

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Notes of a Meeting of the New Homes Bonus Panel held at the Knowle, Sidmouth on Monday 25 January 2016

Present:	Councillors: Thomas Wright(Chairman) David Barratt Douglas Hull Geoff Jung Andrew Moulding Christopher Pepper
Officers:	Jamie Buckley, Community Engagement and Funding Officer Angie Hurren, Broadclyst Parish Council Clerk Chris Lane, Democratic Services Officer
Apologies	Councillors: Mike Allen Marcus Hartnell Ali Eastland, Locality Development Officer, DCC

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 2.35 pm.

*10 Minutes

The notes of the previous meeting of the New Homes Bonus Panel held on 26 November 2015 were confirmed as a true record.

*11 Documentation

The Parishes Together Fund guidance notes and application form, circulated with the agenda were noted.

12 Future criteria of the Parishes Together Fund

The Community Engagement and Funding Officer outlined a letter received from Broadclyst Parish Council which expressed concerns at the recent changes to criteria with regard to the use of Parishes Together Fund monies for ditching and drainage works and potentially verge and hedge cutting. A Guidance Amendment had recently been issued by Devon County Council as follows:

Guidance part one, general applications:

1. Funds cannot be used directly for on-going staff costs or day to day running of a project, unless this is during a transition phase with documented evidence of how the project will become sustainable post transition.
2. Funds should not be used to support projects that are the direct responsibility of another agency
3. Funds cannot be allocated to individuals or private/for profit enterprises.
4. Funds should not be allocated retrospectively
5. Repeat funding should not be awarded unless there is a compelling business case proving transition to sustainability.
6. The TAP Fund manager/decision-makers must be satisfied that the project will benefit more than one Town or Parish.

Guidance part two, applications for ditching and drainage work:

1. Applications for ditching and drainage work will be exempt from guidance numbers 2, 5 and 6 above
2. Proposed work will need to increase frequency or be of a higher standard than that currently offered by DCC
3. Work will need to be carried out subject to the guidance available from DCC Highways

Previously the criteria had stipulated that ditch and drainage works could be funded once only, after which it must be precepted for; however the new criteria would allow repeated applications to the fund and the requirement to work in conjunction with another parish had been removed.

Broadclyst Parish Council were concerned that there was a danger parishes would now automatically look to use the Parish Together Fund for ditch/drainage works as a back stop funding source at the expense of wider projects and community initiatives. They were also concerned that parishes and towns could become dependent on Parishes Together funding to carry out ditch and drainage works, rather than finding more sustainable long term ways of solving problems.

Councillor Andrew Moulding explained that hardly any ditches and drains are the responsibility of Devon County Council; they were mainly the responsibility of landowners. Devon County Council should be contacted and asked whether there was any way they could force landowners to carry out their riparian responsibilities for ditches and drains to remove the strain from Parish Councils.

The Panel decided that parishes that chose to use their Parishes Together Fund for ditch and drainage works should continue to be allowed to do so as this was vital work for the parish.

Panel members acknowledged that parishes had the option of applying for ditches and drainage works but could always apply for other projects if they wished.

At his East Devon Tough choices meeting Councillor John Hart (Leader of Devon County Council) mentioned that the same exception as ditches and drainage could be extended to verges and hedge cutting. The Panel discussed this and decided not to extend the exceptions to verges and hedge cutting. They felt that ditches and drainage was more fundamental due to flooding issues so more worthy of being exempt from certain criteria.

Panel members acknowledged the legitimate concerns expressed by Broadclyst Parish Council and would look at the Parishes Together Fund every year to ensure it was working properly. The Panel also requested that parishes that submit successful ditches and drainage projects be told that the funding was not intended for continual use, that they may wish to precept in future years for the work and the suggestion be made that they look at more sustainable, long term solutions to the problem.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that Devon County Council be contacted to ask whether there was anything that could be done to force landowners to carry out their riparian responsibilities on ditches
2. that the Guidance Amendment from Devon County Council be accepted, subject to Town and Parish councils acknowledging that New Homes Bonus

funding for ditch/drainage work was not sustainable and that this funding was not guaranteed;

3. that the exceptions for drainage and ditch clearance should not be used for verge and hedge cutting.

*13 Date of next meeting

That the next meeting be held on Tuesday 22 March 2016 at 2.00pm in Room 1.