



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Rape Crisis Centre – Request for extension of 2 year exit funding agreement
Date:	3 February 2009
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Relevant Background Information

At its November meeting, Committee considered a request from the Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Centre (RCSAC) to extend BCC financial support agreed in 2006 in response to their 'extenuating circumstances'. The support, which was time limited, was agreed as £14,600 per annum in each of the financial years 2006/07 and 2007/08.

Committee agreed to defer consideration of the matter to enable legal and other advice to be obtained with a view to the matter being considered further at a special meeting of the Committee.

The information requested was considered by committee at its December meeting and took the form of:

- Details of officer support provided to allow the RCSAC both time and technical assistance to address the concerns raised by the Department of Health in order that they might re apply for departmental funding. (See Appendix 1)
- Legal advice in relation to the ability of Council to provide financial or other assistance to the Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Centre under the following two headings:
 1. Can the Council provide financial support to an organisation in a situation where its latest audited accounts demonstrate that its current liabilities significantly exceed its total assets?
 2. Can the Council alternatively offer technical support to the group for the purpose of enabling its books to be audited for the last financial year in order that Council and other potential funders will then be able to make a proper assessment of its actual financial position?

The Director of Legal Services joined the meeting for the item and a summary of his advice is attached as Appendix 2.

Key Issues

In further consideration of the request for additional funding from the RCSAC Committee considered the contributing issues:

- RCSAC do not meet the eligibility criteria for Community Service large grant provision;
- the BCC support package agreed reflected a time-limited response to specific circumstances and included exit funding and officer support in the form of technical support to address concerns raised by their core funder, the Department of Health;
- the lack of available up to date audited accounts and information indicating that current liabilities exceed total assets.

Committee indicated a willingness to assist the organisation to address its financial difficulties and agreed to offer the following support:

1. to provide assistance, either by way of the appointment of an external auditor or by the provision of in-house expertise up to a value of £6,000, to the Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Centre to enable its accounts for the year 2007/2008 to be audited, subject to the organisation formally agreeing to work with the Council in the preparation of a Recovery Plan for the Centre and to the Centre agreeing to become affiliated to Advice Northern Ireland or Citizens Advice; and
2. should the organisation agree to these conditions, a report be submitted to the Committee at its meeting in April, 2009 on the outcome of the audit of the accounts and the Recovery Plan for the Centre, at which time the Committee will re-consider the request for further financial assistance.

Community Services Officers met with representatives from RCSAC to outline the offer. In the interim, the group have benefited from a substantial financial donation. They have also agreed a number of proactive steps which includes the establishment of a specific fundraising committee and the engagement of independent financial accountants to audit their accounts. These will be presented when available.

In response, Committee agreed to invite a presentation from the RCSAC at this special meeting.

Resource Implications

Financial

No provision has been made for financial support within the 2008/09 budget or the 2009/10 revenue estimates.

Recommendations

Committee are asked to consider information presented by RCSAC in support of their request for financial assistance.
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Documents Attached

Appendix 1 – Details of Officer Support Appendix 2 – Legal Advice
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Abbreviations

RCSAC – Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Centre

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