

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

22 May 2006

Report of the Director of Planning & Transportation

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision

1 PLANNING DELIVERY GRANT AND DEVELOPMENT CONTROL MATTERS

Summary

To inform Members of the successful award of Planning Delivery Grant for 2006/07 and the key expenditure profile that is proposed.

1.1 Planning Delivery Grant Award

- 1.1.1 As Members will be aware performance of the Planning Service has been specifically assessed in recent years and grants awarded to local planning authorities to reflect performance and improvement in various aspects of planning activity.
- 1.1.2 The award of Planning Delivery Grant to the Council in previous years has been £109,000 in 2003/04; £464,296 in 2004/05 and £556,596 in 2005/06. The award for the current financial year is £452,562 which reflects a very favourable award in comparison with other district councils in this region and although lower than the Council's award last year, it is made against the background of a national reduction of £35M in the total fund made available by Government for the Planning Delivery Grant.
- 1.1.3 The amount of the award this year is pleasing and reflects a good level of performance in various areas of planning activity. The total award of Planning Delivery is built up from an assessment of various aspects of the planning function. This year we have been awarded £212,946 for continuing improvement in the Development Control Service. This has been possible primarily because previous years' Planning Delivery Grant funds have been invested in the Development Control Service to enhance the throughput of planning applications. In particular we have invested in a number of staff both temporary contract officers and the forward funding of permanent posts to ensure that we have the resources to deal with the volume of work which shows no sign of reducing in the foreseeable future (and all the signs are that Government will place greater emphasis on DC performance again after the focus on LDF and e-planning in this round). In addition the major investment in the End-to-End planning system has brought improved efficiency in the administration of the process that has assisted

in maintaining performance. The following table shows the throughput performance in Development Control against the best value targets that we will be assessed on for the 2007/08 Grant round.

PDG accounting period July 2005 – June 2006 (as at end of April 2006)		
Application type	DCLG target	TMBC performance
Major	60%	62.75%
Minor	65%	67.79%
Other	80%	81.65%

- 1.1.4 An award was given to the Council of £52,525 in recognition of our progress on plan making. This was awarded to most authorities, but nevertheless it should be recognised that the Borough Council was one of the first in reaching various stages in the new Local Development Framework process.
- 1.1.5 The Council has received the sum of £24,446 in recognition of the advances that have been made in terms of e-planning, particularly through the introduction of the End-to-End system and the greater use of the website for access to planning information.
- 1.1.6 Most noticeably in this round of Planning Delivery Grant the Council has been awarded £162,645 in recognition of housing delivery in a high housing demand area. This is a very true reflection of the amount of resource that the Council has devoted particularly to major schemes which will in due course deliver a stream of housing from brownfield sites. The resources deployed to bring forward the four strategic sites are particularly pertinent. It also reflects the Council's key priority for securing a confident forward supply of affordable housing which has also been secured through the planning on the four strategic sites and other sites in the Borough.

1.2 Future Investment

- 1.2.1 Looking forward to the expenditure profile a significant amount of resource is proposed to be for the continued funding of staff resources already in place. Other key areas of expenditure are proposed as follows:
- Tonbridge Town Centre – ongoing funding of the work towards the preparation of the Action Area Plan and the detailed development proposals and allied work in relation to specific site proposals in the town centre.

- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment – critical work to inform the final production of the Local Development Framework and to underpin the development work for Tonbridge Town Centre.
- Open Space Strategy – commissioning of work to provide a qualitative assessment of all the various open spaces in the Borough which is necessary to inform the Local Development Framework in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 but also to support applications for funding in terms of children’s play areas in the Borough and the review of the Leisure elements of the Capital Plan.
- Conservation Area Appraisals – funding to bring forward work in partnership with local organisations on conservation area appraisals which will be important for development control and also potentially for the grant applications. This area will be the subject of Best Value Performance Indicators starting from next year.
- Building Control IT Systems – To implement a similar End-to-End system to complement and integrate with the IT arrangements for planning and to increase the efficiency of the building control administration operation.
- To contribute to the preparatory consultant work and the purchase of equipment in support of the Council’s Customer Relationship Management operation.

1.2.2 Members will appreciate that most of these areas are either core planning functions or are very closely allied to our planning services. The Government’s expectation is that the funds will be applied in this way but equally it is right that where it is possible and where there is an association to the planning service (for example in bringing forward the CRM operation) the Planning Delivery Grant can be used on a more corporate basis.

1.3 Legal Implications

1.3.1 There are none directly arising from this report.

1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.4.1 Arrangements are in hand between my department and the Director of Finance officers to ensure the proper monitoring of the Planning Delivery Grant Income and Expenditure account. More detailed cost analysis on the individual items will be brought forward as appropriate.

1.5 Risk Assessment

1.5.1 Although the council has fared well in the receipt of the Planning Delivery Grant, there is no room for complacency and managers within Planning Services will be concentrating on key areas of service delivery to ensure that the Council is best

placed to secure another good grant award in the next round. At this stage it is not known how many more years the Government will provide for Planning Delivery Grant and further information will be brought forward as and when it is known.

1.6 Recommendations

1.6.1 The broad principles of this expenditure pattern as set out in the report **BE ENDORSED**.

Background papers:

Nil

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