

 Executive 18th March 2009		Agenda Item No.
Title	Area Based Grant for Climate Change	
For further information about this report please contact	Gary Stephens, Group Leader PPC	
Service Area	Planning	
Wards of the District directly affected	All	
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006	No	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 meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number	N.A.	
Background Papers	None	

Contrary to the policy framework:	No
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	No
Key Decision?	Yes
Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)	No

Officer/Councillor Approval		
With regard to officer approval all reports <u>must</u> be approved by the report authors relevant director, Finance, Legal Services and the relevant Portfolio Holder(s).		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Relevant Director	25/02/09	Bill Hunt
Chief Executive	26/02/09	Chris Elliott
CMT	26/02/09	
Section 151 Officer	25/02/09	Mary Hawkins
Legal	25/02/09	Peter Oliver
Finance	25/02/09	Marcus Miskinis
Portfolio Holder(s)	02/03/09	Councillor John Hammon
Consultation Undertaken		
None		
Final Decision?	Yes	
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report explains the Area Based Grant for Climate Change and seeks the Executive's approval for the allocation of the grant money available towards the work of Planning Services.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the Executive approve the allocation of the Area Based Grant for Climate Change towards securing evidence to support the emerging Core Strategy and towards training and support for Planning Officers and Planning Committee Members in implementing the policies of the Local Plan and the Sustainable Buildings SPD.
- 2.2 That the Executive delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive (Housing & Development) in consultation with the Head of Planning and Head of Finance to spend the money within the available budget.

3. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 On 13th November 2008, the Council was informed by Communities & Local Government (CLG) of its Area Based Grant for 2008/09 (mid-year increase). Area Based Grant (ABG) is a non-ring fenced general grant, to provide support for local authorities in delivering national, regional or local priorities as they see fit. The District Council was awarded £22,500 for this financial year to reflect the new burdens on local planning authorities arising from the expectations in the Supplement to Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 1 on climate change. It is understood a similar award will be made in financial years, 2009/10 and 2010/11.
- 3.2 The size of the award reflects CLG's estimation of local authorities costs in implementing the requirements of the supplement to PPS1, in particular, gaining an evidence-based understanding of the feasibility and potential for decentralised and renewable or low-carbon technologies to inform planning policy, and additional time spent assessing planning applications for climate change impacts. It is these two areas of planning work which the grant is proposed to be put towards.
- 3.3 The Planning Policy Team are in the process of preparing the District Council's Core Strategy and the latest stage in that process will be reported to a Special Executive on the 30th March. It is a requirement that planning policies within a Core Strategy are supported by evidence, and therefore should the Council choose to include policies within its Core Strategy to require renewable or low-carbon technologies as part of future developments within the District, it will need to demonstrate through evidence that they are feasible and viable. For that reason, it is proposed that part of the grant for this financial year be used towards gathering such evidence to inform the draft Core Strategy. Given the highly specialised nature of the work, it will be necessary to use consultants to undertake such work. However, your officers have been liaising with their counterparts within the other Warwickshire authorities and a brief for a joint study is currently being prepared which should help reduce costs to below £20,000.
- 3.4 In relation to the second area of work, Members will recall its approval of the Sustainable Buildings SPD at the December Executive. The report identified the need for further training and support to raise awareness of the requirements of the SPD and the options in terms of technologies, in order to ensure they are secured

through the development control process. This training is needed for development and building control officers, Members of the Planning Committee, as well as local agents and architects. It is therefore proposed that the remaining part of the grant for this financial year be used for such training to be undertaken during the coming months. This would be undertaken within the available budget.

- 3.5 Notwithstanding further training, it is acknowledged that there may well be instances in the future where major planning applications are submitted to the Council which contain particular proposals for renewable or low-carbon technologies which will require examining to ensure they comply with the SPD. Whilst the Council will draw on its own expertise and knowledge in these areas, the specialist nature of some of the technologies will mean that expert support may be required in those particular cases. In such cases, it is proposed that the grant for the next financial year 2009/10 be allocated for use to support development control in assessing major planning applications where technical advice is required. This would be reviewed and reported back to Executive at the end of 2009/2010.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTION CONSIDERED

- 4.1 An alternative option would be to allocate the money to other service areas of the Council. This would, however, not assist the Council in meeting its requirements in relation to planning for climate change.

5. BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK

- 5.1 An Area Based Grant of £22,500 has been given to the Council by Communities & Local Government for this financial year, and it is understood similar awards will be given in the next two financial years. It is a non ring-fenced grant that has been awarded to reflect the burdens on local planning authorities of implementing national policy on climate change.
- 5.2 The grant for this financial year will be allocated to gathering evidence to inform the emerging Core Strategy on renewable energy (up to £20,000) and training of Development/Building Control and Planning Committee Members on implementing the Sustainable Buildings SPD (up to £2,500). The grant for next financial year will be allocated to implementing the SPD policy through supporting officers and Members in assessing applications submitted to the authority (up to £22,500). This will be reviewed at the end of 2009/2010. This will have no impact on the Council's core budget.

6. POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 6.1 The recommendation conforms with national, regional and local planning policies and will support the Corporate Priorities and Local Area Agreement targets on climate change.