

Cheltenham Borough Council
Cabinet – 18th October, 2011
Environmental Improvements Scheme
Allocation of ‘New Homes Bonus’ funding

Accountable member	Cllr John Rawson, Cabinet Member Built Environment
Accountable officer	Mike Redman, Director Built Environment
Accountable scrutiny committees	Environment
Ward(s) affected	All
Key Decision	Yes
Executive summary	<p>As approved by Cabinet, Environmental Improvements schemes have been subject to a bidding process by Council departments, with bids prioritised by a member panel drawn from the Cabinet and comprising the Council Leader and Cabinet members for Built Environment and Sustainability.</p> <p>The aim is to tackle environmental issues in packages costing up to a maximum of £15,000 or so. An initial request has been supported by Cabinet, for £10,800 for waste bins. This leaves £149,200 in the Fund.</p> <p>This report summarises all bids submitted and using a scoring matrix of appropriate criteria (see Appendix C), makes recommendations for the distribution of the remaining Fund’s £149,200.</p>
Recommendation	<p>That Cabinet determine which bids to support and at what level, having regard to the:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prioritised list of bids attached at Appendix C; 2. Available budget of £149,200; and 3. Minutes of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee attached at Appendix D.

Financial implications	<p>None arising directly from this report.</p> <p>Although, as mentioned in the key risks, care will need to be taken to ensure that those granted funds are appropriately vetted prior to the release of funding, and a process is in place to monitor delivery to ensure the best use of council funds.</p> <p>Contact officer: Nina Philippidis</p> <p>E-mail: nina.philippidis@cheltenham.gov.uk</p> <p>Tel no: 01242 775221</p>
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<p>Legal implications</p>	<p>The payment of funding to any external parties will require the production of documentation, based on the council's 'Community Giving Grant' template, to ensure that any funding is properly spent in accordance with the approved application.</p> <p>Contact officer: Donna Ruck</p> <p>E-mail: donna.ruck@teWKesbury.gov.uk Tel no: 01684 272696</p>
<p>HR implications (including learning and organisational development)</p>	<p>There may be capacity issues that will need to be fully considered, depending on what decisions are made as to the use of the New Homes Bonus funding for Environmental Improvements.</p> <p>Contact officer: Julie McCarthy</p> <p>E-mail: julie.mccarthy@cheltenham.gov.uk Tel no: 01242 264355</p>
<p>Key risks (See also Appendix A)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Financial – it will be important to ensure that any funds allocated, particularly to external organisations are the subject of appropriate controls to make sure they effectively deliver target outcomes; ▪ Capacity – staffing resources are currently stretched and the allocation and support mechanisms for this scheme will therefore need to take this into account, to minimise the risk of impacts on other corporate priorities.
<p>Corporate and community plan Implications</p>	<p>As part of the bid process, applicants were asked to identify how individual projects supported at least one of the Council's high level environmental objectives-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheltenham has a clean and well-maintained environment • Cheltenham's natural and built environment is enhanced and protected • Carbon emissions are reduced and Cheltenham is able to adapt to the impacts of climate change <p>▪ A copy of the application guidelines is attached at Appendix B.</p>
<p>Environmental and climate change implications</p>	<p>The Environmental Improvements fund offered an opportunity for the Council to support schemes to directly enhance the town's environment and contribute to helping reduce climate change impacts.</p> <p>As part of the bid process, applicants were asked to identify the impact of individual projects on carbon emissions and how they would help adapt to the impacts of climate change. The majority would have some impact.</p>

1. New Homes Bonus 2011

- 1.1 The Council recently received its first allocation of the New Homes Bonus (NHB) from central government.
- 1.2 NHB has been designed to address the disincentive within the local government finance system for local areas to welcome growth. Until now, increased housing in communities has meant increased strain on public services and reduced amenities. NHB reduces this disincentive by

providing local authorities with the means to help mitigate the strain the increased population causes. This should ensure that the economic benefits of growth are returned to the local authorities and communities where growth takes place. In addition, in doing so, NHB is intended to engender a more positive attitude to growth, and create an environment in which new housing is more readily accepted.

