

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Portfolio Holder 8 March 2011
AUTHOR/S: Executive Director (Corporate Services)/Head of Accountancy

CARRY FORWARD OF UNCOMMITTED GRANT BALANCES TO 2011-12

Purpose

1. To seek the approval of Planning Portfolio Holder to carry forward the uncommitted grant balance in respect of Heritage Initiative Grants and the total balance on the Historic Buildings Preservation Fund.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended the Planning Portfolio Holder resolve that the following uncommitted grant balances be carried forward into the 2011/12 financial year:

Heritage Initiatives Grants	£29,061
Historic Buildings Preservation Fund	£54,622

Background

3. The current budget and policy framework rules allow that any uncommitted grant balance that is unused at the end of a financial year can be carried forward into the following year with the approval of the relevant Portfolio Holder. This unused sum carried forward is then available in the new financial year in addition to the approved budget estimate. Until last year, the balances that were over two years old were required to be approved by Cabinet, but as the items still to be considered had dwindled to just two, which both related to Conservation, the approval was delegated to the Planning Portfolio Holder.
4. It should be appreciated that, in addition to the presented uncommitted grant balances, the Council's reserves also include amounts necessary to meet the payment of grant commitments already approved but not yet paid over. The period between approval of grant and final payments can be years in some cases. These amounts will be carried forward except where it is established that the grant is no longer required.

Considerations

5. Currently, it is anticipated that the only uncommitted grant balances to be considered for carry forward relate to the Conservation and Design Service, on items where there is no annual budget available. They are as follows:
 - Heritage Initiatives £29,061
 - Historic Buildings Preservation Fund £54,622

It is possible that some other grant balances within the Council could be uncommitted at the year-end, if the full budget has not been allocated. In general, however, carrying forward uncommitted balances on headings where an annual budget is available is not recommended, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

6. Heritage Initiatives (£29,061): This reserve was set up in 1996/97 with a one-off contribution of £200,000, for use over a number of years. The balance reduced steadily and in 2007, Cabinet decided that the unused £16,320 in the Millennium Working Party Grants Reserve be added to this reserve. The reserve has not been used over the last two years, due to lack of resources to initiate new schemes. However, the Conservation and Design Manager advises that the balance will be used to help fund projects contributing to the Green Infrastructure. The Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure strategy sets out priorities to be delivered over a 20-year period. It has been developed with Cambridgeshire Horizons and is supported by all local authorities and other stakeholders. The strategy will help deliver the essential green element of growth needed to provide a good quality of life for existing and new communities. Therefore, it is recommended that the balance of £29,061 be carried forward.
7. Historic Buildings Preservation Fund (£54,622, of which £5,500 is required next year to fund works approved by Cabinet): This is not strictly a grants reserve, but historically it has been treated in the same way as grants. This was first established in 1982 to provide the means, in the last resort, to save buildings at risk. It has enabled the Council to use its statutory powers, which could lead to compulsory purchase, repair and resale of such property. In 2006, Cabinet approved that a large proportion of the reserve be used to carry out work at St. Denis Church, which is owned by the Council. Grants were received from English Heritage and Hatley Parish Council towards this expenditure. The works consisted of re-roofing and general repair works to arrest the deterioration of the former church. In 2008, Cabinet agreed that further works be carried out at a total cost of £22,000, with funding being provided by means of £16,500 from English Heritage and the remaining £5,500 from this fund. This expenditure is being reviewed for 2011-12. There is no further expenditure planned in the capital programme. However, the Conservation and Design Manager considers that the remainder of the fund will allow his Section to continue to initiate action to secure the future of threatened historic buildings (e.g. by supporting feasibility studies and providing match-funding to attract external grants); the fund will help the Council fulfil its responsibilities for Listed Buildings at Risk and respond to community led initiatives; its retention will make a substantial contribution to both securing the historic fabric of the district and saving cherished local landmarks. Therefore, it is recommended that the £54,622 balance be carried forward.

Options

8. The decision is simply whether or not to carry forward the balance in each case. The current Medium Term Financial Plan assumes that all uncommitted balances are carried forward until used for grant expenditure. The recommendation is to carry forward the balances. The recommendation follows the wishes of the Conservation and Design Manager, whose plans would be compromised by the loss of funds needed for future grants or possible action to protect key listed buildings at risk. The outstanding balances brought forward could then be reviewed again at any stage in the future.

Implications

9. Financial	Balances carried forward overall will have nil effect on Council expenditure, in accordance with the Medium Term Financial Plan. The balances provide the only means of funding any further Heritage Initiatives Grants or expenditure to initiate action to secure the future of key listed buildings at risk. Any balances not carried forward will result in an under-spending in the old year and will add to the overall General Fund Reserve.
Legal	None
Staffing	None
Risk Management	Failure to carry forward grant reserves would have a detrimental effect on the plans of the Conservation Design Service.
Equality & diversity	None
Equality Impact Assessment completed	No No implications
Climate Change	None

Consultations

10. The comments and recommendations of the Conservation and Design Manager have been incorporated into the considerations reported above.

Effect on Strategic Aims

11. The proposals in the report seek to ensure the continued availability of funding to support the spending plans of the Council.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: Schedules of Grants 2010/11
S.C.D.C. Budget Booklet 2011/12
Previous minutes and agenda

Contact Officer: D Grimster, Accountant
Telephone: (01954) 713075