

Abingdon, North East, South East and West Area Committees



Report of Head of Corporate Strategy

Author: Jayne Bolton

Telephone: 01491 823136

Textphone: 18001 01491 823136

E-mail: jayne.bolton@southandvale.gov.uk

Cabinet member responsible: Matthew Barber

Tel: 01235 520202

E-mail: matthew.barber@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

To: All Area Committees

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New Homes Bonus – Community Funding 2013/14

Recommendations

- (a) that the Abingdon area committee considers and determines the new homes bonus funding applications referred to in appendix three of this report
- (b) that the North East area committee considers and determines the new homes bonus funding applications referred to in appendix four of this report
- (c) that the South East area committee considers and determines the new homes bonus funding applications referred to in appendix five of this report
- (d) that the West area committee considers and determines the new homes bonus funding applications referred to in appendix six of this report

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to ask each area committee to consider the applications the council has received for new homes bonus funding in their area.
2. The report includes separate appendices for each area committee as follows:
 - Abingdon – appendix three
 - West – appendix six

(only relevant appendix attached)

Strategic Objectives

3. The council has a corporate priority to support local communities through grants to voluntary and community organisations that are delivering projects and services that support its own objectives or those in need.

Background

4. The cabinet member for grants approved the new homes bonus community grant policy and procedure for 2013/14 on 23 August 2013. The policy seeks to support community initiatives in areas that have seen development and for a wide variety of community projects or services aimed at improving local facilities or services, or helping to integrate new communities to be considered. A copy of the policy is attached at appendix one of this report.
5. The budget for new homes bonus community funding in 2013/14 is £100,000. In April 2013, the cabinet member for grants approved the division of this budget between the area committees based on housing growth in each area. The actual amounts for each committee are shown in the table at paragraph nine of this report.
6. As the policy refers to housing growth a detailed breakdown showing the numbers of additional homes for each area committee is attached at appendix two of this report. The council's planning policy team supplied this information for the period 2008/9 (the date that new homes bonus was introduced by central government) up to March 2013.
7. Officers have ranked the parishes in each committee high, medium or low priority based on their percentage of the housing growth for the area. This is purely a guide for each committee to consider. Councillors will need to weigh up the benefits of each application alongside the level of housing growth in the area.

Matters for Consideration

8. The new homes bonus grant scheme opened on 30 September 2013 and closed on the 30 November 2013.
9. Officers received 36 valid applications requesting a total of £252,987 divided by each area committee as follows:

Area	Number of valid applications received	Amount of funding requested £	Area Committee budget
Abingdon area	9	76,500	19,300
North East area	4	18,409	9,500
South East area	10	65,138	31,400
West area	13	92,940	39,800
Total	36	252,987	100,000

10. Officers have checked the applications against the agreed policy and have rejected two, which did not meet the mandatory requirements of the scheme. All the applications including any rejected ones are summarised, along with officer comments on the appendix for each committee

11. Detailed reports on each application including costs, risks and consultation comments for each are also attached.

Financial Implications

12. The council has allocated £100,000 in its budget for new homes bonus community grants for 2013/14 only. As per the agreed policy these grants can fund either revenue or capital projects.
13. The council's section 151 officer has confirmed that any new homes bonus community funding that is not awarded by the end of this financial year **cannot** be carried forward to the relevant area committee's budget for 2014/15.
14. The council can however honour any grants awarded by the area committees that are subject to conditions meaning payments cannot be made until 2014/15.

Legal Implications

15. The council's legal powers to award these grants are contained in Section one of the Localism Act 2011 that provides a general power of competence for local authorities.
16. New homes bonus funding is not ring-fenced for any particular purpose so the council has a wide level of discretion in how it chooses to use the funding that it receives.
17. In August 2013, the cabinet member for grants delegated authority to the four area committees to determine new homes bonus funding applications.

Risks

18. Any grants approved by the relevant area committee will normally be paid immediately to the applicant unless the area committee agrees further conditions on any particular awards, in which case they will be made once these conditions are satisfied.
19. The grants officer will need evidence of expenditure for the projects within one year of the payment date however with all the applications there is a risk that for whatever reason projects do not go ahead or get completed and efforts to recoup the grant may be unsuccessful. There is also a risk with all the projects that they don't achieve the desired results.
20. The area committees need to be convinced that each project it funds will go ahead within one year of the date of the grant being awarded. The risks relating to each individual application are included in the detailed reports.

Conclusion

21. Each of the four area committees is asked to consider and determine the grant applications received for their geographical area in line with the policy previously approved by cabinet.

Background Papers

- Individual cabinet member decision to approve a new homes bonus community funding policy and procedure dated 23 August 2013

APPENDIX ONE

New Homes Bonus – Community Funding Policy and Procedure 2013/14

This scheme seeks to support community initiatives in areas that are seeing housing growth. Applications will be considered for funding towards a wide variety of community projects or services that improve local facilities or services, or help to integrate new communities.

Funding criteria

Area Committees will consider proposals for funding in **2013/14 only** against the following criteria:

- constituted voluntary community groups and town and parish councils may apply for either revenue and/or capital funding
- projects **must** have any appropriate planning and/or listed building consents before applying for funding
- projects that benefit communities where housing development **has taken place since 2009**. If no relevant applications are received the area committees may consider applications relating to other projects within the committees area
- we will not fund retrospective projects
- we will not fund projects or services that are more appropriately funded by other organisations.

Application and decision dates

The closing date for applications in 2013/14 will be 30 November 2013 and applications will be determined by each area committee in February 2014.

Conditions of grant awards

The standard terms and conditions that apply to the grant award are:

- the project should be completed within one year of the date of the grant being awarded
- council staff should be allowed to enter and inspect the work being carried out, at any time, subject to them abiding by any necessary health and safety requirements

- acknowledgement of the council's support must be included in any publicity concerning the project or service
- the project or service must comply with all relevant statutory regulations and consents.

The council may also specify conditions that are particular to the service or project that is being funded.

Equalities

The council is committed to promoting equality and diversity and welcomes applications from all sectors of the community, regardless of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, status, religion or belief. We encourage applications from minority groups.

Payment of grants

Grant payments will normally be made to the organisation once the area committee has approved an award. The organisation will be required to sign a declaration that the grant will only be spent on the project as detailed in the application form.

Monitoring of grants

Organisations will be asked to provide evidence of expenditure following completion of the project. Any grant awards not spent within 12 months will need to be returned unless prior approval from the Head of Corporate Strategy has been given.