



Executive

March 5th 2008

Planning Delivery Grant – allocation of funding

Report of Strategic Directors: Joy Wishlade and Kevin Toller

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor S Coles)

Executive Summary

Taunton Deane has been in receipt of an annual Planning Delivery Grant based on overall planning performance. In 08/09 PDG is changing to Housing and Planning Delivery Grant and will be based not just on planning performance but also on the delivery of new housing. We have not yet received notification of what the 08/09 figure is likely to be. However, we have some PDG funding unallocated from the previous year and this report seeks approval for these funds to be used.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Taunton Deane has been in receipt of Planning Delivery Grant 75% of which is revenue funding and 25% of which is capital funding. There is currently £111,771 of capital funding and £89,330 of revenue funding in 07/08 which is currently unallocated. The purpose of PDG is to improve our ability to deliver planning and development services. Some capital funding has been spent on officer time working on capital programmes but there is now a pot built up of £111,771 capital funding.

2. Proposed Revenue Allocation

- 2.1 Up until now the revenue PDG funding has been spent on additional officers in both the Development Control and the Forward Plan departments, on further studies required in the forward plan making process and on part of the TDBC contribution to the Project Taunton partnership.
- 2.2 The cost of retaining all the staff supported by PDG funding in Development Control and Forward Plan for 08/09 is £127,000. The funds required for further studies within the Forward Plan Unit will be funded from Growth Point revenue funding. The three year partnership funding agreement for Project Taunton has now finished and the partners have successfully gained Growth Point funding to cover 08/09. There is also sufficient money left unspent in the partnership fund to cover a further year (09/10) of the delivery team should

other funding not be forthcoming. Further Housing and Planning Delivery Grant is expected to be announced for 08/09 in the early summer.

- 2.3 It is recommended that the remaining £89,330 revenue funding be allocated towards the cost of retaining the development control and forward plan staff, the remainder (£37,670) being paid from H&PDG later in the year.

3 Proposed Capital Allocation

- 3.1 Upgrade for Limehouse system. Limehouse is the software used for consultations in the Forward Plan and Policy and Performance units.

The Version 3 upgrade is for Uengage (new consultation software) and Ucreate (new publisher software). Version 3 gives major improvements in table design, version comparison, user-level publishing, intuitive workflow, full page maps and graphics. New functions include a powerful consultation portal, customisable questionnaires and surveys, and public chamber meetings.

The upgrade is simpler to use, but more flexible and powerful. The cost of the upgrade is £8,000

- 3.2 Development Control – improved working arrangements. Members are aware that under the Health and Safety Executive guidelines, audits on stress levels have been carried out within the organisation. The DC report showed stress levels to be higher than normal and staff identified this as partly to do with their workloads and partly with their working environment. A working group has been set up to look at how the environment and the DC working practices can be made more efficient as well as the environment more pleasant. This work shows that staff require mobile technology (laptops) so they can work out of the office and gain access to their systems. This will also allow them to rearrange their office area with hot desks and thus make better use of the space. The total cost of laptops, the associated software to allow access to the planning system remotely and for the required cabling etc within the office is £14,000

- 3.3 Planning system and virtual server. Members approved £80k of funding from General Fund reserves for a new planning system. This was prior to tendering. The recommended system from the tendering process that meets our requirements was Plantech which also happened to be the cheapest. However £8,000 is required for the supplier (Plantech) - for additional professional services over the original estimate (mostly training & interfacing work required)

£10,000 for also required for hardware as the pricing from the supplier excludes hardware. The hardware required includes a new virtual server & associated licences, as upgrade to the existing SQL Server 2005 database server and some extra disk for the SAN.

The total further cost is therefore £18,000.

3.4 New system for Land Charges.

The current system is becoming increasingly out of date and difficult to support and integrate with the new service delivery models we are developing. It will need significant investment to bring it up to date. The current system also hinders our ability to manage the workloads created by the Personal Search industry. The purchase of the Plantech Acolaid Land Charges module would enable us to meet the needs of the service through:

- Recording and processing of land searches, compliant with all relevant legislation
- User friendly simple to use interface
- Support of mobile / home working
- Close integration with GIS, Development Management and Building Control systems
- Integration with NLIS system
- Support of web-based service delivery channels, including the facilitation of efficient personal searches.

