

Meeting: EXECUTIVE
Portfolio Area: Resources
Date: 28th May 2013

NEW HOMES BONUS – 2013/14 SCHEME ALLOCATIONS

KEY DECISION

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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1** To approve a range of schemes and initiatives to be funded from the 2013/14 New Homes Bonus allocation.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1** That an allocation of £357,000 from the 2013/14 New Homes Bonus grant be approved for the implementation and delivery of the following schemes :
- (a) Town Centre Improvements Project (Initiative 1) - £200,000;
 - (b) Improvements to the Leisure Centre Walkway (Initiative 2) - £60,000;
 - (c) BTC Network of Enterprise Clubs for Young People (Initiative 3) - £5,000;
 - (d) Women's Resource Centre Grant (Initiative 4) - £5,000;
 - (e) Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator (Initiative 5) - £47,000 per annum for 2 years;
 - (f) 'No More' Intervention Project (Initiative 6) - £40,000.
- 2.2** That it be noted the Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator (initiative 5) will be a two year scheme and funding to support the second year of the programme will need to be funded from the 2014/15 New Homes Bonus grant.

2.3 That subject to the approval of 2.1 above, Council be requested to approve the General Fund Revenue Account Contingency Sum held by the Executive be increased by £357,000 to maintain this sum at the £400,000 level previously agreed.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 The New Homes Bonus scheme is designed to be a financial incentive for Council's to deliver housing growth and as such replaces the Housing and Planning Development Grant. It is also intended to make the link between growth and new finance more visible.

3.2 New Homes Bonus commenced in April 2011, and will match the additional Council Tax raised for new homes and properties brought back into use, with an additional amount of £350 for each affordable homes, for the following six years. In two tier areas the New Homes Bonus is split 80/20 between the District and County Councils.

3.3 Until 2014/15, this is new money made available by the Government. After that, the money comes from the Formula Grant as a permanent feature of local government funding. This means that councils that treat the scheme as an incentive to build and return empty properties to use will benefit and those that do not will lose money after 2015.

3.4 New Homes Bonus is an un-ringfenced grant. However, as reported to the Executive as part of the development of the 2012/13 budget, the Chief Finance Officer made no assumption to build the New Homes Bonus grant into the General Fund base budget, and instead established a policy to transfer the grant into a reserve for future political direction.

3.5 We are now in the third year of the New Homes Bonus scheme. The grants awarded to Stevenage BC are as follows:

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Year 1	£84,562	£84,562	£84,562	£84,562	£84,562	£84,562
Year 2		£495,367	£495,367	£495,367	£495,367	£495,367
Year 3			£222,712	£222,712	£222,712	£222,712
One off allocation			£19,048			
Total	£84,562	£579,929	£821,689	£802,641	£802,641	£802,641

3.6 Based on the allocations for the first three years, the total payment due to the Council up to 2016/17 will be almost £3.9 million.

3.7 In addition, there will be further allocations for future years based on annual new homes growth. The allocation for 2014/15 will be based on the net change in stock (as per Council Tax records) for the year to October 2013.

Modelling work on the likely future revenue streams is ongoing and will be incorporated into the Council's regular financial monitoring reports to the Executive.

- 3.8** To date the Council has used £768,260 of New Homes Bonus allocations on the following schemes:

		<u>New Homes Bonus Allocated</u>				
		2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Total
	Balance Brought Forward	0	(£53,362)	(£296,230)	(£801,919)	
	Allocation for year	(£84,562)	(£579,928)	(£821,689)		(£1,486,179)
	Additional allocation			(£19,048)		(£19,048)
	Spend:					
2011/12	Local Community budget top-up	£31,200				
2012/13	Apprenticeships (part 1)			£90,000		
2012/13	Apprenticeships (part 2)			£26,000	£84,000	
2012/13	Free Parking		£50,000			
2012/13	Indoor market		£36,000			
2012/13	Bedwell feasibility		£1,060			
2013/14	Support General Fund			£200,000		
2012/13	LAMS		£250,000			
	Total Spend	£31,200	£337,060	£316,000	£84,000	£768,260
	Balance 2011/12-2013/14 Allocation	(£53,362)	(£296,230)	(£801,919)	(£717,919)	(£717,919)

