



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

Officer Delegated Decision

3 October 2024

Karen Bradford, Chief Executive



Planning Skills Delivery Fund 2024/25

Acceptance of the Planning Skills Delivery Fund Grant and approval of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Contact

Emma Whittaker, Assistant Director of Planning & Growth

 Emma.whittaker@southkesteven.gov.uk

Decision made by:	Karen Bradford
Decision:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To formally accept the allocation of £75,000 Planning Skills Delivery grant from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. 2) To formally accept and sign the MoU document. 3) To approve the setting up of a budget to enable the Planning Skills Delivery grant to be allocated and spent.
Public or Exempt:	Public
Reasons for exemption:	
Conflicts of interest:	No
Policy compliant:	Yes
Details of delegation:	Directors are authorised by virtue of the Council's Financial Regulations to accept any external funding and make the associated budget virements in line with the authorised limits set out in the regulations.

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance

- 1.1 The Council has been awarded a Planning Skills Delivery Fund grant of £75,000. The General Fund Revenue budget will be amended to reflect this grant award. The spending of the grant must be undertaken in accordance with the grant conditions and this will be monitored to ensure that there is no financial risk to the Council.

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 The terms of the grant funding have been reviewed and are satisfactory. The spending of the grant money will be monitored accordingly by the finance team and Assistant Director of Planning to ensure compliance.

Completed by: Mandy Braitwaite, Legal Executive

2. The Purpose of the Report

- 2.1 The previous government launched a Planning Skills Delivery Fund Grant in Summer 2023. The fund would provide £24 million over two years and was split into two elements; backlog funding and skills funding.
- 2.2 An application for Skills funding was submitted in September 2023. The bid requested £75,000 for the following;
 - Creation of sustainability guidance document to support the Council in planning decisions and to improve the quality of applications.
 - Creation of an easy-to-use checklist to support the guidance. This is intended to allow planning officers and committee to easily identify the sustainability measures that have been proposed as part of any application.
 - Training for Officers and Councillors
- 2.3 The Council has declared a Climate Change Emergency in 2019 and aims to make the district a more environmentally sustainable place, becoming carbon neutral by 2050. Planning plays a vital role tackling climate change and supporting a transition towards a low-carbon future. The adopted Local Plan

Policies relating to climate change are limited in their scope. Whilst this is being addressed through the local plan review, this will take time before it can be adopted leaving a policy vacuum. Priority 2 in the Council's Corporate Plan (2024-27) relates to Sustainable South Kesteven and commits the Council to meeting the challenges of climate change by ensuring that new developments are sustainable.

- 2.4 The guidelines will promote best practice and will be a material planning consideration in planning decisions. It is expected that this will improve the quality of applications because officers will have clear guidelines and the skills to challenge and hold developers to account when negotiating development proposals.
- 2.5 The Council was originally made aware that it had been successful in its application for funding in December 2023. However, due to various delays, confirmation of funding arrangements and the Memorandum of Understanding was only provided on 27 September 2024. The Council must decide whether to accept the grant funding and whether to sign and adhere to the MoU and register a decision to claim the funding by **11 October 2024**.
- 2.6 The funding will need to be spent in the financial year 2024-25 and it is anticipated that this will be achievable. MHCLG has indicated that evaluation period for the grant will be extended beyond this financial year. There will be a requirement for quarterly reports/monitoring to MHCLG. A copy of the MoU is appended (**Appendix A**).
- 2.7 The Council will be expected to take part in the learning programme which will run until the end of March 2026.

3. Available Options Considered

- 3.1 The Council could decide not to accept the grant funding and accept that there is a policy guidance vacuum until the Local Plan Review has been completed.

4. Preferred Option

- 4.1 To accept the grant funding.

5. Reasons for the Decision(s)

- 5.1 The outcomes of the project will support officers in holding developers to account and improving the quality of developments. This supports that aims of the Local Plan and the Council's Corporate Plan.

6. Appendices

6.1 List any Appendices.

Appendix A – Memorandum of Understanding

Signed by:

Karen Bradford,
October 3rd 2024