The capital cost of this module is £35,000. The ongoing revenue costs of £5,550 will be met through fee income. Members may recall that the new land charge fees for 2008/09 were recently published in the weekly bulletin, these fees take into account the additional revenue costs mentioned above.

A project approval report is attached.

3.5 New system for Building Control

As with the Land Charges, the current system is becoming increasingly out of date and difficult to support and integrate with the new service delivery models we are developing. It will need significant investment to bring it up to date. The current system also hinders our ability to manage the workloads created by the Personal Search industry. The purchase of the Plantech Acolaid Building Control module would enable us to meet the needs of the service through:

- Recording and processing of building control applications, compliant with all relevant legislation
- User friendly simple to use interface
- Support of mobile / home working
- Close integration with GIS, Development Management and Land Charges systems
- Support of web-based service delivery channels

The capital cost of the module is £51,000. It is proposed to meet this through a contribution of £30,000 from Building Control reserves and £21,000 from PDG Capital. The ongoing revenue costs of £7,500 will be met through fee

income. Members will note that there is a report on this agenda requesting approval of the 08/09 building control fees; these take into account the additional revenue costs mentioned above.

A project approval report is attached.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 There is sufficient funding available for all the above requirements subject to sufficient Housing and Planning Delivery Grant being available. However, on what Government has informed us will be the basis of the grant we are confident that we will receive more than the remaining £37,670 shortfall. The remaining unallocated capital will be £15,771.

Revenue available	£89,330
Contribution towards staff costs	£89,330
Remaining unallocated	Nil
Capital available	£111,771
Limehouse upgrade	£8,000
DC – improved working arrangements	£14,000
Planning system and virtual server	£18,000
Land charges system	£35,000
Building control system	£51,000
Less contribution from building control reserves	(£30,000)
Remaining unallocated	£15,771

5. Recommendation

- 5.1 It is recommended that the Executive:
- a) Approve the use of PDG revenue and capital funding outlined above,
 - b) Approve the use of £30k of building control reserves to part fund the new building control IT system.
 - c) Note the unallocated amount of PDG capital funding of £15,771.

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EXECUTIVE
CAPITAL PROJECT APPROVAL REPORT

PROJECT TITLE: Plantech Acolaid Building Control module

Lead Officer: Brian Yates, Building Control Manager

Executive Member: Councillor Simon Coles

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

To replace the existing Building Control software and paper based systems to enable:

- Recording and processing of building control applications, compliant with all relevant legislation
- User friendly simple to use interface
- Support of mobile / home working
- Close integration with GIS, Development Management and Land Charges systems
- Support of web-based service delivery channels

CATEGORY:

Service necessity.

ESTABLISHMENT OF NEED:

The Building Control service operates in a competitive marketplace. There are significant pressures on the service to deliver faster and more effectively and electronically in order to remain competitive in this market place.

Software which is capable of meeting these demands is necessary to enable the Council to continue to provide the service required and meet the increasing demands on that service. A key part of this is to ensure that the building control software is able to easily communicate with the main planning software and land charges systems.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES:

The improvement in service which will follow implementation of the new software will directly impact on the following Corporate Priorities:

Economy – in particular support building development across the Borough

Delivery – in providing a more effective, competitive and value for money service.

SERVICE OBJECTIVES/OUTPUTS:

- Responding effectively to customer demands and needs;
- Accurate statistical returns to maximise income, forecasting and Best Value Performance Indicators;
- Automation of tasks currently needing manual intervention;
- Performance within top quartile of relevant BVPIs
- Pro-active approach to IT development to ensure software changes are in place and tested before legislation implementation;
- Close links with Planning and Land Charges systems.

SUSTAINABILITY:

The Council has a duty to promote the economic, social and environmental well being of an area. This project contributes to this duty through:

- Supporting building development within the Borough.

OPTION APPRAISAL:

Outputs

There are a number of software systems available for building control work. It is vital that the system procured integrates well with the planning system used within the Council. The Council has recently procured the Plantech system for planning purposes following a thorough procurement process. This system has an appropriate Building Control module.

