

Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Committee

Date:	27 June 2017
Title:	Grant Funding for Neighbourhood Plans
Contact Officer:	Graeme Markland, Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Officer

Purpose of this report:

1. To raise awareness of key dates and the lengthy process to be considered when applying for neighbourhood plan grants. To raise as a potential issue the end of the current neighbourhood plan funding scheme in 2018.

Background

2. At the 16 May 2017 NPCC meeting it was recognised that a full review of the Thame Neighbourhood Plan would be required. In light of this the Town Clerk has instructed the NPCO to draw up a provisional project plan for the review process.
3. As part of this work regulations and the availability of grant funds and technical support are being examined. It has been noted that the current support programme for Neighbourhood Plans is only guaranteed until 31 March 2018. Due to the process involved in making an application for funding grants Thame Town Council may well end up applying for funds under uncertain, future arrangements.
4. Particular concern is noted around the availability of extra financial and technical support. It is not clear that Thame will qualify just because the Plan review will include allocations. If the remaining rules do not change much, Thame might still qualify through rolling forward current (Lord Williams Lower, The Elms) and future allocation sites that together would pass the 500 home qualifying limit.

The current grant process

5. As the responsible body, the Town Council must apply for any grant from Locality even if it subsequently defers the work to another group.
6. Key issues:
 - a. The support programme for all neighbourhood plans runs from 2015 – 2018. It is assumed a new support programme will be initiated post 2018 but as yet there is no indication of its likely scope.
 - b. The Council will be able to request up to £9,000 over three years up to 2018
 - c. As an area with “complex issues” (see below) we will be able to apply for:
 - i. A further £6,000, again between 2015 - 2018
 - ii. Technical support from AECOM (a planning consultancy) or the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors
 - d. Each application has to be between £1,000 and £9,000
 - e. Funds applied for must be spent within the next 6 months or before 31 March 2018, whichever is sooner

- f. To apply within this funding round, Thame must have already completed an end of grant report detailing prior financial or technical assistance given to us.

Additional support

7. One or more issues from the following lists would grant further support for Thame:
 - a. For 2017/18:
 - i. If we undertake site assessments, with a view to allocate sites
 - ii. If we be allocating sites for housing or mixed use developments
 - b. Generally:
 - i. If we become a high growth area – above 500 homes – or choose to allocate more housing than in the development plan
 - ii. If we prepare a NP for 3 or more parish councils.

Grant Expenditure

8. There is a time window – we must make sure the funds applied for can be spent within 6 months, or before 31 March 2018, whichever is the earliest. This suggests we should apply for funding before committing to paid research or consultancy.
9. We can spend a Locality grant on a range of items, for example:
 - Developing a website
 - Training for the steering group
 - A housing survey
 - Hiring a planning expert for policy generation
 - Legal requirements training (for the examination)
 - Venue hire, publicity materials, costs around printing, public engagement, etc.
10. The grant cannot be spent on:
 - Activity that has already happened
 - General administration costs such as minute-taking
 - Funding salaried posts/paying additional hours for existing staff/employing someone on a casual or freelance basis
 - Capital items
 - Note – VAT may be recoverable by Parish/Town Councils under Notice 749.
11. The grant should not be spend on activity that could be provided through the technical support packages – save that money for other costs.

Who we apply to

12. Thame Town Council would have to submit an Expression of Interest form to Locality. A main contact person will need to be identified as a direct representative of the Council. They would need to answer questions on the qualification matters listed directly above.

13. The Expression of Interest form automatically generates an application form. For complex groups the form will be a combined grant and technical support form. Grants are held and issued by the Groundwork organisation. It is expected funds will be drawn down through no more than 4 requests.

Action required:

14. To note the report, and approve delegation of neighbourhood plan grant applications to the Town Clerk and Town Council officers.

Report source: Locality Neighbourhood Planning Grant advice 28/03/2017

http://mycommunity.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/NP_GuidanceNotes.pdf