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

- 4.1** To determine the focus of allocations made from the 2013/14 New Homes Bonus, Strategic Management Board invited bids from Heads of Service across the Council for priority schemes in their area that support and furthered the delivery of the Council's ambitions and priorities. These bids were then assessed against a range of criteria to identify a proposed package. The package of schemes formed part of the Leader's Budget Speech at Council on 27 February 2013.
- 4.2** The outcome of the prioritisation exercise reflected the results from the range of consultation exercises undertaken over the last 12 months, covering the themes of regeneration, economy and jobs, young people and training, and safer communities. Consequently the following schemes for the 2013/14 New Homes Bonus were identified for implementation:

Initiative 1 : Town Centre Improvements Project	
Lead Portfolio Holder : Environment and Regeneration	
Allocation : £200,000	Delivery Lead : Head of Planning, Regeneration and Transport
Timescales : August 2013 – March 2014	
Ambition(s) Supported : Shape our Community, Regenerate Stevenage, Create Sustainable Communities	

4.2.1 This project will build upon the work carried out in the area between the Bus Station and the Leisure Centre and will address the need to improve the appearance of the Bus Station and Town Square areas. The detailed design of the proposed works has yet to be settled but the scheme will further improve the public realm and planting in the area and provide a more attractive environment for retailers, residents and visitors.

Initiative 2 : Improvements to the Leisure Centre Walkway	
Lead Portfolio Holder : Environment and Regeneration	
Allocation : £60,000	Delivery Lead : Head of Property and Estates
Timescales : September 2013 – October 2013	
Ambition(s) Supported : Shape Our Community, Regenerate Stevenage, Create Sustainable Communities	

4.2.2 The proposal is to refurbish the pedestrian walkway that runs through the Arts and Leisure Centre and links the Railway Station to the Town Centre. The walkway is an important gateway into, and first impression of, the Town but was last refurbished over ten years ago. It is looking tired and out dated so the scheme will focus on the elements that will have the greatest impact. This includes a complete overhaul and replacement of the ceiling, lighting and signage, and a deep clean of the walls and floor.

Initiative 3 : BTC Network of Enterprise Clubs for Young People	
Lead Portfolio Holder : Enterprise, Economy and Transport	
Allocation : £5,000	Delivery Lead : Head of Planning, Regeneration and Transport
Timescales : Autumn 2013	
Ambition(s) Supported : Regenerate Stevenage, Create Sustainable Communities	

4.2.3 WENTA manages the Business and Technology Centre and is a social enterprise company whose principle objective is to support business start-ups and enterprise. One of their current priorities is to support young people to get onto the ladder of employment and more particularly, self employment. To support this priority, WENTA are seeking funding from Local Authorities across Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire to fund a network of Enterprise Clubs specifically targeting young people and helping them to develop their business ideas, business skills and ultimately their own businesses, or to prepare them

better for employment. The intention is to deliver these clubs through the existing network of My Incubator facilities and to link with FE Colleges, schools, Young Enterprise and other support services such as Dragon's Apprentice and the Peter Jones Academy.

Initiative 4 : Women's Resource Centre Grant	
Lead Portfolio Holder : Community, Health and Older People	
Allocation : £5,000	Delivery Lead : Head of Housing, Community and Communications
Timescales : April 2013 to April 2014	
Ambition(s) Supported : Shape our Community 2013-18 Community Strategy priority: Help people feel safe SoSafe Community Safety Plan 2011-14 priority: Reducing violent crime including domestic abuse	

4.2.4 The Centre provides a safe place for women to talk about domestic violence issues and also receive information, advice and support in a safe, confidential setting. The work of the Centre supports the priority from the 2013-18 Corporate Plan to 'Help people feel safe' and its aim to address the harm caused by domestic abuse. It also supports the same priority in the 2013 Community Strategy and its aim to focus on raising awareness of domestic abuse across Stevenage. It will contribute to priority one of the SoSafe Community Safety Plan 2011-14: 'Reducing violent crime including domestic abuse'.