Benefits

Benefits of the software include:

- Allow ease of change with new legislation;
- Allow joint working with other Local Authorities as required by Gershon;
- Deliver flexible working in line with the modernising agenda;
- Deploy staff resources in a more efficient way;
- Ease recruitment and training of staff who are familiar with commonly used software packages;
- Give the ability to meet Best Value Performance Standards requirements;
- Improved links with Planning and Building Control
- Meet E-government initiatives.
- Respond to the needs of our customers

Costs

The software is estimated to cost £51,000. This can be met from a combination of Building Control reserves and the PDG capital allocation.

There are additional ongoing revenue costs of £7,500pa. These costs can be met through the fee charging structure for the service.

Risk Identification

- Procurement of new IT and migration of data presents notable risks as well as opportunities for improvement. It is essential we manage the project effectively, as both the continuity and timing are critical to success.
- There may be a dip in service and a backlog of searches develop as staff resources are used to implement the software.
- Suppliers fail to deliver any of the procured systems on time. The strength of the contract between all parties should lessen this particular risk. Any contract developed would have financial penalties for non-delivery;

Monitoring

The project will be closely monitored by the lead officer, and any key issues reported to the Portfolio Holder.

Project Evaluation and Preferred Course of Action

The Plantech Acolaid Building Control module meets the needs of the service and in particular clearly links well with the Plantech system being installed as the main planning system.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

The software is estimated to cost £51,000. It is proposed to meet this through a contribution of £30,000 from the Building Control reserve and £21,000 from PDG Capital.

There are additional ongoing revenue costs of £7,500pa. These costs can be met through the fee charging structure for the service.

TIMESCALE:

A detailed project plan and timescale will be developed with a target period of 4 to 6 months from purchase to full installation of system and staff trained.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That approval is given for the procurement and implementation of the Plantech Acolaid Building Control module.

EXECUTIVE
CAPITAL PROJECT APPROVAL REPORT

PROJECT TITLE: Plantech Acolaid Land Charges module

Lead Officer: Tonya Meers, Democratic and Legal Services Manager

Executive Member: Councillor Fran Smith

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

To replace the existing Land Charges software and paper based systems to enable:

- Recording and processing of land searches, compliant with all relevant legislation
- User friendly simple to use interface
- Support of mobile / home working
- Close integration with GIS, Development Management and Building Control systems
- Integration with NLIS system
- Support of web-based service delivery channels, including the facilitation of efficient personal searches.

CATEGORY:

Service necessity.

ESTABLISHMENT OF NEED:

The last few years have seen significant changes in public, and government expectations for the delivery of land search information aimed at providing faster electronic deliver and opening up greater competition. Personal Land Searchers now account for a significant part of this business.

We have seen a decline in the overall performance of the service, largely founded on our difficulties with present systems (some of which remain paper based) in responding to the demands placed on us.

Software which is capable of meetings these demands is necessary to enable the Council to continue to provide the service required and meet the increasing demands on that service. A key part of this is to ensure that the land charges software is able to easily communicate with the main planning software and building control systems.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES:

The improvement is service which will follow implementation of the new software will directly impact on the following Corporate Priorities:

Economy – in particular for supporting the flow of the housing market

Delivery – in providing a more effective, value for money service.

SERVICE OBJECTIVES/OUTPUTS:

- Responding effectively to customer demands and needs;
- Accurate statistical returns to maximise income, forecasting and Best Value Performance Indicators;
- Automation of tasks currently needing manual intervention;
- Performance within top quartile of relevant BVPIs
- Pro-active approach to IT development to ensure software changes are in place and tested before legislation implementation;
- Close links with Building Control and Planning systems.

SUSTAINABILITY:

The Council has a duty to promote the economic, social and environmental well being of an area. This project contributes to this duty through:

- Supporting the smooth flow of the housing market.

OPTION APPRAISAL:

Outputs

There are a number of software systems available for land charges work. It is vital that the system procured integrates well with the planning system used within the Council. The Council has recently procured the Plantech system for planning purposes following a thorough procurement process. This system has an appropriate Land Charges module.

Benefits

Benefits of the software include:

- Allow ease of change with new legislation;
- Allow joint working with other Local Authorities as required by Gershon;
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- Deploy staff resources in a more efficient way;
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TIMESCALE:

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

That approval is given for the procurement and implementation of the
Plantech Acolaid Land Charges module.