

**THE EXECUTIVE**

**21 SEPTEMBER 2004**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT**

<b>PLANNING DELIVERY GRANT 2004 / 2005</b>	<b>FOR DECISION</b>	
<p><i>This report concerns expenditure of £200,000 which is not in the current budget. The decision is therefore reserved to the Executive.</i></p> <p><b>Summary</b></p> <p>This report summarises proposals and seeks approval to spend the 2004/05 allocation of Planning Delivery Grant of £451,646.</p> <p><b>Ward Affected:</b> All Wards.</p> <p><b>Recommendation</b></p> <p>The Executive is recommended to agree the spend of the Planning Delivery Grant for 2004/05, to be spent in the financial years 2004/05 and 2005/06, on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>£151,000 - Interim funding to Planning and Regeneration reorganisation</li><li>£ 35,000 - Heritage and Conservation Officer (recurring cost)</li><li>£ 50,000 - Transport Strategy</li><li>£ 40,000 - E-planning (50% recurring)</li><li>£ 30,000 - Systems Audit</li><li>£ 40,000 - Urban Design Programme</li><li>£ 30,000 - Training and Development</li><li>£ 10,000 - RTPI accredited post entry training</li><li>£ 65,000 - Corporate Environmental Stewardship Programme</li></ul> <p><b>Reason</b></p> <p>To assist in achieving the Community Priorities of <i>"Making Barking and Dagenham Cleaner, Greener and Safer"</i>, <i>"Raising General Pride in the Borough"</i>, and <i>"Regenerating the Local Economy"</i>.</p>		
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## 1. Background

- 1.1 Planning Delivery Grant (PDG) was introduced by the Government in 2003/4 as a means of providing incentives to local Planning Authorities to improve performance in their Planning Departments. Initially, the grant was intended to run for three years. The 2004 Spending Review has extended this for a further three years. Achievement of the Grant is based on a number of factors but it is primarily targeted at improvement in Development Control performance. In 2003/4, the Council received £151,000. All of this allocation went in to supporting the Planning and Regeneration review.
- 1.2 2004/5 has seen a substantial increase in the allocation of PDG to £451,000. The basis for the 2004/05 award is the Borough's location within a designated growth area, its population, the existence of a current Development Plan and for improved performance in the handling of major planning applications.
- 1.3 The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) has confirmed that it will be possible to carry unspent PDG over into future years and will be issuing further guidance in the future.

## 2. Performance Improvements to Date

- 2.1 The first round of PDG was used to fund, on an interim basis, service expansion in the Planning and Transportation Division as part of the Department's medium-term financial strategy. The immediate benefits have seen the filling of 10 of the Division's vacancies, including a new Group Manager for Urban Design and a Transportation Group Manger. Investment in the Development Control Service and the implementation of the Development Control Improvement Plan has seen a dramatic improvement in performance under Best Value Performance Indicators, particularly the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) critical BV109. Performance has improved between Q1 2003 and Q1 2004 by the following:

<b>BV</b>	<b>Q1/03</b>	<b>Q1/04</b>	<b>Improvement</b>
109a	54.55%	78.00%	23.45%
109b	25.00%	80.70%	55.70%
109c	54.70%	98.00%	43.30%

## 3. Proposals for Spend in 2004/5

- 3.1 It is proposed to spend this year's grant allocation in rolling out the service restructure resulting from the reorganisation of the Planning and Transportation Service as a result of the Regeneration BV review. In addition a number of areas have been identified to benefit from the additional grant. Unfortunately due to time constraints not all of these areas will be spent fully in 2004/05 but will need to be continued in 2005/06. However as mentioned above the ODPM are happy to carry forward unspent PDG into future years. In summary, the proposed allocation of resources is given in the table below. Further detail on each aspect of the proposed spend is also given below.

### 3.2 Proposed Allocation of Planning Delivery Grant 2004/5

	2004/05	2005/06	TOTAL
Interim Funding to Planning and Regeneration Reorganisation	£151,000	£0	<b>£151,000</b>
Heritage and Conservation Officer (recurring cost)	£ 15,000	£ 20,000	<b>£35,000</b>
Transport Strategy	£ 50,000	£ 0	<b>£50,000</b>
E-Planning (50% recurring)	£ 40,000	£ 0	<b>£40,000</b>
Systems Audit	£ 30,000	£ 0	<b>£30,000</b>
Urban Design Programme	£ 10,000	£ 30,000	<b>£40,000</b>
Training and Development	£ 15,000	£ 15,000	<b>£30,000</b>
RTPI accredited post entry training	£ 10,000	£ 0	<b>£10,000</b>
Corporate Environmental Stewardship Programme	£ 40,000	£ 25,000	<b>£65,000</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£ 361,000</b>	<b>£ 90,000</b>	<b>£451,000</b>

#### 3.2.1 Interim Funding to Planning and Regeneration reorganisation - £151,000

This was the figure included in reports previously submitted to the Executive covering the costs of the restructure.

