

DECISION ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
HEAD OF PLANNING	EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE	5 MARCH 2024	7
FULLY FUNDED REVENUE BUDGET INCREASE – PLANNING SKILLS DELIVERY FUND			

PUBLIC ITEM

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

RELEVANT LEAD MEMBER

This item is within the remit of the Lead Member for Corporate and Economic Development, Councillor Karen Buckley.

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Fylde Council have made a successful bid to the Planning Skills Delivery Fund, being awarded the maximum grant of £100,000. In February, The Department for Levelling-up, Homes and Communities requested that the council enter into a memorandum of understanding in order to secure the release of the funding and this has been completed by the Sn 151 Officer.

In line with the submitted bid, it is proposed that the funding be added to the council's revenue budget (split across the 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years) in order to fund the appointment of an experienced planning consultant, who's primary focus will be to determine major planning applications who's progress to determination has stalled.

RECOVERABILITY

This decision is recoverable under section 7 of part 3 of the constitution.

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Executive Committee is requested to approve a revenue budget increase of £100,000, fully funded from specific Planning Skills Delivery Fund, to be used to increase the capacity of the planning team in order to progress planning applications to determination. The funding is to be split with £48,600 being spent in 2023/24 and the remaining £51,400 being spent in 2024/25.

REPORT

1. The [Planning Skills Delivery Fund](#) (PSDF) provides £24 million over two years to local authorities to help with clearing backlogs of planning applications and prepare for the implementation of proposed planning reforms. It is part of a wider programme of work designed to address the capability and capacity of planning services. Local planning authorities were invited to apply for funding for up to £100,000, which can be used to hire additional planning officers and other specialist resources.

2. Fylde Council submitted a bid for the maximum award of £100,000 in September 2023 to help address a backlog of major, primarily residential, planning applications. In December 2023, it was confirmed that the bid had been successful.
3. In February 2024, The Department of Levelling-up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC) issued a Memorandum of Understanding for completion by the council's Sn 151 Officer which sets out how the funding is to be used and monitored.
4. The PSDF Team at DLUHC have confirmed that, as the funding award has been made close to the end of the financial year, the grant funding may be spent in the approaching financial year, provided a commitment to spend the funding is in place.
5. Fylde Council has secured the services of an experienced planning consultant who will be tasked with progressing a number of major planning applications to determination with the main focus being on applications that have been with the council for consideration for some time and who's progress has stalled for one reason or another.
6. This additional resource will allow the council to progress a number of major planning applications to determination. In turn, this will assist in delivering the objectives set out in the development plan and free up capacity of senior planning officers to concentrate on their own case load and allow time to mentor junior members of staff and so develop their capacity to consider more complex applications in future. It is expected that this commission will last until September 2024 and so the funding will be split across two financial years with £48,600 being spent in 2023/24 and the remaining £51,400 being spent in 2024/25.
7. As part of the MoU, Fylde Council will be required to complete an end of grant evaluation form which will include overall expenditure and overall progress with the project and to participate in a wider learning programme to help DLUHC better understand whether the Fund was able to achieve its stated aims.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES	
Economy – To create a vibrant and healthy economy	√
Environment – To deliver services customers expect	√
Efficiency – By spending money in the most efficient way	√
Tourism – To create a great place to live and visit	

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	The report sets out details of grant funding received by the council to address a backlog of planning applications and requests that Executive Committee approve a fully funded revenue budget increase of £100,000, (£48,600 in 2023/24 and £51,400 in 2024/25) from the specific Planning Skills Delivery Fund grant, as detailed in the report.
Legal	None
Community Safety	None
Human Rights and Equalities	None
Sustainability and Environmental Impact	None
Health & Safety and Risk Management	None

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS
None

BACKGROUND PAPERS REVELANT TO THIS ITEM		
Name of document	Date	Where available for inspection
Planning Skills Delivery Fund: Guidance for applicants	24 July 2023	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/planning-skills-delivery-fund-year-1-guidance-for-applicants

LEAD AUTHOR	CONTACT DETAILS	DATE
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Attached documents

None