

CABINET

20 April 2004

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

5 May 2004

PLANNING DELIVERY GRANT

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Contact Officer: Robin Cooper 01962 848256

RECENT REFERENCES:

EA23 Planning Delivery Grant, Environment & Access PIC, 15 March 2004

EA29 Enforcement Report, Environment & Access PIC, 15 March 2004

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Government announcement for the 2004/5 Planning Delivery Grant was issued on 9 March 2004. Winchester City Council was awarded a grant of £570,445. The attached report provides an analysis of how the grant was awarded and a justification for the commitment of the Planning Delivery Grant.

The detailed proposals are listed within the attached report and include annual base budget and one-off proposals for use of the grant for a number of improvements and initiatives designed to improve the performance of the planning performance. These improvement areas are broadly compatible with identified areas for improvement nationally gained from information gathered from a local planning authority survey conducted by the Planning Officers' Society.

There are two new proposals chiefly with annual base budget implications and staff establishment growth implications totalling approximately £135,500. These proposals will also be subject to Personnel Committee decision and will be supported by the Enforcement Report (EA29) and additional information on the Member/Parish Complaint Officer post.

RECOMMENDATIONS:To Cabinet:

- 1 That the Planning Delivery Grant proposals be approved as set out.
- 2 That the minutes of the Environment and Access Performance Improvement Committee of 15<sup>th</sup> March 2004 be approved, as set out in Appendix 2.

To Personnel Committee:

- 3 That approval be given to increase the establishment of 3.5 Full Time Equivalents (FTEs) in the Development Services Department and 1 FTE in the City Secretary and Solicitor's Department.

DETAIL:

1. Planning Delivery Grant – please see the report attached Appendix 1: Planning Delivery Grant.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:1 CORPORATE STRATEGY (RELEVANCE TO):

- 1.1 The Government has awarded the Planning Delivery Grant to Local Authorities as an incentive to improve their performance in key areas of the planning service. Part of the grant has been awarded due to the high housing demand in the area and the need to progress with the Local Plan and the remainder for performance on the speed of determining planning applications.
- 1.2 Improving our performance in the speed of determining planning applications is a key Best Value Performance Indicator and Government commitment. One of Winchester City Council's key priorities, "Homes and Environment", states that we will provide affordable homes in safe and pleasant environments for all sectors of our community. This is to be achieved by making best use of our planning policies to secure sufficient land and funding to provide, in partnership, a full range of high quality homes for rental or ownership to meet the needs of our residents.
- 1.3 Other proposals for expenditure of the Planning Delivery Grant include improving the quality of our service and customer care, including the Enforcement Staffing and Improvements proposal. There are also proposals that meet the Green Agenda and Social Inclusion key corporate priorities, through provision of ICT improvements enabling Winchester City Council to deliver planning services to citizens electronically.

2 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 2.1 The one-off and annual costs associated with implementing the proposals in the report will be contained within the Planning Delivery Grant (PDG) in 2004/5. There can be no guarantee of continued PDG, as the Government has only allocated finance until 2005/6 (and this will be dependent on

performance). The Government are currently consulting Local Government on raising planning fees by up to 39% which, if implemented in Winchester, could increase income to £235,000 per annum (estimate). Increased planning fees are likely to replace the PDG in 2006/7 and beyond.

- 2.2 There are three proposals in the Planning Delivery Grant report with annual base budget commitments – two of these are new proposals and total £135,500. The proposal for Enforcement Staffing and Improvements of £117,000 are chiefly an annual commitment (Item 1 of the proposals in the report) and the proposal for a Member/Parish Complaint Liaison Post of £18,500 (estimated) is also an annual commitment (Item 19 of the proposals in the report). The post of Principal Planning Officer, has already been agreed by Cabinet, and is dependent upon future income being able to fund it in 2004/5 and beyond.
- 2.3 There is a risk that on-going finance may not be available to pay for these improvements beyond 2004/5, but it is unlikely that the Council will receive no additional resources. However, if the expenditure for these posts cannot be met by a combination of Planning Delivery Grant, planning income or vacancy management, it may be necessary to seek reduced expenditure in the Council's budget.

#### BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Planning Delivery Grant Announcement, Letter and accompanying documentation from the Rt Hon Keith Hill MP, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 9<sup>th</sup> March 2004

#### APPENDICES:

Appendix 1: Planning Delivery Grant Report

Appendix 2: Minute extract from Environment and Access Performance Improvement Committee held 15 March 2004 – Relating to the Planning Delivery Grant