30.19					
Carry Over				72000			
COMMITMENTS							
Over complement							
Senior Planning O/C						Management Team decision to offset difficulties	6
Planning Officer O/C						in recruiting staff	7
Sub Total	37013.17	37502.14	109688	72000	185.86	Carried over to 2004/05 for projects 6 & 7	06 & 07
			185.86		185.86		
2004-2005			72674.83			Carried Over from 2003/04 for projects 6 & 7	
Development Control			173982			Planning Delivery Grant	
Senior Planning Officer O/C	42000	0				To include on costs - Safeguard carry over 2005/6	6
Planning Officer O/C	30000	62870				To include on costs - Safeguard carry over 2005/6	7
109 Honoraria Scheme	30000	9225				Commenced 01.10.04	8
Telephonist	15000	16610				To include on costs	9
Bursaries	8000	7200				Training sponsorship for MRTPI	10
Agency Professional	24000	24000				To offset inability to recruit PPO.	11
Parish Council E- Govt	1000	1591.34				As an e enabler for Parish Councils	12
Mini Mailer	4128	5900				To speed up the planning process	13
Photo Copier	6181	5000				To ensure support	14
Franking Machine	5800	5016				To speed up support.	15
Scanning of Planning files	10000	10488				To enhance service provision	16
Milford Hall	700	549.19					17
Project Walkknocker	1000	758.16					18
Carry Over to 2005/06				72674.83		Carry Over of staff over complement.	06 & 07
Forward Planning							
LDF Survey Work	15500	0		15500		Carried Over LDF survey work to 05/06 to include Conservation Appraisal	19
TOTALS/REMAINING	193309	149207.69	246842.69	88174.83	9460.17		
			9460.17		9460.17	Carried Over from 2004/05	
			15500.00			Carried Over from 2004/05 project 19	
			72674.83			Carried Over from 2004/05 for projects 6 & 7	6&7
2005-2006							
Development Control			517574.59			Planning Delivery Grant 05/06	
Senior Planning Officer O/C	42000	42000				To include on costs - Safeguard carry over 2006/7	6
Planning Officer O/C	30000	30000				To include on costs - Safeguard carry over 2006/7	7
109 Honoraria Scheme	40000	40000				Commenced 01.10.04	8
Telephonist	18000	18000				To include on costs	9
Bursaries	10000	10000				Training sponsorship for MRTPI	10
Agency Professional	24000	24000				To offset inability to recruit PPO.	11
Parish Council E- Govt	50000	50000				As an e enabler for Parish Councils	12
Plan Printer	5000	5000				To enhance customer service	20
CRM PD Software Package	15000	15000				To enhance customer Service (Corporate)	21
Medicheck	3000	3000				To speed up support.	22
Scanning of Planning files	22000	22000					23
CRM Data Capture	25000	25000				To enhance customer service (Corporate)	24
IT Equipment	10000	10000				Computer, Colour printer, Screen for reception, software photo, scanner	25
DEV Support Training	5000	5000				To facilitate generic training	26
Carry Over to 2006/07				72000		Carry Over of staff over complement.	06 & 07
Forward Planning			52000			Minimum figure outlined in ODPM PDG Delivery 2005	
Salisbury Vision	100000	100000				To enable us to facilitate a broad church perspective for the future of the ci	28
Conservation Appraisal	25000	25000				As part of possible new BVPI introduced by ODPM	27
LDF Survey Work	50000	50000				LDF Survey work as required for the evidence base	19
TOTALS/REMAINING	474000	474000	667209.59	72000	121209.59		