

HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE MEETING

held in the Sports Pavilion and Community Centre, Coventry Road, Lutterworth

held on 13 May 2013,

commencing at 5.00p.m.

Present:

Councillor Rook (Leader).
Councillors: Mrs. Ackerley, Dann, Holyoak, Spendlove-Mason.
An apology for absence was received from Cllr Golding

Officers: Anna Graves, Ann Marie Hawkins, Beth Murgatroyd, Mark Perris, Norman Proudfoot

581 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Executive meeting held on 22 April 2013 be approved and signed as a true record.

582 HEADQUARTERS BUILDING ;RETAIL UNITS-PLANNING USES

Consideration was given to the recommendation of the Member Advisory Panel that the Council should seek to widen the planning permission to include A3 Restaurants and Cafes and A4 Drinking Establishments. The widening of the planning permission would provide flexibility and broaden the interest from prospective occupiers.

RESOLVED that: authority be delegated to Assistant Director Corporate Resources to seek planning permission to widen the permitted uses of the ground floor retail units to include A3 Restaurants & Cafes and A4 Drinking Establishment, as defined by the Town & Country Planning Act (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Order 2005.

Summary of Reasons

To maximise interest in the retail units and minimise any potential rental voids

583 MARKET HALL IMPROVEMENTS:MARKET BRANDING

It was reported that the Project Team had commissioned Quarterbridge as part of its overall consultancy for the Market to develop a new brand which would be used in marketing literature, on websites and for new signage.

To assist with delivering the objectives of the project, it is important that new lettings commence at the earliest opportunity. To this end, it is essential that the approval process for the new brand is as short as possible.

It was reported that once the name had been decided upon that all Councillors would be informed.

RESOLVED that authority for approval of the new Market Brand be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer, in conjunction with the Market Hall Executive Advisory Panel.

Summary of Reasons

To expedite the approval process and to limit the time taken in approving the brand from the initial receipt of the draft. This will ensure that the brand can be used in all new marketing material (brochures, website, etc.) to allow the new letting process to commence at the earliest opportunity.

584 MARKET HALL; DESIGN APPROVAL

Consideration was given to the design plan and scope of works for the Market Hall

RESOLVED that the design plan and scope of works for the Market Hall improvements be approved

Summary of Reasons

To allow detailed design to commence and subsequently proceed to tender for the improvement works.

585 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillors Ackerley, Dann ,Holyoak and Spendlove-Mason wished to declare that they were all members of Parish Councils prior to making a decision on the following policy

586 NEW HOMES BONUS

It was reported that the New Homes Bonus (NHB) was introduced by the Government in 2011 as part of a radical overhaul of local government finance. It aimed to “provide a powerful, simple, transparent and permanent incentive for local authorities to increase their aspirations for housing growth by ensuring that communities reap the benefits of growth and not just the costs.”

The NHB rewards local authorities for delivering new homes within their District. The NHB grant receivable is calculated by reference to the Annual Council Tax Base Return (CTB1) which is completed by all authorities in October of each year. The resultant grant is then payable for the following six financial years. There is also an enhancement for affordable homes.

The NHB is un-ringfenced but applicants will need to consider Council criteria.

The Council agreed that Year 1 and 2 NHB allocations were to be used to support Council expenditure.

It was agreed that £250k from Year 3 allocations should be allocated as follows:

- 80% - A Locality Investment Fund.
- 20% - A District Wide Investment Fund

RESOLVED:

LOCALITY INVESTMENT FUND

- (i) That Parish Councils and/ or Parish Meetings receive directly a proportion of the 80% of New Homes Bonus allocated to Communities as agreed by Council on 16 January 2013.
- (ii) The amount each Parish receives be governed by how many new dwellings have been occupied and identified on the Government return CTB1 since the New Homes Bonus scheme began
- (iii) There being no Town or Parish Council for Market Harborough in place ,that Constituted bodies be able to submit applications to an officer grants panel and those recommendation to be heard by a Members Panel made up from the 10 Market Harborough Ward Councillors

- (iv) That the Member Grants Panel for the Locality Investment Fund be held twice per year, which should make recommendations to the Executive for decision;
- (v) That an Officer Grants Panel for the Locality Investment Fund be established to support the Members Grants Panel;
- (vi) That more support be provided to communities and parishes to support the preparation of New Homes Bonus applications and to assist them in identifying need;
- (vii) an annual review of the process be undertaken by the Executive

DISTRICT WIDE FUND

- (viii) That this fund be made available to the properly constituted groups/parishes to deliver specific services/projects linked to the Councils priorities and related to increased growth within the parishes; and
- (ix) That the Member Grants Panel for the District Wide Fund be held twice per year, which should make recommendations to the Executive for decision;
- (x) That an Officer Grants Panel for the District Wide Fund be established to support the Members Grants Panel;
- (xi) The assessment process be in line with the proposed Section 106 Grants process, ie addressed through a Member Grants Panel and Officer Grants Panel.
- (xii) An annual review of the process be undertaken by the Executive

Summary of Reasons

The proposed grants process has been designed to meet the recommendations agreed by Council, on 16th January 2012, that 80% of the allocated £250k should be used to create a Locality Investment Fund “to be used on a community budgets arrangement in those areas which have taken housing growth. The areas may already be a whole community or part of a community comprising larger area (clusters). A process of identifying how the money would be used would need to be drawn up but it should be on the basis of clearly identified and articulated need and not on ‘pet projects’ of the few”.

