



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Community Festivals Fund
Date:	12 November 2008
Reporting Officer:	Marie-Thérèse McGivern Director of Development ext. 3470
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Relevant Background Information

The Development Committee considered reports in January, April and August regarding the proposed transfer of Community Festivals Funding from the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) to Local Authorities. DCAL awarded a grant of £77,300 to Belfast City Council. At the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in May, it was agreed to commit £120,000 to a Community Festivals Fund, with a request to DCAL that they consider increasing further their contribution to match that from the Council, whilst accepting the original award from DCAL to manage and distribute the Community Festivals Fund in the Belfast area. The total fund value therefore for Belfast is £197,300 within which an operating budget of 10% (£19,730) has been set aside, leaving an amount available for distribution of £177,570.

At the Development Committee in August, Members agreed to delegate authority to the Director of Development to award grants under the Community Festival Fund. Members also agreed to engage an external consultant as lead assessor, to manage the fund evaluation and assessment process. Through a tender process, Julianne McCormick Associates were appointed as Lead Assessors. It was further agreed that minimum and maximum levels of financial offers from the fund were £2,500 and £10,000 respectively.

Due to the tight timescale for distribution of the funds, DCAL gave permission for Belfast to make a single call instead of the originally proposed quarterly tranches. A single call was therefore made for festivals that were due to take place from 1 October 2008 to 31 March 2009. The scheme was opened from 2 to 19 September 2008. Council launched a campaign to advertise and promote the scheme through public adverts placed in the three main newspapers. In addition, posters were distributed to community centres as well as information posted on relevant websites and e-bulletins.

The external evaluator and Arts Development Officer attended 7 information sessions that took place throughout the city, attended by approximately 50 representatives from various community and arts organisations. The Culture and Arts Unit fielded approximately 100 telephone calls and e-mails from organisations requiring further support and advice.

Key Issues

Twenty-four applications were received with twenty-one organisations awarded a grant. The remaining three organisations were considered ineligible against the established criteria. The total cost of funding the recommended festivals is £162,774 (approx 82%). £14,796 remains unspent and is held back as contingency for the appeals process. Nineteen of the twenty-one applications have been recommended to be awarded the full grant requested. The two remaining organisations, Upper Andersonstown Festival and Walkway Community Centre budgets contained unjustifiable costs, which were deducted from amount requested (see Appendix 1 for recommendations).

It is notable that all successful applicants met the criteria to a high degree. Indeed, the new scheme has created a high degree of interest, as new festivals represent approx 50% of total applications. Audience and participant figures are estimated to be in the region of 70,000, which is a very positive contribution to audience development, cultural tourism and to the wider economy. In addition, these positive benefits have been achieved for a spend of £2.32 per head, offering extremely good value for money.

On 30 September the Minister Gregory Campbell of DCAL responded to Belfast City Council's request to match fund that of council's contribution for the Community festival Fund (see Appendix 2). The Minister has since requested that Councils contribution justify the increased need for funding. The Director has made a written response (see Appendix 3) outlining the rationale and that Belfast City Council presents a justifiable case with a clear need and demand for increased allocation. The Director has also requested that the Minister consider a decision before the scheme opens again in January 2009.

In order for the Community Festivals Fund 2009/2010 to be administered appropriately, it will be necessary for the scheme to be opened in January 2009. Under the conditions laid out by DCAL's in the original letter of offer, Council is required to deliver the Community Festival Fund in four quarterly tranches (an exception was made in 2008/2009 due to timescale for delivery) in the forthcoming year. (See Appendix 4 for CFF 2009/2010 schedule).

It is estimated that a minimum of 86 applications for the Community Festival Fund will be received in the 2009/2010 financial year for Belfast. This is based on an assessment of the previous levels of festivals' activity, recent experience of the current Community Festivals Fund, and the increased interest in community festivals development. Through research, it has been established that more community festival activity takes place during spring/summer months, with less need or demand in the Autumn/winter months. Therefore members are asked to consider allocated spend of the fund be determined on a percentage of need basis.

Resource Implications

Financial

The total fund value for Community Festival Fund 2008/2009 is £197,300. From this an operating budget of 10% £19,730 has been set aside for the administration of the scheme. The total cost of funding the recommended festivals is £162,774. £14,796 remains unspent and is held back as contingency for the appeals process.

The total value of the Belfast Community Festival Fund 2009/2010 has yet to be confirmed; Council has requested that DCAL notify council prior to the opening of the new scheme and to match fund that of Council which is estimated at £120,000. If successful the total fund would be £240,000. From this, an operating budget of 10%, £24,000, will be set aside for the administration of the scheme, leaving £216,000 to be awarded.

Human Resources

There are implications for additional staffing resources required to administer the proposed fund and it is therefore recommended to engage an external consultant to act, as in 2008/9, as lead assessor to manage the Community Festival Fund evaluation and assessment process. The associated costs will be met from the £24,000 which the Council is allowed to use to administer the Fund.

Recommendations

It is recommended that members note the contents of the above report and agree to:

1. Open the Community Festival Fund 2009/2010 in January 2009.
2. Determine the allocation of spend of the fund on a percentage of need basis over quarterly tranches.
3. Engage an external consultant as lead assessor to manage the CFF evaluation and assessment process.

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 2008/2009 Community Festival Fund recommendations
Appendix 2 Letter received from DCAL Minister
Appendix 3 Letter of response from Director of Development to the DCAL Minister
Appendix 4 Proposed schedule for Community Festival Fund 2009-2010

Abbreviations

CFF Community Festival Fund
DCAL Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

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