



J Fitzgerald

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(By email only)

Date: 15th July 2010

Dear J Fitzgerald,

Reference number: FOI/RAP/06/10/2213

On 21st June 2010 we received the following request for information from you:

“Hertfordshire Council’s Horizon Magazine/ summer 2010 announced in an article by Council Leader Robert Gordon that £400,000 was awarded to a (named) list of Hertfordshire Towns/Projects.

I am requesting the following information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

- 1) When was it known (date) by the Council Leader that the Council was awarded/allocated this fund to spend on Town Centre improvements in Herts?
- 2) (Aside from the named winning bidders) Which Town Councils, Community Groups & Town Partnerships in Herts were informed about the availability of this fund and the bidding process?
- 3) When (dates) were the invitations to bid for this fund, made to the towns/projects that were eventually successful?
- 4) Where can the 'strict judging criteria to assess the quality of the plans' be viewed? The above 'underlined' is a statement from the article by Cllr Robert Gordon.
- 5) Who were the named Officers and Councillors tasked with the whole administration of this fund from bid invitation to fund award stage?
- 6) Who made up the selection panel when the seven projects were chosen?

Please supply detailed references (meetings/dates etc) and where the said references/minutes may be viewed in print or online. Secondly, where it is not possible to directly name an Officer then please supply their title role e.g. Senior Arts Officer etc.”

Your request for information has been considered under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. I can confirm that Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) does hold the information you have requested and can respond as follows:

1) When was it known (date) by the Council Leader that the Council was awarded/allocated this fund to spend on Town Centre improvements in Herts? The 'Local Shopping Centres Improvement Fund' forms part of a larger 'Recession to Recovery' programme. The programme, together with a second programme, 'Think Family' is funded from Performance Reward Grant (PRG), monies received by Hertfordshire Forward, the Countywide Strategic Partnership for the achievement of targets in first Local Area Agreement (LAA) for Hertfordshire. HCC is the accountable body for LAA1.

In May 2009, the Hertfordshire Forward Core Group, chaired by Robert Gordon, Leader of HCC, agreed to use part of Hertfordshire PRG to fund the 'Recession to Recovery' programme. The programme approved by the Core Group included £500,000 capital for a 'Local Shopping Centres Improvement Fund'.

In its role as accountable body for LAA1 arrangements within Hertfordshire, HCC Cabinet, at its meeting on 13th July 2009 agreed how the PRG funding arising from LAA1 delivery would be invested through countywide partnerships (below). Robert Gordon as HCC Leader, chaired the meeting.

The relevant countywide partnership for the 'Recession to Recovery' programme is Hertfordshire Works, also chaired by Robert Gordon. At its meeting on 2nd September 2009, Hertfordshire Works endorsed the 'Recession to Recovery' programme and delegated delivery to its Topic Groups. In the case of the 'Local Shopping Centres Improvement Fund', this is the 'Vibrant Towns' Group.

2) (Aside from the named winning bidders) Which Town Councils, Community Groups & Town Partnerships in Herts were informed about the availability of this fund and the bidding process?

Advance notification of the bidding opportunity and timescale was sent on 19th October 2009 to all members of the Officer group that supports Hertfordshire Works (including all district councils and the Hertfordshire Infrastructure Consortium – third sector organisations in Hertfordshire) – all District Council Chief Executives and district officers supporting Local Strategic Partnerships. The notification included the following:

- *Applications must be submitted by district councils and they will be responsible for ensuring that successful schemes are implemented;*
- *District councils are encouraged to work in partnership with town and parish councils, local traders, town centre managers and VCS organisations where appropriate. Joint bids are also welcome from two or more districts. Any funding allocated must be spent by 31.03.2011;*
- *There is no set limit on the amount of money that individual projects can bid for up to the £500,000 maximum. However match funding will be expected to be identified;*
- *Bids will be assessed on the following criteria: Innovation, Additionality, Partnership Working, Match Funding and Deliverability;*
- *Expressions of Interest and final bids will be judged by a panel including practitioners from outside Hertfordshire and HCC.*

3) When (dates) were the invitations to bid for this fund, made to the towns/projects that were eventually successful?

Formal invitations to bid, together with a guidance note, expressions of interest form and full bid form were sent to same mailing lists as in 2 above on 5th November 2009.

4) Where can the 'strict judging criteria to assess the quality of the plans' be viewed? The above 'underlined' is a statement from the article by Cllr Robert Gordon.