New Homes Bonus aims to ensure that communities reap the benefits of growth and it is therefore recommended that proportions of the locality investment fund should be made available to communities according to the number of housing completions e.g. hypothetically, if a parish has had 1 new home out of a total 100 homes completed in the district in the last 3 years, that parish would receive 1% of the locality investment fund eg. Appendix 1.

Growth refers to housing which has been delivered since the period of eligibility for NHB started, which was those new properties built and occupied since October 2009. Whilst NHB was paid for the first time in April 2011, it related to the period October 2009 to September 2010, as identified on the Government return CTB1.

The proposal in relation to a District Wide Investment Fund has been designed to meet the recommendations also agreed by Council on 16 January 2012 to create a District Wide Investment Fund covering the remaining 20% of the £250k. The fund could be used flexibly to meet identified need for example;

- Filling the funding gap for services with increasing costs as a result of housing growth e.g. waste management, grounds maintenance, street cleansing, street art and furniture, place making costs.
- Providing facilities in areas that cannot support additional housing growth and therefore cannot benefit directly from the NHB
- Support to stimulate economic growth by working with local businesses and partners
- Pooling with others/ match funding with other grant streams
- Spend on an ‘Invest to Save’ basis on green infrastructure projects.

The Member Grants Panel proposed for Section 106 Grants would also consider the New Homes Bonus Grants twice per year.

To support the Member Grants Panel it is proposed that an Officer Grants Panel should consider and score the applications. The Officer Panel would include representatives from Planning, Cultural Services, Community Safety, Parish Liaison, Business Support, Housing and Commissioning. Recommendations for funding would be presented to the Member Grants Panel, which would make recommendations to the Executive.

There is an understanding that more community engagement work with parishes and communities is required to assist them in the preparation of grant applications and identifying need.

Smaller and larger grants are proposed because there is limited funding available from other funding streams to support small scale projects. Research indicates these smaller initiatives e.g. writing of a parish plan, form firm foundations for bigger projects
Feedback from the review of Section 106 Grants should shape the application and monitoring process.

587 SECTION 106 GRANTS REVIEW

Consideration was given to the review of the process for dealing with section 106 grants applications which had been undertaken in the last three months. The aim of the process was to complete the grant process i.e. from application deadline to point of payment within twelve weeks. The Executive considered that ward members should be involved at Week 1 stage when the acknowledgement was sent to applicants informing them of the process and timescales

RESOLVED:

- (i) That a Member Grants Panel be held twice per year, which will make recommendations to the Executive for decision;
- (ii) That an Officer Grants Panel be established to support the Members Grants Panel;
- (iii) That additional support be provided to communities and parishes to support the preparation of Section 106 applications for funding and to assist them in identifying and evidencing need;
- (iv) That the application process (including application form, guidance and weighted scoring criteria) be developed to address the issues raised in this review by the Head of Policy, Performance and Partnerships in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Health & Communities, with the support of the Officer Grants Panel;
- (v) That robust monitoring be carried out on funding allocated to ensure it is spent in line with the Executive decision, 106 grant conditions and within a period of two years; and
- (vi) That, in line with current practice, there be no upper or lower limit to grant requests, as long as they are within the individual parish 'pots'.

Summary of Reasons

There is currently only one Grants Panel per year. Every interviewee thought there should be more per annum.

To support the Member Grants Panel in recommending decisions it is proposed that applications in each of the three Section 106 Grant Windows would initially be scored by a panel of Officers. This would include representatives from Planning, Cultural Services, Community Safety, Parish Liaison, Business Support, Housing and Commissioning. Recommendations for funding would be made as a result of these Officer Panel discussions and these would be presented to the Member Grants Panel, which would make recommendations to the Executive.

There is an understanding that more community engagement work with parishes and communities is required to assist them in being proactive at identifying and evidencing need to secure future S106 Agreements and support them in making applications for current S106 monies.

Encouragement and support for parishes to write Parish Plans, Community Design Statements and Neighbourhood Plans is essential to help provide more detail of community facilities projects (to include details of sites, funding streams and timescales) and to ensure Section 106 funding is not lost.

Feedback from interviewees is that the process is too slow and requires more clarity and transparency.

Robust monitoring post-approval is required to ensure money is spent in line with the Executive decision.

In order to have flexibility and respond to community needs it is recommended that in line with current practice there should be no upper or lower limit to grant requests as long as they are within the individual parish 'pots'.

588 NOTES OF MEETINGS OF EXECUTIVE ADVISORY PANELS

RESOLVED that the records of the following meetings held by Executive Advisory Panels be noted:

- Local Planning Task Panel: 6 March 2013 (Appendix A)
- Local Planning Executive Advisory Panel: 10 April 2013 (Appendix B)
- Market Hall Executive Advisory Panel: 10 April 2013 (Appendix C)
- Redevelopment of Council HQ Executive Advisory Panel: 27 February 2013 (Appendix D) and 25 April 2013 (Appendix E)

Summary of Reasons

The arrangements for the Executive Advisory Panels require that they report back to Executive with notes of their meetings

The meeting closed at 6.15.pm