

Scrutiny Committee Report



Report of Head of Corporate Strategy

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To: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 22 August 2013

New Homes Bonus – Community Funding 2013/14

Recommendation

That scrutiny committee considers and provides comments to the cabinet member for corporate strategy on the new homes bonus community funding policy and procedure as detailed in appendix 1 of this report.

Purpose of Report

1. To consider a policy and procedure to allocate new homes bonus community funding in 2013/14, as detailed in appendix 1 of this report.

Corporate Objectives

2. The council has a corporate priority to offer support to local communities by offering grants to voluntary and community organisations who are delivering projects and services that support the council's own objectives or those in need.
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Background

3. In February 2013 cabinet approved the provision of £100,000 of new homes bonus grants, to be allocated by area committees, to support community schemes.
4. Cabinet also resolved that any new homes bonus money distributed to area committees should be apportioned in proportion to the growth in the number of band 'D' equivalent properties in each area between September 2009 and September 2012. The allocation to be used for each area committee in 2013/14 is as follows:

Area Committee	Percentage	Amount
Abingdon	19.3%	£19,300
North East	9.5%	£9,500
West	39.8%	£39,800
South East	31.4%	£31,400
Total	100%	£100,000

5. Cabinet considered allocating funding at parish level but it was decided that this divided the available resources into sums that were too small to make a significant difference.

Financial Implications

6. There is £100,000 for the allocation of new homes bonus grants included in the councils revenue budget for 2013/14 only.

Legal Implications

7. The council's legal powers to award these grants are contained in Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 that provides a general power of competence for local authorities.
8. 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.

Risks

9. There are some risks attached to funding projects managed by voluntary sector organisations such as assurances of: match funding, quality of services, retention of staff and volunteers. The risks associated with each funding application will be
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highlighted to the relevant area committee and where appropriate conditions will be attached to awards to negate the risks involved.

Conclusion

10. We have developed the new homes bonus community grant policy and procedures for 2013/14 so that we can determine requests for funding towards community projects using a formally approved process.
11. The main priority for this funding will be to support community led projects in those towns and villages that are accepting significant amounts of new housing. However, if insufficient applications come forward from these areas the area committees will be able to consider applications for other projects within their areas and that otherwise meet the agreed funding criteria.

Background Papers

12. The reports listed below give background information regarding the introduction for this policy:
 - Methodology of distribution of budgets to area committees – Cabinet member decision 12 April 2013.
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APPENDIX 1

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 2010**. 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
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- 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.