See below:

	CRITERIA EVIDENCE	SCORE
1	<p>INNOVATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projects should be innovative and creative, looking at new approaches to delivery and doing things differently. PRG is not intended to replace mainstream funding. Applications are more likely to be successful if they demonstrate innovation, such as a 'pilot' scheme that can be replicated elsewhere or which generates learning that can be disseminated across Hertfordshire: 	25%
2	<p>ADDITIONALITY</p> <p>What will the project delivery over and above existing/mainstream programmes – i.e. things that would happen anyway – what's the synergy with other projects and will this project be the key to unlocking other investment in the town centre/local shopping parade?</p>	25%
3	<p>PARTNERSHIP WORKING</p> <p>Who are your partners, how have you consulted and involved them in your scheme, what do they bring to the table and do they have a role in delivery?</p>	20%
4	<p>FUNDING</p> <p>There is an expectation that PRG funding will be matched £ for £ by other funding - this may be in the form of capital, revenue, benefits in kind of other LSP PRG funds. However we need to know the level of commitment of any match funders and how staff time or other benefits in kind are costed.</p>	10%
5	<p>DELIVERABILITY</p> <p>We need to be sure that you and your partners have the capacity and skills to deliver the project within the timescale and budget and to be aware what statutory or other consents need to be obtained before the works can start. Your track record in delivering other capital projects will be important as will your proposals for sustaining the project in the longer term.</p>	20%

5) Who were the named Officers and Councillors tasked with the whole administration of this fund from bid invitation to fund award stage?

As noted in 1 above, the administration of the Local Shopping Centres Improvement Fund part of the 'Recession to Recovery' programme was delegated by Hertfordshire Forward to

the Hertfordshire Works Vibrant Towns Group. The Group is chaired by Dorothy Thornhill, elected Mayor of Watford. The programme was principally administered by David Hughes, then HCC Key Sites and Regeneration Manager, now Economic Delivery Manager.

The Vibrant Towns Group comprises:

- Chair, Elected Mayor of Watford.
- Economic Development Officers (EDO) from East Herts District Council, St. Albans City and District Council, and Watford Borough Council.
- Major Projects and Developments Manager, Broxbourne Borough Council.
- Regeneration Officers from Dacorum Borough Council and Stevenage Borough Council.
- Planning Officer from North Herts District Council.
- Head of Corporate Support, Hertsmere Borough Council.
- Town Centre Managers, Welwyn Hatfield District Council and Hitchin Initiative.

6) Who made up the selection panel when the seven projects were chosen?

The decision to use an external selection panel was made by the Vibrant Towns Group. This Panel was made up of the Economic Participation Executive from the East of England Development Agency; David Lloyd, HCC deputy leader and Portfolio Holder for Economic Well-being and Resources; and a Design Review Panel Member from Inspire East, the Regional Centre for Sustainable Communities. HCC Officers administered the panel but did not take part in the voting.

Please supply detailed references (meetings/dates etc) and where the said references/minutes may be viewed in print or online.

Progress reports on delivering the 'Local Shopping Centres Improvement Fund' were made as follows;

- HCC Policy and Resources Cabinet Panel, 15/10/09 agenda item 5.1
- HCC Policy and Resources Cabinet Panel, 19/11/09 agenda item 5.1
- Executive Member for Resources and Economic Wellbeing report to County Council meeting 24/11/09 item 1.3
- HCC Policy and Resources Cabinet Panel, 17/12//09 agenda item 5.1
- Hertfordshire Works Board 2/12/09 agenda item 3 (b)
- Executive Member for Resources and Economic Wellbeing report to County Council meeting 23/02/10 item 1.5
- HCC Policy and Resources Cabinet Panel, 23/02/10 agenda item 5.2
- HCC Policy and Resources Cabinet Panel, 16/04/10 agenda item 5.4
- Hertfordshire Works Board 30/06/10, agenda item 8c.

Copies of Hertfordshire Forward and Hertfordshire Works reports and minutes can be found at: www.hertslink.org/hertfordshireforward .

Copies of HCC Cabinet and Policy and Resources Cabinet Panel minutes and agenda papers can be found on <http://www.hertsdirect.org/hccmeetings> .

The relevant guidance notes and blank application forms are attached. Please note, some names and third party personal information have been removed from these documents in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me, quoting the reference number on this letter. To find out more about Freedom of Information, please visit www.hertsdirect.org/foi

If you are unhappy with the way the County Council has handled your request for information, you may complain through the County Council's complaints procedure which is available at www.hertsdirect.org/complaints

If you are unhappy with the outcome of the complaints procedure you are entitled to ask the Information Commissioner to investigate your complaint. You should write to: FOI/EIR Complaints Resolution, Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely,

**Information Access Practitioner
Hertfordshire County Council**

The Information Governance Unit supports Hertfordshire County Council's Data Protection, Freedom of Information and Records Management activity.