

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 26 APRIL 2005

PLANNING DELIVERY GRANT ALLOCATION FOR PERFORMANCE IN 2004/05

Report of the Head of Planning and Community

Purpose of Report:

To notify Members of the level of Planning Delivery Grant (PDG) awarded to the Authority for its planning performance during 2004/05 and to confirm its distribution to continue to improve the planning service during the year 2005/06

Legal Implications including Human Rights Act 1998:

No specific implications

Financial Implications:

Some savings from the core budget can be obtained by displacing some elements of core funding for the planning service with PDG on actions which genuinely can lead to service improvements.

National Park Purposes:

Improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the plan making and development control functions of the Authority will help contribute to both National Park purposes and the duty.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that Members AGREE to the proposed allocation of the Planning Delivery Grant award as set out in paragraphs 2.4 & 2.5 of the report.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the government has committed funds for awarding local planning authorities for good performance in delivering planning services. The annual awards are incentives to improving service delivery and are allocated depending upon meeting nationally set Best Value Performance Indicators which are intended to reflect both quantity and quality in their planning work. Although not 'ring-fenced', the funding is expected to be spent on actions which directly improve the planning performance of a local planning authority and each year monitoring of spending takes place to ensure this expectation is met.
- 1.2 This is the third year of PDG and each year the method of calculation is extended to cover a greater number of indicators/measurements of the performance of a local planning authority. In its first year all National Park Authorities (NPAs) received the minimum award of £75,000. In year two the minimum award was removed and a few local authorities failed to receive any allocation. Exmoor NPA improved slightly on year one and received an award of £76,353. Approximately £25,000 from these allocations remains uncommitted and has been carried forward to this financial year.

2. AWARD FOR PERFORMANCE IN 2004/05

- 2.1 This years PDG awards were announced in March for development control performance (again based on meeting the eight week application determination timescales and whether these are improvements on last years) and on the provision of e-planning facilities measured by a survey of authorities web sites in September 2004. PDG is also awarded for authorities in areas of high housing demand, low housing demand and those with Enterprise Areas as well as allocations

specifically for Regional Planning Bodies and County Councils. Awards for Development Control performance can be reduced for poor performance on appeals (a measure intended to stop authorities from prematurely refusing applications to hit eight week determination targets rather than to spend time on negotiation). Finally as a result of the capping of PDG allocations at £700,000 and the redistribution of this money to other authorities, additional funding can be provided through the Development Control allocation mechanism.

- 2.2 This years allocation for Exmoor is significant at £110,778 (and compares favourably with other NPAs) for its development control performance. This is made up of £76,531 for exceeding the 80% eight week determination target and £32,248 for improving on this indicator in relation to previous years. Redistribution from the capping amount brings in another £1,999. A further allocation is expected for performance on plan making – specifically an additional £52,000 for the submission of the Authority’s Local Development Scheme to the Government Office before the deadline of 28 March. Confirmation (or otherwise) of this is expected before the date of the Resources Committee.

3. PROPOSED ALLOCATION OF PDG

- 3.1 Provisional allocations were put forward at the Resources Committee on 1 March under consideration of the draft discretionary budget for 2005/06 prior to the amount of the award being known. The following proposals are based on the assumption that a further award will be confirmed for performance in plan making. Priority is given to ‘human resources’ as this continues the PDG funded planning assistant posts (and their training) in development control and policy which have contributed significantly to continuing improvements in performance.

Human Resources

- Planning Assistant posts x 2: £55,000
- Data inputter post: £7,000
- Planning Team Training: £8,000
- PDG Performance Bonus Scheme: £8,000

Equipment/Works

- Large Format Scanner (for DMS): £12,000
- Accommodation Improvements – Exmoor House : £20,000

Projects

- Design Guide – Printing & Venue Hire: £20,000

Total **£130,000**

- 2.5 This would leave an amount of £30,000 from the award and together with some carry over from previous allocations it is suggested that a proportion of this be allocated towards physical improvement schemes on the ground on projects where initial funding/work has already been committed. Funding contributions towards such schemes are therefore suggested and examples could be the implementation of a village enhancement project already worked up for Winsford and designing and implementing improvements to the existing Lynton Town Council owned car park in the Valley of Rocks, again a project where an existing commitment to partnership working has been made. This would leave an amount for building up reserves for future years which it is suggested is a prudent measure.

Chris France
Head of Planning & Community
April 11th 2005

Background papers on which this report, or an important part of it are based, constitute the list of background papers required by Section 100 D (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 to be open to members of the public
 Council website – Allocation of PDG 2005/06