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|  | AGENDA ITEM NO. |
| Report Cover Sheet | |
| Name of Meeting: | Executive |
| Date of Meeting: | 10 th October 2007 |
| Report Title: | Planning development Grant Allocation |
| Summary of report: | The report sets out the award of Planning Development Grant for this year and the manner in which it can be allocated to support the Planning Service |
| For further information please contact (report author); | John Archer 456500 john.archer@warwickdc.gov.uk |
| Business Unit: | Planning and Engineering |
| Would the recommended decision be contrary to the policy framework: | No |
| Would the recommended decision be contrary to the budgetary framework: | No |
| Wards of the District directly affected by this decision: | all |
| Key Decision? | Yes |
| Included within the Forward Plan? | Yes 13 |
| Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 | No |
| Date and name of meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number: | Executive July 06 |
| Background Papers: | Allocation letters and schedules from DCLG |

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| Consultation Undertaken | | |
| Below is a table of the Council's regular consultees. However not all have to be consulted on every matter and if there was no obligation to consult with a specific consultee they will be marked as n/a. | | |
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| Consultees | Yes/ No | Who |
| Other Committees | n/a | |
| Ward Councillors | n/a | |
| Portfolio Holders | yes | Cllr Hammon |
| Other Councillors | n/a | |
| Warwick District Council recognised Trades Unions | n/a | |
| Other Warwick District Council Service Areas | n/a | |
| Project partners | n/a | |
| Parish/Town Council | n/a | |
| Highways Authority | n/a | |
| Residents | n/a | |
| Citizens Panel | n/a | |
| Other consultees | n/a | |
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| Officer Approval | | |
| With regard to officer approval all reports must be approved by the report authors relevant director, Finance Services and Legal Services. | | |
| Officer Approval | Date | Name |
| Relevant Director(s) | 24/09/07 | Craig Anderson |
| Chief Executive | 26/09/07 | |
| CMT | 26/09/07 | |
| Section 151 Officer | | |
| Legal | 1/10/07 | |
| Finance | 28/09/07 | Marcus Miskinis |
| Final Decision? | Yes | |
| Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below) | | |
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1. RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 That the allocation of Planning Development Grant as set out in Appendix 1 be approved.

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

2.1 The Planning Development Grant award to Warwick District Council for 2006/07 is £262,606. The award is a very good one, being the highest of all Warwickshire districts and the third highest of all Shire Districts in the West Midlands Region. This reflects the very high levels of performance achieved by the Unit over the last year, within both Development Control and Policy teams. The achievement of this performance was, of course, in large part enabled by the careful utilization of the PDG awards from previous years to support the Planning Service, primarily through provision of staff resource. It is proposed that this approach should continue with the present year's award. The total sum is not as high as the award of £326,494 awarded last year. However, this is not any adverse reflection on the performance of Warwick, as it is a result of the significantly reduced national sum available for distribution to local authorities overall. As in the case of last year, 25% of the funding must be allocated for capital expenditure. The remainder (£196,954) can be used for revenue purposes. Taking into account the roll over from last year, a total of £213,754 revenue funding is available for allocation this year.

2.2 The allocations that have been proposed are set out in appendix 1. In considering how the PDG funding should be disbursed last year, the approach taken was aimed principally at maintaining additional staff in post. It is through securing and maintaining high quality staff that it is possible to deliver the levels of service required. Allocations were therefore made for not only for that year, but for further years ahead to maintain posts already supported by PDG

2.3 The 4 key posts that it was agreed to support through PDG were as follows:
Policy Projects and Conservation

- retention of existing temporary planning officer in post
- additional planning officer post

Both of these posts are essential for the delivery of the new Local Development Framework system and implement the commitments set out in the approved Local Development Scheme

Development Control:

- retention of an existing temporary planning officer in post
- retention of a part time enforcement officer post

2.4 When approving the allocation of PDG last year, Executive also agreed that it was necessary to establish these posts on a permanent basis, in order to secure the quality and experience of staff required in a competitive planning job market. This was subsequently agreed by Employment Committee. Executive agreed the allocation of a significant amount of last year's funding and a commitment of £85,000 of this year's amount in advance in order to provide funding for these posts up to 08/09

2.5 In considering this year's allocation, the priority has been to maintain funding for the permanent staff supported through PDG. This has required, firstly, the commitment of the 85,000 to be drawn down and secondly, further provision to be made for salary provision up to 09/10. The allocation proposed will provide funding for all the additional established posts up to 09/10 except for a shortfall of £32,000. This further sum will need to be earmarked from the new Housing and Planning Grant that will replace Planning Delivery Grant as from next year.

When the PDG allocation was agreed last year, it was reported to Executive that the commitment to the establishment of the four posts as set out above should not cause any difficulties for revenue budget planning for 09/10 onwards as a result of potential changes in the financing regime for Planning. It should be noted that an increasing proportion of the Revenue costs of running the Planning Service are now dependant on annual performance grant. However, the budget position will be reviewed regularly and as we move towards 2010/11, if the funding from the replacement for Planning Development Grant (the proposed Housing & Planning Grant) , other national funding arrangements or increased fee income does not meet the projected costs, then corrective action will need to be taken to contain costs.

2.6 In addition to the continuation of the permanent posts, the balance of funding available is proposed to be directed primarily at additional temporary posts as follows:

- Further year of temporary specialist appointment to review existing Blanket Tree preservation orders
- Further 10 months of temporary part time Enforcement Officer support
- Temporary increase in hours of existing permanent part time enforcement Officer

The remaining funding is allocated to provide reserves for temporary admin staff support and temporary cover planning staff for holiday periods, for support work to the preparation of the Core strategy and a small contingency for other eventualities, including temporary upgrades and honoraria to recognise required higher levels of working where appropriate

The capital element (£65,651) will be used for support to the IEG project, in securing additional digitising of records and providing support hardware necessary for developing the E-service

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

3.1 The approach adopted has been to concentrate resources upon maintaining staffing, which provides the best output in terms of value for money against quality of service. There are no realistic alternatives which will provide support to the Planning Service to maintain its quality. This has been the approach adopted through previous allocations of PDG and it has enabled the Service to perform at high levels.

4. **BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK**

- 4.1 The allocations of funding have all been made within the existing Financial framework

5 **POLICY FRAMEWORK**

- 5.1 The allocation proposed will strengthen the ability of the Planning Service to better deliver the policies that are already in place. Without continuation of this additional resource within Planning, the delivery of the Planning Policy Framework may well be threatened.