

Bid 1**Planning and Building Control**

Two Planning Support Officers - £51,000 funded from Planning Delivery Grant (PDG) for 2 years then will form part of the base budget

Two planning support assistants officers (formerly referred to as customer service assistants) have been funded by planning delivery grant since July 2003. It is as a result of the support provided by these posts that the service has been able to meet its BV109 targets which has resulted in significant awards of planning delivery grant. The work done by these officers is essential for the service and based on current assessments is very unlikely to be transferred to the Customer Service Unit. The posts have operated on a series of temporary contracts linked to PDG funding. This has led to uncertainty and turnover of staff who require significant training.

Corporate Priorities

The effective and efficient operation of the DC teams contributes to the delivery of development to secure CP1 to CP5. Ensuring an appropriate division of roles between planning staff and the planning support officers is of particular relevance to CP6 – improving core service performance in a cost effective way.

Statutory Powers

Planning and Compulsory Act 2004

Risk assessment / Implications of not progressing the bid

The registration, validation and customer contact aspects of the work of these posts is vital to the performance of the DC service. The PDG funding for them as allocated will terminate next summer and future grant arrangements are uncertain. Unless permanent funding arrangements are made for these posts there will be a severe impact on DC service delivery.

Alternative approaches explored

A bid to use some of the PDG allocation for 2007/08 has been agreed in principle by the Executive which could extend the temporary contract period from June 2008 to June 2009. Unallocated PDG totals £210,000

Bid 2**Planning and Building Control**

0.5 Planning Support Officer - funded from Planning Delivery Grant for 2 years then will form part of the base budget - £11,000

A bid has been made to fund the existing two Planning Support Officers on a permanent basis. As part of the DC Process Review the service has restructured from 3 to 2 teams. This has led to savings of approximately £10,000 p.a. by replacing a team leader post with a planning officer role. Having reorganised the service into two teams, one of the 3 Planning Support Officers has been redeployed to deal with a full case load of planning applications.

Experience has shown that since moving to two teams the validation/registration and customer contact work exceeds the capacity of just two officers. Adding a 0.5 FTE post would resolve this problem and allow the role to be combined with the existing part time technical support officer in conservation to create a new multi team support officer to undertake validation/registration and Design Panel work. Overall the work would then be done by 2.5 rather than 3 officers showing improved efficiency in this area of work as part of the reorganisation.

Corporate Priorities

The effective and efficient operation of the DC teams contributes to the delivery of development to secure CP1 to CP5. Ensuring an appropriate division of roles between planning/conservation staff and the customer service assistants is of particular relevance to CP6 – improving core service performance in a cost effective way.

Statutory Powers

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

Risk assessment / Implications of not progressing the bid

The registration, validation, support for the Design Panel and customer contact aspects of the work of these posts is vital to the performance of the DC service. The PDG funding for the vacant post will terminate next summer and future grant arrangements are uncertain. Having tried to run the service with two rather than three posts it has been concluded that re-statement of 0.5 of a post is required to manage the workload.

Alternative approaches explored

A bid to use the PDG allocation for 2007/08 has been agreed in principle by the Executive which could extend the temporary contract period from June 2008 to June 2009. Unallocated PDG totals £210,000

Bid 3/4**Planning and Building Control**

Two Planning Officers

- one initially funded from Planning Delivery grant until becoming self financing – up to £32,500
- one funded from General Fund (council tax) - £32,500

High development control case loads continue to be maintained and performance targets on speed of decision making is achieved at the expense of providing timely pre-application advice, monitoring conditions and dealing with general correspondence including ombudsman queries. This has led to complaints about the quality of service being provided. The resourcing issues within the service were set out in a report to the Executive dated 4th October 2007. In summary the report concluded that while the cost of the service is below average, the case load per officer is high. Government advisors have concluded that the average case load per officer should be about 150, whereas within SHDC the figure is up to 276 cases per officer if the number of applications received is taken into account. South Hams has a 42% higher case load per officer than the average of comparable councils, and a 30% greater case load per officer than West Devon or Teignbridge. Two additional planning officers, plus continued use of a former customer service assistant to determine planning applications, would result in caseloads of about 170 per year in line with Teignbridge and West Devon. One of the posts could be self-funded in the medium term by introducing charges for pre-application advice on major schemes. Initial market testing has indicated that agents would be prepared to pay sums in the region of £1,000 to receive timely and comprehensive pre-application comments. The 30 or so major applications per annum could yield about £30,000 per year. The precise charging structure has yet to be determined, and could with higher charges potentially provide part funding for the other post.

Corporate Priorities

Implementation of the Council's corporate policies as expressed through the Local Plan and LDF documents rely on the DC service for the management of development. A proactive approach to responding to strategic work pressures and promoting affordable housing schemes relies on there being sufficient capacity within the service.

