

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Full Council – 22 July 2014

Accelerating Growth Delivery

Report of Strategic Director – Brendan Cleere

(This matter is the responsibility of the Leader – Councillor John Williams)

1. Executive Summary

The Council has established growth as a top priority and has earmarked New Homes Bonus funding for delivering its ambitions (Full Council, 5 February 2014).

There is currently an ambitious agenda for delivering major housing and employment, regeneration and physical infrastructure schemes to enable growth. These are outlined particularly in the Taunton Town Centre Rethink and Taunton Growth Prospectus documents, both approved by the Council in early 2014.

In order to accelerate and secure delivery of such schemes, Members have been advised previously that it will be necessary to make appropriate use of available New Homes Bonus funding, to commission dedicated specialist and technical support. Such funding is needed to bring schemes to a stage where they are 'shovel ready' – for example designs drawn up, business cases made, legal implications clarified and planning permission secured. In this way, we will be better placed to take advantage of significant funding opportunities offered by the Local Enterprise Partnership, Government and other agencies. Experience shows that many of these major funding opportunities arise with little time to prepare, but require a clear business case and ability to deliver within very tight timetables. Any 'unresolved' issues – such as planning and property/legal concerns - can rule a potential scheme 'out of the running' for consideration, due to the time needed to give the necessary assurance of 'deliverability'.

This report proposes that a contribution of £550k is made from the 2014/15 New Homes Bonus allocation, towards technical and specialist support for accelerating delivery of growth ambitions.

2. Background

- 2.1 The background to this report is described in the Executive Summary. The following section proposes use of New Homes Bonus funding for a range of priorities and projects associated with the Council's growth agenda

3. Proposed New Homes Bonus Funding (NHB) to Accelerate Growth

Table 1: NHB Profile of Spend to Accelerate Growth

Priority	Description	14/15 (£k)	15/16 (£k)	16/17 (£k)	17/18 (£k)	Total (£k)
Highways & Transport Capacity	This funding would provide additional transport and highways related support to accelerate the delivery of major schemes which are essential to realising economic growth potential and also to speed up essential highways input to the planning process.	50	50	50	50	200
Legal Capacity	This funding would provide additional capacity for legal input and expertise, dedicated to growth and regeneration schemes and projects.	30	30	0	0	60
Property & Estates Capacity	This funding would enable dedicated property and estates support to resolve issues and accelerate delivery of growth and regeneration projects.	145	145	0	0	290
Total		225	225	50	50	550

- 3.1 It is proposed that the full £550k sum is found from the 2014/15 New Homes Bonus allocation. This would leave £0.58m in this reserve for 2014/15.
- 3.2 In addition to the schemes listed in Table 1, members are asked to note that a bid has been submitted for Government funding under the Homes and Communities Agency's 'Large Scale Infrastructure Programme', towards a dedicated team to accelerate delivery of major housing growth in Taunton. Major urban extensions elsewhere have such resources to accelerate delivery and overcome day-to-day and complex matters associated with such large scale development. The outcome of this bid is expected over the summer period.
- 3.3 In proposing the items in table 1, Members are also asked to note and support the following principles:
- That the items proposed do not comprise 'bricks and mortar'. Further requests for use of New Homes Bonus funding will be made for such purposes, as growth schemes and opportunities come forward.
 - That the funding amounts and periods suggested for each priority are based on best estimates and knowledge of requirements at this time. Any significant variations or additional requirements resulting in a change in the total funding requested will be reported to Members. Expenditure on these items will also be reported on a regular basis to the Project Taunton Steering Group as part of their role in monitoring delivery of the Growth Programme.

4. Finance Comments

- 4.1 This report is requesting that £550k of New Homes Bonus (NHB) funding is allocated to the estimated budget requirement for delivering the priority schemes as indicated within this 'Accelerating Growth Delivery' report, over the next five years.
- 4.2 The figures provided in Table 1 have been thoroughly scrutinised with the Director - Growth and Development. The total of £550k is sufficient for the plans within this report.

5. Legal Comments

- 5.1 None.

6. Links to Corporate Aims

- 6.1 This proposal will accelerate delivery of the Council's priority for growth.

7. Environmental Implications

- 7.1 None

8. Community Safety Implications

- 8.1 None

9. Equalities Impact

- 9.1 Equality implications of specific schemes will be assessed as they come forward. At this stage there are no specific equality implications from the proposals.

10. Risk Management

- 10.1 A key purpose of this report is to mitigate the risks of growth schemes not reaching 'delivery' stage due to insufficient up front investment and/or lack of readiness of schemes to take advantage of external funding opportunities.

11. Partnership Implications

- 11.1 Whilst there are no specific partnership implications arising from this report, allocating funds in the manner proposed will send a clear message to partners and potential funding bodies that the Council is serious about delivering growth.

12. Recommendation

- 12.1 Full Council is recommended to approve the commitment of New Homes Bonus from 2014/15 to be transferred to new Earmarked Reserves for the purposes identified in Table 1, and be allocated to the Revenue Budget in each of the relevant financial years as the funds are used.

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