

NEW HOMES BONUS GRANT FUNDING APPLICATIONS

Councillor Mordue Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Compliance

1 Purpose

- 1.1 To make decisions on the allocation of New Homes Bonus (NHB) grant funding for parish and town council projects, based on the recommendations of the Informal NHB Grants Panel.

2 Recommendation

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| 2.1 That the recommendations of the Informal NHB Grants Panel be approved, as set out in the schedule attached at Appendix A. |
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3 Background

- 3.1 The Informal NHB Grants Panel met on Wednesday 7 September 2016 to consider applications for funding from parish and town councils under the NHB grant funding scheme. The Panel consisted of Councillors Steven Lambert, Derek Town and Peter Strachan and parish council representatives John Gilbey and Nick Hierons (nominated by the Aylesbury Vale Association of Local Councils - AVALC). The Cabinet Member and Director responsible, the Senior Community Development Manager and Grants Officer were also in attendance.
- 3.2 The New Homes Bonus (NHB) is a national initiative whereby funding from the national revenue grant for local authorities has been top sliced and allocated to local councils in proportion to the number of new homes in their area. For every new home built and occupied in Aylesbury Vale, and for every long-term unoccupied property that is brought back into use, the Government gives the council a NHB grant each year for six years.
- 3.3 In December 2012 the council agreed to allocate a share of the NHB to parish and town councils, to help alleviate the impacts of housing growth on local communities. 20% of the Government allocation has been set aside for the funding scheme, which equates to £1,282,000 being available in 2016/17, the fourth year of funding for town and parish councils. In addition, £15,578 was carried over from the third round of funding making a total of £1,297,578 available in this round.
- 3.4 In January 2013 Cabinet agreed the structure of an Informal Panel, to consider applications from parish and town councils and make recommendations to Cabinet on the allocation of the NHB funding. This Panel subsequently met to agree the detailed criteria and process for the grant scheme, based on the decisions of Cabinet.
- 3.5 The key criteria are:
 - a. Applications should include a business case which as a minimum should demonstrate:
 - the impact of growth on their area, applications needn't necessarily be from the area directly taking growth in recognition of the fact that those most affected by growth are not always within the area taking that growth
 - the need or community desire for the investment proposed

- firm costings together with a funding and delivery plan
 - b. Awards can be for up to 100% of the scheme cost and can support both capital and revenue projects (with a life of less than 6 years).
- 3.6 Prospective applicants were required to submit a preliminary 'Expression of Interest' (EOI) form to identify whether projects met the criteria, to discuss other possible funding sources (including Section 106), and avoid abortive work for potential applicants. The deadline for applications was 29 July 2016.

4. Applications for funding

- 4.1 In total 12 EOI's or enquires were received and eight parish and town councils subsequently submitted applications for consideration by the Panel, to a total value of £1,485,099 (£1,297,578 of funding available).
- 4.2 The Panel was also asked by Turweston Parish Council to consider a request for an increase to the amount of New Homes Bonus grant funding awarded in the 2014/15 funding round.
- 4.3 In considering the applications the Panel members were unanimous in recommending funding for 4 applicants, totalling £674,295 and also recommended increasing the grant award to Turweston Parish Council by the amount requested, making a total of £684,295. The Panel declined to fund two applications.
- 4.4 In considering the first of two applications for funding from Haddenham Parish Council for a Haddenham to Aylesbury cycleway, the Panel was supportive of the principle of the project but felt that the level of information in the application was inadequate. The Panel therefore recommended that the funds are ring fenced and the Parish Council is invited to re-submit a fuller application with a clear project and delivery plan and costings and that this should be submitted by the end of this financial year, i.e. no later than 31 March 2017.
- 4.5 In considering an application from Chearsley Parish Council for the rebuilding of the village hall the Panel was divided. The Panel appreciated that the application was very thorough, but whilst it appeared to be a high quality scheme, it was questioned whether the application was in keeping with the original NHB funding criteria because of the limited impact of growth in the village.

The Panel were unable to agree on whether or not to fund the project and went to a vote. Two voted in favour, two against and there was one abstention. The Panel therefore recommended the decision be referred to Cabinet for a final decision in view of the fact that the Panel was split.

- 4.6 In regards to the application from Quanton Parish Council on behalf of Quanton Tennis Club, the Panel questioned whether the project fitted with the original NHB criteria to award funding to help with the provision of community facilities associated with growth that have tangible benefits for the communities accepting growth. The tennis club is a members only club that does not currently offer any pay and play or community access options. Therefore the Panel recommended that funding be declined.

- 4.7 The level of funding recommended and the reasons for the recommendations are outlined at Appendix A.

5. Next steps

- 5.1 Once the level of funding is agreed, funding agreements with successful applicants will be finalised, which will include timescales for the delivery of the project, to be monitored by the Grants Officer, and against which phased grant payments may be made. Appropriate recognition of the support provided by the NHB funding scheme will also be sought through media publicity and appropriate signage.
- 5.2 The timescales of any future potential NHB funding round to be agreed when the outcome of the Government's consultation is known and that in the mean time no further Expressions of Interest should be accepted.

