

Appendix A

Title:	Historic Buildings and Areas Grants.
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr T Philips OBE - Planning and Development
Reporting Officer:	Caroline Power - Conservation Officer
Key Decision:	No

Purpose

To consider the details of the new grant system for historic buildings and areas and how it will be administered.

Background

In February 2007, Cabinet agreed to withdraw from the three Historic Buildings Joint Committees (HBJCs) that operate in the District and to develop a new informal partnership arrangement covering the whole District.

Notice was given to withdraw from the three HBJCs in March 2007. This will take effect from 30 September 2007.

Key Issues

The aim is to develop a simplified and more flexible system for grant aiding historic buildings and areas within the District. This will allow grants to be focused on the priority buildings, the Buildings at Risk, wherever they are located in the District.

It is anticipated that by removing the formal committee system, there will be less bureaucracy and a more flexible approach towards grant aid, with all partners able to focus funding on projects which meet their priorities, whilst identifying projects for joint funding. This will also avoid the need for separate and costly auditing requirements.

Consultation Exercise

Details of a new scheme have been sent out to all members of the HBJCs for consideration. There have been no major concerns raised although the formal meetings for Bradford and Trowbridge are still to be held. Internal consultation has also taken place with officers and the Portfolio Holder.

Next Stage

The next stage is to create a single District-wide grant scheme that will be available for historic building repairs and renovation and enhancement projects within historic areas. The new system should be simpler and more flexible in terms of how communities and individuals can apply for assistance.

The criteria for the consideration of the historic buildings and areas grants will be based on a point system of priorities that are set out in the appendices. A grant for an historic building repair will be primarily judged on a building's condition and use. This will allow for stronger links to the corporate priority of regeneration within the District as well as targeting the funds in a fairer way. In addition, the historic area grants will provide potential improvements to the environment.

It is proposed that an informal Partnership Panel will be set up whereby District Council and town and parish representatives will attend according to where the grant applications are located. In the case of the District Council, it is proposed that the ward member for the location of the grant or grants under consideration, together with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, would be invited to the panel. Similarly, town and parish councils will be invited to send a representative if there are grant applications in their areas.

It is envisaged that there will be quarterly meetings for the panel. Grants may be considered on the basis of support solely from the District Council or jointly by the District Council and the local town or parish. On some occasions the District may choose not to provide grant assistance. All partners would retain control of their individual budgets. The Conservation Officer will work directly with the panel, although specialist advice will be commissioned as required.

Decisions on the District Council's grants would be delegated to the Planning Policy and Conservation Services Manager, in liaison with the Planning Portfolio Holder and taking into account the views of the Partnership Panel.

Effect on Strategies and Codes

The targeting of buildings at risk is one of the primary goals within the Council's Conservation Strategy. The new grants system will enable targeting and a more focused approach on the buildings in the worst condition in the District. It will also support the corporate priority of improving market towns.

Risk Management Implications

Failure to implement this proposed scheme will result in a number of buildings at risk throughout the District not being funded and at risk of being left unrestored.

Financial Implications

The historic buildings budget is £27,340 in 2007-08. This consists of the total grant money that was previously given to the HBJCs, the grant for historic building renovation works and the historic areas enhancement scheme.

The residual money from the closure of the HBJCs is shown in the table below. This is a provisional amount that is still subject to audit. This money was previously given to the HBJCs for the purpose of making grants for historic building repairs. It is proposed that the residual funding be retained within the conservation service as a reserve to supplement the new grant scheme. Any under- or overspending on the conservation grants budget would be transferred to or from the reserve to allow the carry over of monies from one year to the next.

Historic Building Joint Committee	Budget as at end of March 2007	Amount returned to Town Council	Amount returned to District Council
Bradford on Avon HBJC	£36,119.85	£21,917.91	£14,201.94
Trowbridge HBJC	£3,292.05	£2,007.35	£1,284.70
Warminster HBJC	£1,904.70	£1,161.40	£743.30
Westbury HBJC	£3,004.19	£1,614.00	£1,390.19
Total			£17,620.13

Legal and Human Rights Issues

Amendments to the Council's Constitution will need to be undertaken to reflect the winding up of the HBJCs. The scheme of delegation would also be amended accordingly. The changes would be presented to Council on 12 September.

Recommendations.

It is recommended that:

- 1) the proposed district-wide grant system for historic building and areas be approved and implemented.
- 2) the Council's share of the residual monies from the former HBJCs be retained for use in the historic buildings and areas scheme.
- 3) the various historic buildings and areas budgets be consolidated and any under- or overspend be transferred to or from a specific revenue reserve.
- 4) Council is recommended to amend the Constitution to establish delegated authority to approve grants up to the value of £10,000 for the Planning Policy and Conservation Sections Manager in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.
- 5) Council is recommended to amend the Constitution to recognise the termination of the HBJCs.

Background Papers

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.