Initiative 5 : Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator	
Lead Portfolio Holder : Safer and Stronger Communities	
Allocation : £47,000 per annum for 2 years	Delivery Lead : Head of Leisure, Environmental Health and Children's Services
Timescales : June 2013 – May 2015	
Ambition(s) Supported : Create Sustainable Communities	

4.2.5 The Stevenage Domestic Abuse conference in November 2012 noted that Stevenage stands out against other Hertfordshire districts as a hot spot for domestic abuse, this situation has not improved over time and there has been a gradual increase in crimes, year on year.

4.2.6 More domestic abuse is now reported to the police but overall domestic abuse is actually under reported. Victims tend to come forward when their situation has become dangerous and overwhelming. Under reporting, weighed against reporting of only the most violent crime makes it difficult to assess the voracity of the true needs. Partners need to work smarter and more proactively, through multi agency working, including information and data sharing.

4.2.7 Domestic Abuse in Stevenage impinges on and draws resources from many sections of the Council and its partners e.g. Housing Services (Homelessness,

Tenancy Services, FIP, Wellfield Court and The Haven), Children's Services, Council Tax, Community Safety, Anti Social Behaviour, Debt Advice, Education, Social Care, Health, Police, Drug and Alcohol Services, CAB. It affects individuals and families mental health, foetal development, financial wellbeing, education, employment and criminality.

4.2.8 Children are often neglected by services while they are living in an abusive household. One of the biggest issues is that children are not considered for interventions that may help to break the cycle of abuse; interventions that may help them make the right choices towards healthy and aspirational lives.

4.2.9 In 66% of Safeguarding Children referrals made by SBC, to HCC, Domestic Abuse is a factor: Nationally, Serious Case Reviews show that domestic Abuse is present in 70% of cases where children die or suffer serious injury as a result of abuse. Five out of six of the most serious abuse cases in Hertfordshire in recent years, including a very recent case in Stevenage, featured Domestic Abuse. A child who experiences domestic or physical abuse is 1000 times more likely to offend against women and children in later life and significantly more likely to become a perpetrator of crime and anti social behaviour in later childhood and adulthood.

4.2.10 The conference delineated the need for a district officer to work in the field of domestic abuse, to coordinate activities, steer strategy and encourage partnership working. The employment of such an officer would help to move the domestic abuse agenda forward. Action 3.6 of The Way Forward, the draft SoSafe Domestic Violence Action Plan states, that the Council will employ a district Domestic Abuse intervention and prevention coordinator, to coordinate multi agency activities and be responsible for Stevenage Domestic Abuse strategy.

4.2.11 It is proposed to employ a Domestic Abuse Coordinator to:

- Develop a Stevenage Domestic Abuse Policy, Strategy and Action Plan;
- Coordinate services across the town to ensure a multi agency approach to domestic abuse is taken;
- Advise Stevenage Borough Council staff on the appropriateness of its intervention in individual cases;
- Work closely with The Community Safety Partnership to link Domestic Abuse Strategy to the community Safety Strategy
- Work closely with the Council's Children's Services and Safeguarding Officer to ensure children are safeguarded when domestic abuse interventions are progressed
- Draw resources from partners and external funding sources to support intervention initiatives
- Advise the Council on issues relating to Domestic Homicide Reviews referrals.

Initiative 6 : ‘No More’ Intervention Project	
Lead Portfolio Holder : Safer and Stronger Communities	
Allocation : £40,000	Delivery Lead : Head of Housing Management
Timescales : April 2013 – March 2014	
Ambition(s) Supported : Create Sustainable Communities	

4.2.12 The “No More” Project came about following the death, due to alcohol abuse, of a tenant with whom the ASB team were working. This particular individual was known to the ASB team because of the behaviour of his visitors to the property. Whilst working with him to resolve the ASB issues it became apparent that he was suffering from alcohol abuse and this was causing him difficulty in sustaining his tenancy.

