

Cabinet – 18 April 2007

Regional Housing Pot : Local Authority Allocations 2007/08

Portfolio: Cllr Alan Paul – Social Care & Supported Housing
Cllr Adrian Andrew – Regeneration & Enterprise

Service Area: Strategic Housing
Regeneration

Wards: All

Key decisions: Yes

Forward Plan: Yes

Summary

This report seeks to inform Cabinet of the recent grant award from the Regional Housing Pot announced by the Regional Housing Executive for Walsall projects during 2007/2008. In addition, the report seeks Cabinet's agreement to proposed management arrangements required in order to ensure successful delivery of the programme.

Recommendations

That Cabinet:-

- (i) note and welcome the 2007/2008 grant award from the Regional Housing Executive of £3,707,647.
- (ii) delegate authority to the Executive Director for Social Care and Inclusion to manage the funding, in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Social Care & Supported Housing and Regeneration & Enterprise.
- (iii) that priority should be given to concentrate funding on the priority areas identified within the Strategic Regeneration Framework and the potential NRA area in Birchills / Alumwell.

Resource and legal considerations

On 14 February 2007, the Regional Housing Executive confirmed that ministerial approval had been obtained for the local allocation of the 2007/2008 Regional Housing Pot. This included:-

Renewal and Growth	
• Market renewal/restructuring	£3,707,647

Funds are to be spent on demolition, property acquisition, property improvement and environmental enhancements. These projects will contribute to the housing priorities identified in the 2005 Regional Housing Strategy and the 2006-8 Regional Allocations' Strategy. Cabinet is recommended that priority should be given to concentrate funding on the priority areas identified within the Strategic Regeneration Framework and the potential Neighbourhood Renewal Assessment area in Birchills/Alumwell.

Citizen impact

The Decent Homes Standard is key element of Government policy and is an important benchmark for local authorities. It contains four main criteria – that a dwelling should:-

- be above the legal minimum standard for housing
- be in a reasonable state of repair, and
- have reasonably modern facilities (such as kitchens and bathrooms) and services, and
- provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort (effective insulation and efficient heating).

The funding awarded from the Regional Housing Executive will assist in tackling dwellings where there is need for investment to meet the decent homes standard and have a positive impact on the lives of a number of Walsall citizens.

The funded allocated to Walsall is to support housing market renewal projects in priority areas of Walsall. This is a new source of funding for Walsall, which supports the delivery of the Council's core strategic housing objectives. Walsall's prospectus for 2007/2008, against which the Regional Housing Executive has allocated its funding, has attracted one of the largest such grants in the region, which gives an indication of the strategic fit, quality and deliverability of Walsall's proposals.

Community safety

The creation of safe and attractive neighbourhoods is a key priority for the Council. The incorporation of secured by design principles in property improvements and public realm work will be key requirement for projects developed through this initiative.

Environmental impact

Improvements to Walsall's housing stock will make a positive impact of the environment in a number of ways. For example, investment in energy efficient heating systems and insulation will help to reduce Carbon Dioxide production through reduction in the use of energy. In addition, improvements properties will help to improve the visual quality of the local environment.

Performance and risk management issues:

(i) Performance Management Issues

The Regional Housing Pot allocation for 2007/2008 will contribute towards the delivery of the Council's approved Strategic Regeneration Framework.

(ii) Risk Management Issues:-

Risk 1 – *Failure to deliver required outputs.*

This risk is considered low in light of the Council and its partner, Walsall Housing Group, having developed the Walsall Strategic Regeneration Framework, which identifies a range of strategic regeneration projects across Walsall, which will collectively deliver the required outputs.

Risk 2 – *Failure to spend approved resources within 2007/2008.*

As above, this risk is considered to be low, on the basis that a number of major Strategic Regeneration Framework projects are well advanced and able to be delivered during 2007/2008.

Equality implications

None

Consultation

Consultation has been undertaken with Walsall Housing Group, Walsall Housing Partnership and the Regional Housing Board.

Further project specific consultation will be undertaken with residents of affected properties on a project by project basis.

Vision 2008

This project will contribute directly to the Council's Vision priorities of:-

- making Walsall a cleaner, greener borough
- encouraging people to feel proud of Walsall

Background papers

Grant approval letter from Government Office West Midlands – 14 February 2007.

Author

Sue Byard
Assistant Director for Strategic Housing
☎ 01922 653800
✉ e-mail : byards@:walsall.gov.uk



Signed:

Kathy McAteer
Acting Executive Director

Date: 2 April 2007



Signed:

Tim Johnson
Executive Director

Date: 3 April 2007



Signed:

Councillor Alan Paul
Portfolio Holder

Date: 3 April 2007



Signed:

Councillor Adrian Andrew
Portfolio Holder

Date: 2 April 2007