6. Options considered and reasons for recommendation

- 6.1 The options considered by the Panel for each application were whether to fund, the level of funding and whether any conditions should be attached to the funding, (above those included in the standard funding agreement: that a plaque or equivalent acknowledgment of AVDC's New Homes Bonus is displayed at an appropriate location, that there is recognition of New Homes Bonus support in all publicity and that funding will be released upon the production of invoices for work completed).
- 6.2 The reasons for the Panel's recommendations are included in the schedule attached as Appendix A.

7. Resource implications

- 7.1 All funding for parish and town councils under the NHB grant funding scheme will be drawn from the 20% of the Government allocation set aside and ring fenced for the scheme in 2016/17, and the underspend carried forward from 2015/16.
- 7.2 If the Panel recommendations are approved a total of £524,295 will be committed and £150,000 ring fenced for Haddenham Parish Council making a total of £674,295, representing 52% of the budget available. £623,298 would be carried forward and made available to support future applications.
- 7.3 If Cabinet also approves Chearsley Parish Council's bid, a further £376,372 of available funds will be committed, totalling £1,060,667 and representing 82% of the budget available. £236,911 to be carried forward and made available to support future applications.

8. Response to Key Aims and Objectives

- 8.1 The allocation of New Homes Bonus funding to parish and town councils helps support the council's corporate plan priorities of protecting and improving the living experience in the Vale and improving our interaction with parish councils.

Contact Officer
Background Documents

Jan Roffe, 01296 585186
Previous Cabinet and Council reports relating to the New Homes Bonus.
Notes of the Informal Panel meeting

New Homes Bonus budget 2016/17		1,282,000			
Uncommitted budget 2015/16		15,578			
Total budget available 2016/17		1,297,578			
Name of Town/ Parish Council applying	Project description	Total cost of project	Amount requested	Grant Panel's Recommendation	Reasons for recommendation
Wing Parish Council	Redevelopment of the Recreation Ground	208,000	208,000	208,000	The Panel was very supportive of this application to fund a new Portakabin pavilion and the resurfacing of the football pitch at the Wing Recreation Ground. The application included a clear demonstration of growth in Wing. The Panel recognised that the pavilion and resurfacing of the football pitch are key elements of a wider project to redevelop Wing Recreation Ground. Supporting the project would provide pump priming funding which is in line with the intentions of the NHB scheme. The pavilion will be used by a large number of local sports and leisure groups, benefitting the whole community and Wing's growing population. The Panel recommended funding the project up to the amount requested.
Winslow Town Council	Town Centre Park and Arboretum	175,000	150,000	75,000	The Panel awarded £200,000 in the 2013/14 round of funding for phase one of this project to purchase land in the centre of Winslow, known as The Paddock. The intention at phase two was to build a community centre on the land as well as provide a town park. Since then further consultation with residents has taken place. It is now considered that The Paddock is too valuable a resource upon which to build a new community centre and that it should be developed solely as a town park. The Panel was mindful that AVDC is currently holding over £736,000 of S106 money for Winslow, some of which could support this project. The Parish Council advises that the money is still being held for the building of a new community centre, although a suitable location has yet to be identified and further S106 contributions are likely to be forthcoming as Winslow continues to grow. The Panel recommended that funding be awarded up to £75,000. The shortfall to be met using £75,000 of S106 money and the £25,000 of reserves already committed to the project by the Town Council. The Panel also recommended that this should not prejudice a subsequent bid to the NHB for additional work.
Quainton Parish Council (on behalf of Quainton Sports Club - tennis section)	Refurbishment of tennis courts	52,486	44,678	0	In considering this application, the Panel discussed whether the project fitted with the original NHB criteria to award funding to help with the provision of community facilities associated with growth that have tangible benefits for the communities accepting growth. The tennis club is a members only club that does not currently offer any pay and play or community access options. The Panel recommended that funding be declined.
Marsworth and Pitstone Parish Councils	Marsworth to Pitstone footway along the B489	251,320	241,820	200,000	The Panel was very supportive of this application to provide a footway alongside the B489 between Marsworth and Pitstone, providing a safe walkway for residents. The Panel was surprised by the 40% contingency built into the costings provided by Transport for Bucks, believing this to be an unnecessarily large percentage. The Panel recommended funding the project up to £200,000, representing project costs but supporting only up to 10% of the contingency figure.
Haddenham Parish Council	Haddenham to Aylesbury cycleway	150,000	150,000	150,000	The Panel was sympathetic to the amount of housing growth that Haddenham has taken in recent years and the likelihood of significantly more housing growth to come. However, in considering the application the Panel agreed that there was insufficient information upon which to make a judgement as the application did not include a fully costed project delivery plan or timescales. The Panel was also concerned that costs could escalate at the detailed plans stage and noted that an alternative or additional source of funding could be S106 from BCC which funded the Haddenham to Thame cycleway. The Panel was also unconvinced of the benefit to the whole community. The Panel recommended that funds are ring fenced and that the parish council is invited to re-submit a fuller application with a clear project and delivery plan and costings for the consideration of the Panel and that this should be submitted no later than 31 March 2017.

