

CABINET

22 MARCH 2006

PLANNING GRANTS 2006/07

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

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RECENT REFERENCES:

CAB1065 – Minutes of the Environment and Access Improvement Committee 16 March 2005

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report recommends the allocation of planning grants to organisations for specific projects in 2006/07.

Planning grants are made to enhance parts of the District which might not otherwise be undertaken. The total revenue budget now available for the grants is £51,050

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That Cabinet approves the following planning grants be made in 2006/07:
 - a) £7,500 Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre
 - b) £10,500 South Downs Joint Committee (formerly East Hampshire AONB)
 - c) £7,000 Hampshire Wildlife Trust (restoration of St. Faiths Meadow)
 - d) £10,500 to Hampshire Wildlife Trust (wardening of Winnall Moors and St. Faith's)
 - e) £5,500 British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (for local environment projects)
 - f) £10,000 Itchen Navigation Project (£10,000 in each of the next five years, total contribution £50,000)

CABINET22 MARCH 2006PLANNING GRANTS 2006/07REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT1 Introduction

1.1 The City Council awards planning grants to encourage organisations and local communities to instigate work of repair or enhancement of parts of the District which would not otherwise be undertaken.

1.2 A revenue budget of £51,050 exists in 2006/07 within the Landscape budget of the Planning Division. This is £10,000 less than was available in 2005/06 due to a £10,000 saving as part of the Council's overall budget reduction for 2006/07.

2. Proposed 2006/07 Grants

2.1 It is proposed that the following organisations be allocated funding from the 2006/07 revenue budget for Planning Grants.

2.2 **Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC) - £7,500**

Winchester City Council is an HBIC partner and has a 3 year Service Level Agreement which is binding until 2008. The Centre provides a focus for the collection, management and dissemination of biological data relating to Hampshire, provides information for the production of Biodiversity Action Plans, gives guidance to local recorders and encourages the wider population to understand and appreciate the natural environment. It also provides necessary factual information to the City Council in connection with biological surveys and assessments for planning and hedgerow applications.

2.3 **South Downs Joint Committee - £10,500**

This is a new Joint Committee comprised of all the local authorities that would be within the proposed South Downs National Park. It has taken over the staff and work of the former East Hampshire AONB Project, a well established project. The Joint Committee continues to drive initiatives and provide advice for the conservation and enhancement of the landscape quality of both the East Hampshire and Sussex Downs the AONB, their communities and visitors. The Joint Committee's officers work in close liaison with the various local authorities, providing an important link between the three counties subject to the ongoing National Park proposals.

2.4 **Hampshire Wildlife Trust – Restoration of St Faith's Meadow Site of Special Scientific Interest - £7,000**

St Faith's Meadow is part of the Itchen Valley SSSI, owned by Winchester City Council but had been inadequately managed and thus significantly deteriorated. The Planning Department funded HWT to produce an ecological survey and subsequently they were commissioned to prepare a Restoration and Management Plan, which will improve visual amenity and make a valuable contribution to our biodiversity targets.

In 2005 Cabinet approved funding of £7,000pa for the first 3 years of the plan, which HWT with their specialist skills are undertaking in partnership with WCC. Preliminary permissions are being obtained and clearance of under storey vegetation is currently underway.

A further grant for £5,000 for 2006/07 has been approved by the Winchester Town Forum.

2.5 Hampshire Wildlife Trust (HWT) - Wardening of Winnall Moors, St Faith's Meadow and St Catherine's Hill - £10,500

Winnall Moors have been wardened and managed by HWT for many years, including an area leased to them by WCC. That lease has come to an end and it is not financially viable for HWT to continue to provide this service free of charge. This is an SSSI and as such there is a statutory requirement for the owner to manage the land in favourable condition. WCC have in previous years contributed to the management of St Catherine's Hill but reluctantly cut this support two years ago. It is now considered prudent to consider funding HWT to provide a site warden for these three very special areas to ensure that they all continue to have good custodianship and improved wildlife habitat.

2.6 British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) – Local Environment Projects - £5,500

Under the Community Environment Project, BTCV have been responsible for enabling community volunteers to undertake local projects such as hedge laying, woodland management, pond restoration and tree planting. BTCV provide training, fund sourcing, and insurance cover and work with the groups to enable them to become self-sustaining. The funds invested in this project have been significantly cut but the investment yields a very valuable resource of volunteers who improve the environment, contribute to delivery of biodiversity targets, and there is a community benefit. Previously HWT were also involved in a similar project but they worked in partnership with BTCV who provided all the training aspects.

2.7 Itchen Valley Navigation Project - £10,000

The main aim of the Itchen Navigation Heritage Trail project is to enhance and improve an internationally renowned chalk river system for the benefit of its wildlife, heritage, the community and visitors to the area.

The project was established as a partnership which includes Winchester City Council and by a project planning grant received from the Heritage Lottery Fund in 2004. The main Lottery bid was submitted in September 2005 as a two stage project, the outcome of Stage One being announced by March 2006 and the outcome of Stage Two being announced by March 2007. Cabinet has already approved funding at the meeting on 7 February 2006.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

3. CORPORATE STRATEGY (RELEVANCE TO):

The giving of planning grants towards environment projects accord with the principles of safeguarding our high quality environment for the future by protecting and enhancing the bio diversity of the natural environment and to minimise the loss of green fields to development.

4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

The amount of £51,000 for planning grants for 2006/07 contained within this report can be met from the approved revenue budget for this heading.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: Documents and background papers held in the Planning Division.

APPENDICES: None.