

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Portfolio Holder 12 May 2009
AUTHOR/S: Chief Executive / Principal Accountant
(General Fund and Costing)

CARRY FORWARD OF UNCOMMITTED GRANT BALANCES AS AT 31 MARCH 2009

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.

Background

2. 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. In previous years, 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 for this and future years to the Planning Portfolio Holder.
3. 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

4. All uncommitted grant balances as at 31 March 2009 to be considered for carry forward relate to the Conservation and Design Service. They are as follows:

o Heritage Initiatives	£29,061
o Historic Buildings Preservation Fund	£54,622
5. 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 Conservation & Design Manager post was vacant from then until late last year, so further schemes were not initiated. The balance will be used to help fund projects contributing to the Cambridgeshire Green Vision. The Vision sets out a 20-year plan to create a multi-purpose Green Infrastructure network across the area. It is supported by Cambridgeshire Horizons and all local authorities are involved in identifying and supporting schemes. The Vision 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 full balance of £29,061 be carried forward.

6. 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 will now fall in 2009-10 and English Heritage has been asked to confirm their funding contribution. 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

7. 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

8. 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 Service.
Equal Opportunities	None

Consultations

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

Effect on Strategic Aims

10.	Commitment to being a listening council, providing first class services accessible to all.	The proposals in the report seek to ensure the continued availability of funding to support the spending plans of the Council.
	Commitment to ensuring that South Cambridgeshire continues to be a safe and healthy place for all.	
	Commitment to making South Cambridgeshire a place in which residents can feel proud to live.	
	Commitment to assisting provision for local jobs for all.	
	Commitment to providing a voice for rural life.	

Recommendations/Conclusions

11. It is recommended the Planning Portfolio Holder resolve that the following uncommitted grant balances be carried forward into the 2009/10 financial year:

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

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: Schedules of Grants 2008/09
S.C.D.C. Budget Booklet 2009/10
Previous minutes and agenda

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