- 1.3 The Bonus commenced in April 2011, and will match fund the additional council tax raised for new homes and long term empty properties brought back into use, with an additional amount for affordable homes, in each of the following six years.
- 1.4 Cheltenham's first allocation of NHB amounts to £290,275 and Council agreed on 27th June, 2011, this has been used to create 2 funds for the following uses:-
- 1.5 **Environmental improvements** - £130,000, supplemented by £30,000 from the civic pride reserve, to provide a total fund of £160,000 for small environmental works. Bids from within council departments will be made and decided by Cabinet in the autumn. The aim is to tackle environmental issues in packages costing around £15,000 or so a time. An initial request has been made, and supported by Cabinet, for £10,800 to purchase larger waste bins for the council's parks to remove the need to use wheelie bins to cope with the summer peak in activity, plus replacement bins adjacent to Imperial gardens to complement the re-paving scheme.
- 1.6 **Promoting Cheltenham** - £160,275, supplemented by £18,731 of unspent LAA performance reward grant, giving a total fund of £179,006, for economic development purposes to help tackle the recession and promote the town as a place in which to do business, by sponsoring activities and events which will attract visitors and trade. It will include cultural activities such as the festivals and tourism activities.
- 1.7 The environmental improvements fund has been the subject of a bidding process by internal Council departments, with bids signed off by a member panel drawn from the Cabinet.

2. Reasons for recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet needs to be satisfied with the prioritising and funding projects under the fund and must ensure that it has considered the risks which may impact on the financing and delivery of relevant outcomes.

3. Alternative options considered

- 3.1 None.

4. Consultation and feedback

- 4.1 The 'Environmental Improvements' scheme was the subject of consultation with the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September.

5. Performance management – monitoring and review

- 5.1 Performance in implementing the environmental improvements scheme will be monitored through the Council's normal internal performance management and scrutiny processes.

Report author	<p>Mike Redman, Director Built Environment</p> <p>Cheltenham 264160 (Ext 4160)</p> <p>mike.redman@cheltenham.gov.uk</p>
Appendices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Risk Assessment B. Cheltenham Environmental Fund – application guidelines C. Prioritised scheme bid list D. Draft minutes of Environment O&S Committee – 14th Sep, 2011
Background information	<p>Report to Cabinet on 26th July, 2011, from the Leader of the Council, entitled 'Economic development update and proposals for administering New Homes Bonus funding'</p> <p>Discussion paper to Environment O&S Committee on 14th September, 2011, from the Leader of the Council, entitled 'Economic development update and proposals for administering New Homes Bonus funding'</p>

The risk				Original risk score (impact x likelihood)			Managing risk				
Risk ref.	Risk description	Risk Owner	Date raised	I	L	Score	Control	Action	Deadline	Responsible officer	Transferred to risk register
CR29	If the council does not implement the actions identified in the climate change adaptation risk assessment there is a risk that resources will not be used to best effect which could impact on financial, environmental and service decisions and affect service delivery.	Director Commissioning - Jane Griffiths	06/05/2010	4	2	8	Reduce	Services are required to identify the actions they will be taking to respond to climate change (both adaptation and mitigation) in 2011/12 service plans. Internal audit has a trained officer in environmental auditing who will be assessing progress against the adaptation risk assessment.	01/09/2011	All Directors Audit Partnership Manager Richard Gibson, policy and partnerships manager	
	If insufficient staffing capacity is available to manage allocation and monitoring processes there is a risk that projects and related outcomes will not be delivered on time, or to an acceptable standard	Director Built Environment	26/07/2011	3	2	6	Accept	Internal bids need to clearly identify resources required for effective management and delivery Capacity for managing bidding process needs to be identified	-	Directors and service managers tasked with project delivery	

Cheltenham Environmental Fund

Application Guidelines

Introduction

The Cheltenham Environmental Fund is a funding programme for small-scale environmental works. These will generally be capital works in streets, public spaces, parks or open spaces.

The fund will be allocated by Cabinet in October 2011.

Who can apply

Bids can be made in conjunction with external organisations, including community groups. Single award bids, typically up to a maximum of £15,000, must be submitted by an officer of the Council. Larger bids may be considered.