Statutory Powers
Planning and Compensation Act 2004
Risk assessment / Implications of not progressing the bid
Unless additional capacity is created, the service will continue to struggle to provide timely pre-application advice. This is likely to become an increasingly difficult problem as new housing sites are promoted and LDF documents are published creating strategic work pressure.
Alternative approaches explored
A bid to use part of the PDG allocation for this purpose has been made, but this would only allow for temporary contract periods. One of the two posts could be funded by charging for pre-application advice on major schemes. Unallocated PDG totals £210,000. Two posts at S01 grade would cost £65,000 p.a.

<u>Bid 5</u>
<u>Improvement Unit</u>
LAA Partnership – our contribution with WDBC for management support -£10,000
The development of outcomes and actions for each of the four LAA Themes will be co-ordinated by a resource hub established across all the partners to the LAA 2008-2011. The bid is to provide the South Hams DC share of the resourcing of the hub which will overcome the need for individual authorities providing support structures within each of the programme themes. It will therefore provide each partner with savings against individual working and give a more integrated approach to preparing and delivering the Local Area Agreement. The Hub will also develop an integrated approach to service provision and community leadership leading to greater partnership working and shared service provision.
Link to Corporate Priorities
CP6
Statutory Powers
This is a discretionary service.
Risk assessment / Implications of not progressing the bid
If we are not adequately represented in the negotiations of the LAA 2008-2011 we cannot influence the planning and delivery of the LAA and the assessments for CAA that will follow.

Bid 6Customer Services

Housing - Choice based lettings - (capital investment in 2007/08 £25,000) - £30,000 pa

The Executive of 7th September 2006, approved the signing up to a joint bid to the DCLG for the provision of a Devon and Cornwall Choice Based Lettings Scheme. The Bid was unsuccessful and another bid has been submitted for this year. The need for this bid was highlighted as a significant pressure for 2006/07 but was withdrawn when the Devon Wide Bid was unsuccessful. Government expects all Local Authorities to adopt a Choice Based Lettings scheme by 2010 and if the Devon Wide Bid is unsuccessful again, we will still have to pursue the alternative option. The final costs for the Devon Wide Bid will depend on how many partners finally join the scheme but we should set aside at least £25k for the initial set up costs during 2007/08 and £30k for the annual running costs from 2008/09. If the bid is unsuccessful then a similar amount would be needed to join the existing Homefinder scheme

Either way the implementation of a Choice based lettings Scheme will need to be carefully project planned to ensure that Members have an opportunity to input into any new policies and that any decisions that are made are in accordance with the legislation. There will be a lot of training for staff not only on the new system but also in terms of new ways of working as a result of the change from the current method of allocating properties to operating a Choice Based Lettings system. For example at the moment staff spend a large amount of time contacting applicants to see if they would be interested in a particular property. Under a choice based letting scheme applicants would apply for a vacancy, this would allow for staff resources to be switched to supporting vulnerable applicants to make bids for properties.

Relationship to Corporate Priorities:

CP1 – secure a supply of housing for local people at affordable levels

CP1A Number on housing register. Reduce by 10% per annum the number in priority need.

CP1B Use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation by homeless families with children. To reduce to nil by March 2004 (except in exceptional cases and then the period of residence will be for a maximum of 6 weeks)

Statutory Powers

Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Act 2002

Risk assessment / Implications of not progressing the bid

The risk associated with not meeting the Government's target of having a CBL system could be high if works are not undertaken to upgrade the IT system. HIP returns already ask if a CBL scheme is in operation and if not when it is envisaged that a scheme would be implemented, and not implementing a CBL scheme could have an adverse affect on the grant we receive from the National Affordable Housing Programme. Additionally, the Government will establish an inspection regime and if Councils do not offer a CBL system it may impact on CAA scores. Some Councils and RSLs have already implemented CBL schemes – including Torbay Council, West and Mid Devon District Councils and Tor Homes. Furthermore, other rural districts in high housing demand areas across the South West have begun to establish CBL schemes.

Alternative approaches explored

A go it alone approach will incur significantly higher implementation costs, certainly of over £100k. Annual running costs would also be higher than the estimated £30k. Joining a partnership will enable a higher specification system to be used and also economies of scale will result from procurement decisions. Extensive discussions with other Districts in Devon including joint bidding for a Government Grant. The results of the bid are expected at the end of December 2007.

A more viable alternative to going it alone would be to join the Homefinder Direct scheme run by Ocean Housing. Aside from any benefit to be gained in relation to future Audit Commission and Housing Corporation inspections this option

obviates the need for SHDC to purchase its own housing register module. Instead we would be able to access Ocean Housing's existing database with remote access.

