

TO: Environment Scrutiny Committee - 1st April 2003

SUBJECT: Grant Aid Review 2002/2003

FROM: Planning and Engineering

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To appraise the members of the current situation in respect of Historic Buildings Grants administered by the District Council.

2. BACKGROUND

Members will be aware that Warwick District Council has a long association with the provision of grants for the maintenance of historic buildings throughout the District with a variety of grant aided schemes. The following is a resume and update on the present schemes.

Historic Buildings Grants

The scheme is solely funded by Warwick District Council and is available for Listed Buildings and non Listed Buildings which make a contribution to Conservation Areas and would not generally be eligible for grant aid under other schemes. Following a reduction in the capital programme for last year, the annual allocation was reduced to £7,500.00. In order to allocate this sum fairly, the majority of properties received less than a 25% grant which is the normal allocation, however, this did enable 13 grant offers to be made. This has resulted in repairs being carried out to properties in Kenilworth, Hunningham, Bishops Tachbrook, Whitnash, Bubbenhall and Leamington Spa. This scheme has been fully allocated for 2002/3. It is anticipated that for the coming financial year the capital allocation will be returned to its original level and a higher allocation will be available. A number of properties have already submitted applications for the new financial year.

Warwick Scheme of Grants

This is solely funded by Warwick District Council and is available for all Listed Buildings and non Listed Buildings within the Warwick District Conservation Area. Due to the reduction in capital programme, as previously mentioned, the annual allocation was reduced to £5,000.00. This, however, enabled 5 properties to receive grant aid including significant works at 4 Jury Street and 7 Mill Street and detailed replacement at the Friends Meeting House. Warwick benefited for many years from the jointly funded Town Scheme of Grants with English Heritage and, therefore, pressure for grant aid tends to be less than in other parts of the District. Again, it is anticipated that the level of grant aid will increase for the forthcoming financial year for this scheme. This scheme has been fully allocated for 2002/3.

Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme of Grants for Leamington Spa

This is a partnership scheme of grants jointly funded by English Heritage and Warwick District Council giving a total funding of £40,000.00 per year. It is allocated to properties in the Leamington Spa Conservation Area against an agreed action plan and tends to cover the area to the North of the river where there are no other forms of grant aid. Grants are offered at 25% of the cost of works. For the past year, a total of 23 grant offers have been made from this scheme. This has resulted in a number of significant restoration projects at individual houses and also shopfront improvements in Regent Street and Warwick Street. This scheme was allocated for 3 years and has one more year to run. This scheme has been fully allocated.

Townscape Heritage Initiative Scheme of Grants

This is a Partnership Scheme with the District Council, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Single Regeneration Budget. This scheme draws together the District Council Shopfront Grant Scheme for the Old Town for which our annual contribution is £20,000.00 and the Heritage Lottery Funds Townscape Heritage Initiative to which the District Council contributes £30,000.00 annually. These contributions draw down a total of £138,000.00 annually to be spent in the Old Town area. Funding under this scheme is normally offered at 50% of the cost of the eligible works. A total of 14 grant offers have been made during the current financial year and additional works for 2 offers made last year have also been funded from the current year. Of the 14 offers, 10 have included works to shopfronts which meets the annual shopfront grants target of 10 shopfronts per year for the Single Regeneration Budget funding. Other works have included the former Midland Red Social Club in High Street, which is an ongoing project and will also be partly funded from the next financial year and the Polish Club in High Street, enabling that to be brought back into new community and educational use. The annual allocation for this scheme has been fully allocated. This scheme was offered on a 3 year basis and has one more year to run.

Future of grant schemes

Capital allocation of £100,000.00 has been made for the current financial year. This will now be allocated as follows.

£20,000.00 Historic Buildings Grant Scheme.

£10,000.00 Warwick Town Scheme of Grants.

£20,000.00 towards matched funding with English Heritage for the Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme of Grants.

£30,000.00 to part match funding with the Heritage Lottery Fund Royal Leamington Spa Townscape Heritage Initiative Scheme of Grants.

£20,000.00 towards the Royal Leamington Spa Shopfront Scheme of Grants in conjunction with the Townscape Heritage Scheme of Grants which is match funded by the Single Regeneration Budget. (Total Townscape Heritage Initiative Scheme of Grants funding will be £138,000.00).

As the Partnership Funded Schemes rely on a fixed allocation of partnership funding, it is important that this level of funding is maintained for the forthcoming financial year.

In the case of both the Townscape Heritage Initiative and the Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme of Grants, these will cease at the end of March 2004. The Shopfront Scheme of Grants will continue for a further year. In terms of the Historic Buildings Scheme of Grants and the Warwick Town Scheme of Grants, it has been possible to significantly increase these allocations from last years figure.

It is proposed to continue the allocation of the schemes under the same terms and conditions as previously agreed.

Marketing and Publicising Grant Schemes

A new publicity leaflet was launched at the Council's Heritage Day in November. Displays indicating the grant schemes available were also used at the Heritage Day and have subsequently been on display at Riverside House. Properties within the THI and HERS action plans have been individually targeted as appropriate.

Best Value Review

As part of the Best Value Review, current guidance, procedures and terms of reference for grant aid were reviewed.

The outcome of this review has resulted in improved guidance within the newly launched grant leaflet which is now available on the Council's website. Some revisions have been made to office procedures including a work sheet for each grant offer to enable better monitoring of applications. A system of prioritising applications has also been introduced for the Historic Buildings and Warwick Town Scheme to ensure that best value is achieved from the funds available.

3. POLICY AND BUDGET FRAMEWORK

Provision of grant aid for the historic environment is in accordance with Aim 2 of the Community Plan to improve the urban environment by funding an operating grant aid scheme for improvement to historic buildings.

The provision of grant aid is also in line with the Local Plan policy to protect and enhance the historic environment.

4. OUTCOME REQUIRED

That the contents of this report be noted and that a further report is provided for the Environment Scrutiny Committee in 6 months time.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

Grant files for each grant scheme.

For further information about this report please contact:

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