



Policy and Resources Committee – 13 February 2012

Funding for Oundle and Raunds Neighbourhood Plans

Purpose of report: To seek Members' agreement to the roll forward of Government grant funding to support the preparation of the above Neighbourhood Plans.

Attachment(s)

Neighbourhood Planning Front Runners (Grant Determination 2011/12)

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Members may be aware that the council was successful in securing funding to support the preparation of two Neighbourhood Plans under the Government's front runners scheme. The grants were awarded in May of last year.
- 1.2 The purpose of the grant is as set out in the attached determination, but in summary is to provide assistance to local authorities to engage with the process with a view to identifying best practice.

2.0 The Details

- 2.1 There were three tranches of grant funding, each providing for up to £20k for each plan. An application was made for funding for Raunds and Oundle, and both were successful as part of the second and third rounds respectively.
- 2.2 The money is not ring fenced and it is not currently planned to be spent in the current financial year. This is because it was anticipated that it would be spent on the examination and referendum aspects of Neighbourhood Plans and neither of the two Town Councils has yet reached this point in the process.
- 2.3 In addition to significant staff input into the development of these two plans to date, the council has incurred costs in supporting the Raunds Masterplan, which will underpin that Neighbourhood Plan (£50k), and in supporting the work of the Oundle 2020 Group in terms of commissioning a traffic management report from consultants and supporting public consultation (£20k).
- 2.4 Although some or all of this money might be used to offset this expenditure in this year it is proposed that the total budget of £40k is rolled over to 2012/13 to be used for examination and referendum if required. Should the money not be used for this purpose then a final decision on its use could be made at the end of 2012/13.

3.0 Equality and Diversity Issues

- 3.1 There are no equality and diversity implications arising from the proposal.

4.0 Legal Implications

- 4.1 There are no legal implications arising from the proposal.

5.0 Risk Management

- 5.1 Should the money not be rolled forward there will be a lack of funding to support the preparation of these plans in the future.

6.0 Financial Implications

6.1 It is not normal practice for unspent revenue funding to be rolled forward at the end of the financial year, therefore an exception needs to be made to meet community expectations of support.

7.0 Corporate Outcomes

7.1 The key corporate outcomes relevant to this report are sustainable development, strong communities and high quality built environment.

8.0 Recommendation

8.1 That agreement be given to the roll forward of the £40k front runners funding.
(Reason: To enable future financial support to be provided to the development of Neighbourhood Plans for Raunds and Oundle)

Legal	Power: Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004				
	Other considerations: Neighbourhood Planning Front Runners Grant Determination 2011/12				
Background Papers:					
Person Originating Report: Trevor G Watson Head of Planning Services tgwatson@east-northamptonshire.gov.uk 01832 742218					
Date: 16 January 2012					
CFO		MO		CX	

(Committee Report Normal Rev. 22)

Treasury Consent

Neighbourhood Planning front Runners -- Thirds Wave (Grant Determination 2011/12: 31/1937)

The purpose of the grant is to provide assistance to a total of 31 local planning authorities to engage with a process of neighbourhood-level planning (under the current legal provisions) in a total of 40 locations in advance of the new proposals for neighbourhood planning being introduced through the Localism Bill. This follows the award of assistance for the same purpose to 42 local planning authorities for projects in 50 locations under the First and Second Waves in March 2011 (Grant Determination 2010/11: 31/1886). The intention is to use these projects to identify issues that may be addressed in regulations and guidance, the National Planning Policy Framework, and best practice that can be used by the advisory bodies we are likely to fund.

The Third wave will account for £800,000 of the £5m that we have available in 2011/12. Each local planning authority concerned would receive funding of £20,000 per project. In some cases, grants are proposed for more than one project in a single local authority area, hence the total number of local authority areas being fewer than the total number of grants. The local authorities and each of the project locations are listed in Annex 1, below.

Is this budget ring fenced? No

Request for Resources indicator

- **Programme Object Group:** SP061105
- **Programme Object:** BP0810377
- **Standard Chart of Accounts:** 51620120
- **RRR 1** RFR1

Description of Expenditure

This determination **31/1937** will enable the Department to pay capital funding for 2011/12 to local authorities involved with the Third Wave Neighbourhood Planning Front Runners. These are the unfunded remainder of the locations identified following the Department's invitation published in December 2010.

Neighbourhood planning - The Localism Bill (published in December 2010) makes new provisions for neighbourhood planning, which would create a radical new element in the planning system in England. Through these provisions, designated local community groups and parish councils will be empowered to bring forward proposals for a development plan for their neighbourhood area or for an order granting planning permission(s) in that area. They will be able to require the local planning authority (LPA) to assist them in the preparation of their proposals and require them to take the proposals to independent examination. If proposals for plans or orders are carried in a local referendum, the local planning authority will be required to adopt them as part of the area's development plan. In this way, neighbourhood communities will be given real power to shape the way that the areas in which they live develop and grow. Neighbourhood planning can be carried out now by community groups or parish councils within the current legal and policy framework but local planning authorities are under no obligation to assist the process, to undertake an independent examination, to hold a referendum or to adopt the plan.

Neighbourhood planning and the Front Runners project is a very high ministerial priority. A business case for neighbourhood planning generally was put to DCLG Investment Sub Committee, which agreed it (subject to later review) on 15 December 2010. The £20k grant may be used by the LPA for any purpose associated with the neighbourhood planning Front Runners project they have proposed in the application to the Front Runners scheme. The

LPAs are aware that total costs may exceed this sum and that DCLG is under no obligation to fund all their costs.

Grant payments under the Front Runners scheme -- This is the second time that the Department has sought consent to fund a programme of neighbourhood plans. We are seeking clearance for forty projects out of a total of 90 applications to the scheme, the first 50 of which were funded in 2010/11.

As was the case for the First Wave, one recipient is a national park authority (Northumberland National Park Authority). In this case, the law requires us to seek approval from DEFRA (Natural England) before funding them and we have written to Natural England for this purpose.

We propose shortly to advertise for further applications to the Neighbourhood Planning Front Runners scheme over 2011/12, with the intention of awarding grants in batches every four months. We will seek separate HMT approval on each occasion.

Legislative Authority

For all recipients other than National Park Authorities: S.31 Local Government Act 2003
For National Park Authorities: S.72 of the Environment Act 1995

General Guideline & Conditions

All expenditure must be within PEX and RFR provision.