#### 3.2.2 Heritage Conservation Officer - £35,000

Heritage is seen as an increasingly important component of Urban Design and the delivery of Sustainable Communities. A paper entitled "Moving Towards Excellence in Urban Design and Conservation" has recently been produced by English Heritage in association with the Planning Officer Society and the Commission for the Architectural and Built Environment (CABE). The report, which reflects Government Policy, recognises that urban design and conservation are essential components of the Planning System. They recognise that the historic environment is a precious asset that must be conserved for future generations but also that good conservation ensures that important buildings and spaces continue to have a contemporary relevance and vitality. Good urban design learns from the past and respects it in developing policies and proposals for new building and refurbishment and for the enhancement of the public realm.

To reinforce this message, a new Planning Performance Indicator has been produced entitled "Quality of Service Checklist". The six point indicator has the following sub section:

*"In preparing the local Development Plan and determining all types of applications, does the Authority have arrangements to access specialist advice on the historic environment?"*

The criteria by which this indicator is judged are;

- the advice should be available for the preparation of the plan and all planning applications.
- advice may be given in-house, by another authority, by CABE, English Heritage or the private sector.
- arrangements should be permanent and continual.

In London, English Heritage used to fund a number of posts within local planning departments. However, despite requests for funding, the Council has been unsuccessful in obtaining any. English Heritage has now abandoned this funding. CABE have no permanent consultancy to offer. Realistically, this leaves the use (and funding) of private consultants or in-house provision.

A post of Heritage Officer was identified in the new Planning and Transportation Division as part of the Regeneration Best Value review. It was agreed that this post would not be filled until external funding opportunities had been explored. We will continue to seek funding but, in the meantime, are seeking to use PDG in order to be able to both provide the necessary advice and expertise and to meet the performance indicator.

### 3.2.3 Transport Strategy - £50,000

This reflects one of the key outcomes of the Regeneration Best Value Review. To be effective in promoting regeneration in the Thames Gateway, the Council must improve its capacity in lobbying for key strategic transportation initiatives. A new group of officers has been established within the Division and a group manager appointed. The PDG will be used to produce, publish and publicise the Council's position on strategic transport initiatives and provide a fighting fund for lobbying. This could have a direct impact on the Council's future CPA assessment under the Sustainable Communities heading.

### 3.2.4 E-Planning (Data Administration) - £40,000

Planning is required by Government to be fully e-accessible by 2005. Planning and Regulatory Services On-line (PARSOL) identify 28 criteria to be met to satisfy this target. This PDG has been identified to secure improved computer software for document scanning and the employment of a full time scanning officer (hence the 50% recurring). This is also reflected in the new planning BVPI "Quality of Service Checklist".

### 3.2.5 Systems Audit £30,000

This PDG will be used to fund external consultants to examine and recommend change, as necessary, to Development Control processes, including administration. This is designed to improve the speed of decision making in Development Control and, hence, produce tangible improvements in BVPI 109 (a-c). This BVPI is CPA critical and we have set ourselves the task of meeting Government set targets for Development Control by the end of this financial year.

### 3.2.6 Urban Design Programme - £40,000

This reflects one of the key outcomes of the Regeneration Best Value Review. To be effective in promoting regeneration in the Borough and in the Thames Gateway, the Council must improve its capacity in Urban Design. A new group of officers has been established within the Division and a group manager appointed. The PDG will be used to produce, publish and publicise an Urban Design Strategy for the Borough and for training and capacity building for Officers and Members. This is also reflected in the new planning BVPI "Quality of Service Checklist" and could have a direct impact on the Council's future CPA assessment under the Sustainable Communities heading.

### 3.2.7 Training and Development (including RTPI Accredited training) - £10,000

Town Planning is currently going through the biggest shake-up since the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act. The introduction of the new Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the Sustainable Communities Plan reflects a major shift in thinking for national and local Government. This, coupled with a recruitment crisis within the planning profession, leads to the need for greatly enhanced training requirements for both Officers and Councillors.

### 3.2.8 Corporate Environmental Stewardship Programme - £65,000

These programmes and outputs all reflect the work of the newly established Sustainable Development Group and, in particular, the promotion of environmental sustainability within the Sustainable Communities and Regeneration agendas. These programmes are designed to raise awareness of the sustainability agenda within the Council, the region and, most importantly, within the community. There are strong ties here to the Community Priority of Making Barking and Dagenham Cleaner, Greener, Safer, with links to both education and environmental management. This could also have a positive impact on the Council's future CPA assessment under the Sustainable Communities heading.

#### **4. Future Years Grant Allocation**

- 4.1 Planning Delivery Grant comprises a total of £350 million nationally and was initially proposed over three years, with this being the second year. However, the 2004 Spending Review has confirmed that the grant will continue for a further three years, above the initial three year period.

ODPM has confirmed that unspent PDG can be carried forward to future years and will be issuing guidance in the future.

#### **5. Consultation**

The following people have seen this report and are happy with it as it stands

Lead Members:

Deputy Leader's Portfolio (Financial Planning and Strategy), Councillor Geddes.  
Regeneration Portfolio, Councillor Kallar.

Making Barking and Dagenham Cleaner, Greener, Safer, Portfolio, Councillor McKenzie.

Bob Cooper, Interim Head of Finance DRE

#### **Background Papers**

Executive Minute 46, 8 July 2003. Re: Planning Delivery Grant 2003/04.