



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Community Festivals Fund
Date:	9 April 2008
Reporting Officer:	Marie-Thérèse McGivern Director of Development ext. 3470
Contact Officer:	Tim Husbands, Managing Director, Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Halls ext 1400 Siobhan Stevenson Culture and Arts Manager ext 3586

Relevant Background Information

A previous report of was brought before Committee in January 08 regarding the proposed transfer of Community Festivals Funding from the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure to Local Authorities. This funding was previously administered through the Northern Ireland Events Company.

The report raised a number of issues with the proposed transfer. A letter indicating the Councils position was sent to Hazel Campbell at DCAL. A Copy of this letter is attached as **Appendix A**.

Key Issues

A Letter of Offer has been received for the sum of £77,300 for the Community Festivals Fund for the period April 2008 to March 2009 see **Appendix B**

There has not, however, been a specific written response to the points raised in the letter sent to DCAL on 8 February, however, officials from DCAL have met with Council officers and there have been information sessions organised through NILGA.

The following points have emerged in relation to the points outlined in the letter.

Funding

1) There will be no alteration to the funding allocation to Belfast at this stage.

2) Funding allocated to Local Authorities that cannot be distributed will be redistributed to other Local Authority areas, it is expected that this will be achieved through a quarterly review of the funding distributed.

3) Feedback from other Councils indicates that the challenge for some will be to develop sufficient capacity to make use of the funding allocation and for other the match funding required will be an impediment to utilising the funding.

4) The level of redistributed funding would then form the basis for future allocation of funds.

Staffing Resources

No additional resources will be made available for administration, however, up to 10% of the grant claimed can be put towards administration

Duration of Funding

The funding for Community Festivals Fund is secure for a three year period. No commitment is given beyond that point.

Transitional Fund

It is anticipated that some additional transitional funding will be made available in the coming financial year, however, this may be restricted in terms of the number of organisations funded and level of funding.

Contact through NILGA

It is expected that communication regarding the funding will be maintained through NILGA

Timescale

DCAL have accepted that due to the short timescale a flexible approach is required towards the processes adopted for the distribution of funds in this financial year. It may therefore be possible to consider distribution in line with existing mechanisms of funding provided they are publicly advertised and within the spirit of the fund.

Members need now to consider how Council wishes to respond to this letter of offer. Clearly the concerns raised by Committee and communicated to DCAL via letter have not been addressed, with the DCAL position remaining as it was in January 2008. To accept the offer requires Council to identify £77,300 to match fund the DCAL offer and to create a 'Community Festivals' fund for Belfast. This has obvious financial and administrative implications as well as directly impacting on funds we are currently committing to this area. In addition, the amount represents a drop in the total resources available for Belfast in a situation where the announcement by DCAL is likely to have increased demand for such funding.

Resource ImplicationsFinancial

Resources of £77,300 will be required to provide match funding for the Community Festivals Fund.

Human Resources

There are implications for additional staffing resources required to administer any proposed fund.

Recommendations

That Members consider whether Belfast City Council wish to accept the offer of funding as outlined in the letter of offer.

Key to Abbreviations

Appendix A - Letter from Marie-Thérèse McGivern to Hazel Campbell of DCAL
Appendix B - Letter of Offer for Community Festivals Fund

Documents Attached

DCAL - Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure
NILGA – NI Local Government Association

APPENDIX A

8th February, 2008

Ms. Hazel Campbell,
Head of Arts and Creativity Branch,
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure,
Private Office,
The Interpoint Building,
20124 York Street,
BELFAST. BT15 1AQ

Dear Ms. Campbell,

TRANSFER OF THE COMMUNITY FESTIVALS FUND TO LOCAL
AUTHORITIES

The Belfast City Council's Development Committee has discussed the proposed transfer and considers that the proposed package being offered to the Council to be insufficient to deliver a meaningful Community Festivals Fund in Belfast.

The concerns raised by Councillors are around the available resources, lack of transfer of costs associated with the administration of the Fund and the timescale required to deliver funding to festivals within the coming financial year.

I would point out that within Belfast there are over 50 cultural festivals, including regional events, in addition to numerous sporting festivals. The allocation of funding of £77,300 to Belfast is considerably less than the awards made through the Northern Ireland Events Company within the Belfast area in previous years. (In 2007/08, of the £293k administered through the Community Festivals Fund, grants over £146k (50%) were in Belfast). The funds proposed are, therefore, considered inadequate to administer the Fund and meet the anticipated demand for funding.

The Committee is concerned that there is no proposal to transfer money to local authorities to cover the costs of staffing resources to support the distribution of funding. There is a requirement for the Community Festivals Fund to be distributed through a transparent process in line with the outlined criteria. The total resources allocated to the Northern Ireland Events Company for the fund in 2006/7 was £550,000, which included administrative costs of £100,000 and covered the employment of a Manger and two Community Festivals Officers. The Council would therefore suggest that a portion of these funds should be made available to provide staffing support.

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The Council has not yet received full details and a Letter of Offer regarding the transfer of the Community Festivals Fund. There is therefore inadequate time to ensure funding can be advertised and applications assessed and then processed to enable awards to be made available by April 2008.

I would also seek specific clarification on a number of additional points. Firstly, regarding the duration of funding transfer, Council would require reasonable reassurance that the plans for Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) to transfer funding to local authorities would be secured over a longer period to ensure Council can meet the demands of community festivals on a long term and strategic basis.

We would also seek further information on the additional transitional funding which DCAL has made available for a number of community festivals in the Belfast area over the past two years. We feel that this will have implications for the viability of funding.

You indicated in your letter that further detailed arrangements would be discussed by DCAL with the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA). The Committee emphasised that it was essential that there was direct communication on the proposals with all the local authorities in Northern Ireland, rather than just NILGA. The Council, in turn, will ensure that other local authorities are kept informed of the Belfast's response to the proposals.

In the light of the matters outlined here, Belfast City Council would be unwilling to take on delivery of the Community Festivals Fund and would ask DCAL to address the issues identified above and to respond to the specific points of clarification identified.

I would be pleased to meet with the Minister or senior official to discuss these points further.

Yours sincerely,

MARIE-THÉRÈSE MCGIVERN (Ms.),
DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT.

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APPENDIX B