

REPORT TO CABINET

REPORT OF: Development Control Services Manager

REPORT NO. PLA491

DATE: 11 April 2005

TITLE:	Planning Delivery Grant Allocation 2005/06
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COUNCIL AIMS/PORTFOLIO HOLDER NAME AND DESIGNATION:	Cllr John Smith (Economic Portfolio Holder)
CORPORATE PRIORITY:	Access to services - A Planning - B
CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS:	None
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT IMPLICATIONS:	This report is publically available on the Council's website www.southkesteven.gov.uk under "Council Meetings"
BACKGROUND PAPERS:	Proposals for allocation of Planning Delivery Grant 2005/06 – ODPM The Planning Delivery Grant Determination 2005 – ODPM The Pendleton Report 2004

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This reports follows the announcement from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister regarding the annual award of Planning Delivery Grant (PDG) to Local Planning Authorities. Members will be aware that the government introduced Planning Delivery Grant in 2003/04 in recognition that Local Planning Authorities (LPA's) were under resourced in most areas of the country. In the first year every LPA receive a grant of at least £75,000, with increased funding for the higher performing authorities (South Kesteven received £125,000). The following year PDG was awarded on the basis of development control performance, plan making, enterprise areas and high housing demand areas. Unfortunately SKDC only received £5190 in 2004/05 as development control performance fell below the required targets, did not have an up to date development plan and was not

located in a high housing demand area (essentially London and the wider South East). The £5190 received was in recognition of the only enterprise area in the district, being the Earlsfield area of Grantham.

- 1.2 The qualifying criterion for grant awards in 2005/06 has changed again. The government now also assesses Local Planning Authorities e-planning capability and rewards those Councils who have made substantial improvements in performance. This year has seen such a marked improvement in development control performance at SKDC and all three national targets have been exceeded. In total SKDC's Planning Delivery Grant award is £569,559.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is asked to note the award of planning delivery grant of £569,559 for achieving Best Value Performance Indicator targets and for improvement in performance.

Cabinet is asked to request that officers develop a strategy for the investment of planning delivery grant into planning services and planning related projects.

3. DETAILS OF REPORT

- 3.1 In awarding PDG for 2005/06 the government monitors LPA's performance against Best Value Performance Indicators for the period October to September (in this case Oct 2003 to Sept 2004). Additionally other factors that are relevant to SKDC are taken into consideration and can be summarised as follows:

◆ Enterprise Areas

- 3.2 South Kesteven has one designated enterprise area and that is the Earlsfield district of Grantham. For this we receive £5,000.

◆ Development Control

- 3.3 Development Control Performance is assessed against BVPI 109a, b and c. The table below details the national targets for each of the 3 application types and SKDC's relative performance. You will note that additional grant has been secured through not only exceeding government targets but also as a result of improving our performance against previous years.
- 3.4 Members will be aware that development control has improved significantly over the past year. Structural changes have been made within the service and amendments to the committee structure, though the introduction of the Planning Panel, have had significant effects on performance. Allied to these changes is the commitment and motivation of the individual members of staff involved in the planning process. The last year has seen a cultural change in the service and a high performance culture is developing. Each member of staff's contribution has been critical to the success and this is an outstanding achievement that deserves appropriate recognition.

BVPI	National Target	SKDC performance Oct 2003 – Sept 2004	% Improvement on previous year
109a – major development	60% in 13 weeks	61%	19.6%
109b – minor development	65% in 8 weeks	72.2%	35.2%
109c – other development	80% in 8 weeks	85%	27.2%
Grant for exceeding all 3 targets	Additional grant for improvement	Reallocation due to capping	Total grant for DC performance
£257,511	£276,110	£10,279	£543,900

♦ Plan-making

3.5 A separate grant is awarded to LPA's for keeping an up to date development plan. Currently South Kesteven has submitted the first stage of the Local Development Framework (known as the Local Development Scheme) to Government office and an announcement on the amount of grant awarded will be made later on this year.

♦ E-planning

3.6 The government has introduced a new BVPI (205) known as the Quality of Service Checklist. The criteria includes a mark for provision an electronic planning service, with points awarded against the Pendleton survey criteria. SKDC currently delivers an online planning service through the Welland Partnership. Members will be aware that this service was one of the first nationally and its existence has allowed us to access additional PDG funds. That said there are areas for improvement and enhancement and Officers are currently working towards improving the delivery of an electronic planning service. The criteria used for assessing e-planning are as follows:

<u>Pendleton criteria</u>	<u>SKDC</u>
1. Planning Page accessible on Council Home Page.	Yes
2. Online application register.	Yes
3. Can you view application drawings and attachments	Yes
4. Can you view appeals	No
5. Facility to comment online	Yes
6. Facility to monitor applications online	Yes
7. Online decision register	No
8. Period of time covered by register	No
9. Can the decision notice be viewed	No
10. Are conditions/reasons for refusal listed	No
11. Can officer reports be viewed	No
12. Can committee meeting schedule be viewed	Yes
13. Can records of committee meetings be viewed	No
14. Is there online planning help text	Yes
15. Online application submission	Yes
16. Can you pay the application fee online	No
17. Can drawings etc. be attached to an electronic application	Yes
18. Downloadable forms	Yes
19. Is the development plan text available	Yes
20. Is the proposals map available	Yes
21. Is the proposals map linked to policy	No
22. Is the proposals map comprehensive and easy to use	Yes

3.7 SKDC achieved 13 of the 21 scoring criteria (period of time covered by register was not scored) and has achieved an award of £20,659. We are currently working on providing additional online planning services in line with the Pendleton criteria and would expect to achieve a greater allocation in subsequent years.

4. COMMENTS OF DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND STRATEGIC RESOURCES

4.1 None.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 The total Planning Delivery Grant allocation received by SKDC for this financial year is £569,559. The majority of this has been achieved through marked improvement in development control performance and is an outstanding effort from all staff and Members involved. In order to quality check decision making the government assesses each Council's record on appeals. Development Control awards are abated where an authority has a higher than average number of negatively determined planning applications overturned by the Secretary of State on appeal. The abatement is 10% where appeal performance is at least 40% worse than the national average (33.81%) and 20% where appeal performance is at least 50% worse. Currently South Kesteven is currently having approximately 23% of refused planning applications overturned at appeal so no such abatement is applied.

5.2 The award is the second highest in the East Midlands (Only Nottingham City achieved more with £700K) and is the 35th highest award for development control performance nationally.

5.3 The grant is allocated on the basis of a 75/25% split between resource and capital. This split is based upon the level of PDG spent by Council's in previous years on IT and capital improvements. Whilst PDG is not specifically ring fenced the government has made it clear that future awards of PDG are dependent on authorities' performance across planning activities. On this basis it necessary for Officers to develop a strategy for investing the grant award into planning services and planning related projects. The following key issues have been identified in the Development Control service plan as areas for investment:

- ◆ back scanning archived planning files
- ◆ IT initiatives
- ◆ External consultancy of service (particularly administrative function)
- ◆ Replace existing furniture and improve accommodation
- ◆ input into LDF project to help ensure that an up to date plan is available
- ◆ Staffing issues (additional hours/use of short term consultants)
- ◆ Future projects

5.4 Additionally, the grant is likely to finance a comprehensive district wide housing needs survey which will provide vital information for the delivery of much needed affordable housing throughout the district.

6. CONTACT OFFICER

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