Officers can make more than one grant application.

What we are looking to support

Funding applications will be assessed on the basis of their relevant merits and their ability to deliver one or more of the following outcomes:

- an improvement in the quality of streets, public spaces, parks or open spaces;
- a positive contribution to environmental sustainability; and
- an increase in the community's involvement in its local environment.

Bids are encouraged which have additional benefits including an ability to:

- demonstrate innovative design or delivery solutions to environmental issues;
- act as learning pilots for other areas or organisations; or
- make a further contribution to wider areas of interest, particularly the economy, education, transport, health and well-being, bio-diversity or civic pride.

Funding will be awarded for capital works and reasonable associated costs (design, project management etc).

Projects should demonstrate community engagement in development and/or delivery.

Projects will need to evidence long-term maintenance.

Projects can be existing or new but must be capable of making significant progress by 31st March 2012 in terms of community engagement, design or implementation.

Making an application

Your application must clearly demonstrate the following which will form the basis of the assessment criteria:

- how your project will deliver **one or more** of the fund's outcomes
- how your project will have **lasting environmental or sustainability benefits**
- how the **success of your project will be measured**

- how Cheltenham's **community will be involved** in the development, design or delivery of the project
 - what **additional benefits** your project will deliver
 - when various stages of your **project will be delivered and the project completed**
 - how your project will be **maintained in the future**
 - how you will **involve partners** in your project and what they will contribute (funding or in-kind)
- if your project is eligible for other funding, how the *Cheltenham Environmental Fund* will **complement, secure and add value to** those other sources of funds.

How we will assess applications

An assessment panel will be drawn from the Cabinet. The panel will be looking for:

- projects that have been well thought out and can demonstrate that they meet the assessment criteria set out above;
- applications that demonstrate clarity of both planning and delivery of the projects with an understanding of what permissions will be required to see the successful implementation of the project;
- assurances that project deliverers will put in place a robust system for collecting, monitoring and assessing the impacts of the project and for reporting and sharing this information.

Recommendations will be made to the Borough Council's Cabinet that meets on 18th October 2011. Successful applicants will be notified shortly afterwards.

Completed applications for the main fund must be returned no later than Friday 30th September to:

Judith Baker, Built Environment Directorate, Municipal Offices

Email: judith.baker@cheltenham.gov.uk

Draft minutes of Environment O&S on 14th September, 2011 - to be approved at the next meeting on Wednesday, 23rd November, 2011

9. NEW HOMES BONUS (INCLUDING ENVIRONMENT IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME)

The Cabinet Member Built Environment introduced the report and informed members that any scheme not included this year could potentially be included in subsequent years as the new homes bonus would continue to be allocated to the authority from central government.

Members remarked that they would have been better placed to comment on the proposed schemes had the criteria been included, but understood that this was still being worked on. In response the Cabinet Member explained that rather than getting involved in elaborate scoring systems the proposed projects should be examined in terms of best value for money. The proposals had in the main been put forward internally by officers, but some had come forward from community groups.

A discussion was held as to whether the proposed projects did actually fit the purpose of the funding which was to mitigate the strain on the increased population causes. The example of guttering on allotment sheds was given.

The Cabinet Member Built Environment was confident that the projects proposed were small scale infrastructure projects and were consistent with the Government's intentions. Meanwhile some Members applauded the flexibility being used. The example of the project of Pittville Gates and Railings Restoration was given, which in Cllr Hibbert's view would represent the perfect project for Cheltenham to mark the Queen's diamond jubilee.

Rather than each member comment on the project relating to their ward the Chair proposed that each member e-mail directly to the Cabinet member their comments on the proposals.

When asked whether grass cutting could be included in order to enhance the appearance of the town, the Cabinet Member Sustainability replied that grass cutting was an ongoing revenue item and could not be allocated to the new homes bonus.

Members agreed that those projects proposed by community groups be given priority.

Resolved

- **That Members forward to the Cabinet member their comments on the proposals.**
- **That the minutes of this item be forwarded to Cabinet**