4.2.13 Whilst there are a number of cases referred to the ASB team where alcohol abuse is involved, we have other clients not involved in ASB cases where alcohol abuse is a factor in their ability to sustain their tenancy. Where possible intensive support and referrals are made, however recent cases have identified a gap in services to our clients where alcohol abuse is involved.

4.2.14 The No More Project worker will fill this gap and work with a caseload of 5-10 clients providing intensive support to address alcohol addiction. This will result in support programmes tailored to the individual and their particular circumstances.

4.2.15 The No More Project Worker will agree multi agency plans working with a number of other organisations to support clients in becoming motivated to set goals to reduce their alcohol intake and develop life skills.

4.3 Resources Development & Scrutiny Committee

4.3.1 The Resources D&S Committee met on the 16 April 2013, and included on the agenda was the proposed New Homes Bonus allocations for 2013/14 as part of the Budget and Policy framework requirements.

4.3.2 The committee received presentations from each of the proposed New Homes Bonus scheme lead officers who explained the scheme deliverables, timescales and financial implications. Members raised a number of questions, particularly relating to Initiative 1 (Town Centre Improvements) and Initiative 2 (Improvements to the Leisure Centre Walkway). Members wanted to understand where the funding would be targeted in the town centre and what improvements would be delivered within the funding amount. Members also wanted officers to consider including interactive facilities within the leisure centre walkway if feasible.

4.3.3 The following recommendations were made by the committee:

- (a) The Committee welcomed all of the proposals.
- (b) The proposed Town Centre Improvement and Leisure Centre Walkway projects could do more to advertise the town to residents.
- (c) It had been anticipated that the improvements to the Leisure Centre Walkway would provide both an introduction to the town and draw people into the town centre.
- (d) The Committee requested that a link be made between the BTC Network of Enterprise Clubs for Young People and Youth Connexions.
- (e) The Committee requested that the Council encourage the Women's Resource Centre to become more accessible as its services are currently unavailable at times when they are most likely to be needed (during the late evening and at the weekend).

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

5.1.1 The final New Homes Bonus allocations for 2013/14 have now been announced. The total grant payments will be made monthly direct to councils. The first monthly payment will be made in April 2013.

5.1.2 As part of the budget setting process, Council approved a General Fund Revenue Account Contingency Sum in the Budget and Policy Framework for 2013/14 of £400,000 for expenditure determined by the Executive.

5.1.3 The following schemes are recommended for approval within the Executive's contingency sum:

Initiative 1	Town Centre Improvements Project	£200,000
Initiative 2	Improvements to the Leisure Centre Walkway	£60,000
Initiative 3	BTC Network of Enterprise Clubs for Young People	£5,000
Initiative 4	Women's Resource Centre Grant	£5,000
Initiative 5	Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator	£47,000 per annum for 2 years
Initiative 6	'No More' Intervention Project	£40,000
Total		£357,000

5.1.4 Subject to the approval of the initiatives listed above, Council will be requested to approve the General Fund Revenue Account Contingency Sum held by the Executive to be increased by £357,000 to maintain this sum at the £400,000 level previously agreed.

5.1.5 The balance of New Homes Bonus monies (2011/12-2013/14) which remains unallocated to schemes totals £313,919.

5.2 Legal Implications

5.2.1 The New Homes Bonus is paid through section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 as an un-ringfenced grant. Local authorities and their communities will have the freedom to spend New Homes Bonus revenues according to local wishes.

5.3 Equalities and Diversity Implications

5.3.1 Stevenage Borough Council has committed itself to providing high quality services that are relevant to the needs and responsive to the views of all sections of the local community, irrespective of their race, gender, disability, culture, religion, age, sexual orientation or marital status. The General Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) requires the council to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations in the exercise of its functions. These considerations are the duty of decision makers. Initial Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) have been carried out on the recommended New Homes Bonus schemes and further full EqIAs will be carried out, where appropriate, if the schemes go ahead. It is anticipated that there will be a positive impact from the schemes and EqIAs will be used to ensure that all sections of the community can benefit from them.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None

APPENDICES

- None