Joining the Homefinder Direct scheme also has the advantage that is the only current scheme in England and Wales that can truly claim to be a sub-regional scheme and as such offers South Hams District Council the opportunity to be part of a scheme of choice rather than be forced by central Government to adopt a CBL scheme devised in another area.

Currently the following six local authorities are already operating the Homefinder Direct CBL scheme: Mid Devon District Council, Torbay District Council, West Devon Borough Council, Caradon District Council, North Cornwall District Council and Restormel Borough Council.

Bid 7

Customer Services

Housing - Direct Lettings - 3 year bid because in future years there will be reduced temporary accommodation costs making it self financing - £30,000 pa

The government has set a target for all Local Authorities to reduce by 50% the use of temporary accommodation by 2010. One way of helping to meet this target is to encourage private landlords to come to an arrangement with South Hams District Council to let their properties to people before they become homeless; this is known as a Direct Lets Scheme (DLS). This is particularly pertinent in the South Hams as there is a large and growing need for accommodation to meet the requirements of those tenants who are able to sustain a tenancy with minimal support in the private sector. The benefits of setting up a DLS include: improved standards of accommodation, improving homeless prevention statistics, reducing the need for temporary accommodation, making it easier for tenants to access the private rented sector and more choice for tenants.

This is an invest to save bid, it is anticipated that after 3 years this post will be self financing as temporary accommodation is released, thus saving the council the cost of renting and repairing the properties. Members of the Community Policy Development Group received a report on the future direction of the Housing Advice Service at their meeting on 12th April 2007.

Corporate Priorities

Setting up a DLS addresses CP1– “to secure a supply of housing for local people at affordable levels”. In addition, CP6 is also addressed in that a DLS would improve core service performance in a cost effective way.

Statutory Powers

A DLS could be established under the Local Government Act 2000 2 (1) (b) to “promote the improvement of the social well-being” in the local authority. The power to charge landlords for services, such as a management fee, on a non-profit basis is granted by the Local Government Act 2003, under the auspices of sections 24 & 25 of the Local Government Act 1988.

Risk assessment / Implications of not progressing the bid

No identifiable financial risks are apparent. However, there is a risk that not to proceed with the setting up of a DLS and thereby reducing the number of those in temporary accommodation by the government's target date of 2010, that South Hams District Council's performance rating by the Audit Commission could be adversely affected.

Alternative approaches explored

Other approaches currently deployed by South Hams District Council to help minimise the number of those in temporary accommodation include Rent Deposit schemes, housing advice and family mediation. DLS is one part of this strategy. A great deal of research has been undertaken examining Exeter City Council's “EXtraLet” scheme, which went live in December 2006. Information has also been garnered from the National Landlords Association and the Department of Communities and Local Government.

Bid 8**Corporate**

Carbon Management - 2 year bid to fund emerging initiatives and joint working opportunities - £20,000 pa

As part of the budget discussions for 07/08 the Council agreed a one off sum of £15,000 to fund a shared Climate Change Officer post with Teignbridge for a year. If the post could be proved to be self-financing from cost savings which arose from reducing the Council's carbon footprint, it was suggested that the funding could be continued on a more permanent basis, subject to consideration of other budget pressures.

After the budget was agreed there were a number of changes at Teignbridge Council which resulted in the proposal being put on hold. In the circumstances, the Council is using some of the budget to pay an officer at Teignbridge to help the Council carry out some preliminary work to assess the authority's carbon footprint. This report is expected towards the end of this year, but preliminary work suggests that a post may not be self-financing as originally envisaged.

Members will be aware of the proposed Climate Change Bill. Opportunities may emerge to respond to Climate Change and Carbon Management initiatives through further joint working with adjoining Councils, or on a Devon wide basis through the developing Local Area Agreement. Establishing a reserve of £20,000 p.a. for a two year period will provide a resource which will enable flexibility to take advantage of opportunities which may arise.

Corporate Priorities

The Council has recognised the importance of climate change by making it a cross cutting theme underpinning the corporate priorities, and by establishing two member champions for climate change and sustainability.

Statutory Powers

This area of activity is currently discretionary, however there is increasing emphasis from Government on council's achieving a reduction in their carbon footprint, as well as securing savings. It is expected that the Government will introduce performance indicators in relation to carbon reduction and in the longer term there could be financial implications for organisations which do not reduce their carbon footprint.

Risk assessment / Implications of not progressing the bid

In the absence of identified funding there is a risk that progress with aspects of the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan will be slow. If carbon reduction can be achieved through more efficient energy use it will save the authority money

Alternative approaches explored

Members have recently approved the Climate Change Policy, Strategy and its associated action plan. Identification of specific funding may allow aspects of the action plan to be progressed at a faster pace than currently envisaged. Without additional funding actions will be progressed within existing resources and when time allows.