Name of Town/ Parish Council applying	Project description	Total cost of project	Amount requested	Grant Panel's Recommendation	Reasons for recommendation
Haddenham Parish Council	Banks Path Paving (village hall complex)	24,000	24,000	0	The Panel appreciated that the village hall complex is well used by Haddenham's growing population. However, in addition to the village hall, the complex includes the library, Scout and Guide Centre, disused medical centre, dentist and the Banks Parade of shops and car park. There are grey areas around who is responsible for what from the repair and maintenance perspective and Haddenham Parish Council is in the process of obtaining clarification from a solicitor. The Panel agreed that the repair of the paving is a maintenance issue that does not bring anything new to the village community and that with so much uncertainty surrounding who is responsible for what recommended that funding be declined.
Aylesbury Town Council	Replacement of Aylesbury Town Cemetery paths and driveways	41,295	41,295	41,295	The Panel discussed whether this was a maintenance issue for the Town Council, but acknowledged that the replacement of the pathways and tarmac drive is part of a much larger improvement and refurbishment plan for Aylesbury Town Cemetery. The Town Council has recently enhanced the older part of the cemetery, including improved landscaping around the pond area and has created a park setting. It was agreed that the replacement of the paths and driveway will contribute to the overall enhancement of the cemetery and make it fit for purpose for future access for burials. The Panel recommended funding up to the amount requested.
Chearsley Parish Council	The rebuilding of the village hall	582,998	376,372	0	The Panel appreciated that Chearsley had submitted a very thorough application and that the village hall, constructed after the Second World War as a chicken shed, is no longer fit for purpose. The Panel was however divided, as whilst it appeared to be a high quality scheme, it was questioned whether the application was in keeping with the original NHB funding criteria because of the limited impact of growth in the village. The Panel discussed the original principles of the scheme, namely that applications need not necessarily be from the area directly taking the growth, but are affected by it. Also, that the funding scheme was designed not to be too prescriptive and that each application would be considered on its own merit. The Panel were unable to agree on whether or not to fund the project and went to a vote. Two voted in favour, two against and there was one abstention. The Panel recommended that Cabinet consider the application and make the decision on whether the project is in keeping with the criteria and worthy of NHB funding up to the requested amount.
		1,485,099	1,236,165	674,295	
Total budget available				1,297,578	
Uncommitted budget				623,283	

The Panel was also asked to consider an increase in the grant awarded to Turweston Parish Council in the 2013/14 round					
Turweston Parish Council	Traffic calming measures in village Conservation Area	77,224	10,000	10,000	In the 2014/15 round of funding, Panel members were unanimous in their support for the project to install traffic calming measures through the village. Although Turweston itself has not taken any housing growth, the village has been severely impacted by growth in surrounding areas, both within Aylesbury Vale and in South Northants, particularly in Brackley where large residential and commercial development has taken place. Turweston requested £100,000 of grant support and subsequently tried to downscale the project to work within the £60,000 NHB grant awarded. In order to meet the key objectives, the final cost is £77,224 including an unexpected 9.5% management fee imposed by the contractor Ringway Jacobs. Turweston has requested a £10,000 increase in the grant award to help cover these costs. In light of the parish council's modest reserves and financial commitment to cover the unexpected management fees, the Panel was unanimous in recommending an increase in the grant award up to the requested amount.
			1,246,165	684,295	
Total budget available				1,297,578	
Uncommitted budget				613,283	

Name of Town/ Parish Council applying	Project description	Total cost of project	Amount requested	Grant Panel's Recommendation	Reasons for recommendation
Budget figures should Cabinet approve funding to Chearsley:					
Name of Town/ Parish Council applying	Project description	Total cost of project	Total amount requested	Cabinet decision	Background to the application
Chearsley Parish Council	The rebuilding of the village hall	582,998	376,372	376,372	Chearsley is a small community with about 550 residents. 10 new homes have been built in the last five years with a further 8 to be built by a local developer. The village has doubled in size since the village hall was built in 1951. There are potentially 200 new homes to be built in Long Crendon, 2 miles away and huge development in Haddenham, 4 miles away. CHUFS (Chearsley and Haddenham Under Fives) use the building on a daily basis, the hall is in a poor state and storage space is minimal, limiting use of the hall by the community. The parish council want to provide a new, larger, modern accessible and flexible space for the village. Villagers would like to use the current hall more often, but tend to use halls further afield which have more modern facilities.
		1,485,099	1,246,165	1,060,667	
Total budget available				1,297,578	
Uncommitted budget				236,911	