



## Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Departmental Grant Aid Review
Date:	10 June, 2009
Reporting Officer:	Marie-Thérèse McGivern, Director of Development ext. 3470
Contact Officer:	Marie-Thérèse McGivern, Director of Development ext. 3470

### Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that the Development Department was joined by Community Services and the Waterfront and Ulster Halls in April, 2007. As a result, a plan for the re-structuring of the whole Department was developed and endorsed by Committee in June 2009.

The plan included the complete review of 7 units: Waterfront Hall/Ulster Hall; Community Services; Business Support; Events; Arts and Tourism; Policy and the Markets.

In addition, the reviews would bring forward a re-structured Department and would seek to create unified systems and processes.

The plan also included the reformulation of the Capital City II strategy to include the new elements now in the Department. One of the identified processes was a review of grant aid provision and the desire to rationalise and unify, as far as possible, the existing grant streams.

### Key Issues

The change management process within the Department has had major successes. A new strategy was confirmed by the end of 2007 and the various service unit reviews were also completed, however, due to the complexity of the issues approval for the re-structuring was not achieved until September 2008 and that new structure is currently being completed.

On the systems side, major change has been achieved to create single and unified approaches to business processing and performance management. As a result of this workload the Grants review has taken longer than was at first envisaged, but the process is now complete and the report seeks to set out the way forward and get approval for the next stages.

The current grant and funding streams in the Department are itemised and appended at Appendix 1. The portfolio is a wide one and analysis indicated that practice was very different between the various schemes. In particular, there were different systems in place and differing approaches to criteria, management information, performance management, review and evaluation. It was further clear that duplication and waste of resources was evident and that better alignment and outcomes could be achieved. In addition, when placed beside each other it was also deemed not to be user-friendly and had the potential for confusion to those who might seek to access grant aid.

In moving forward towards a new approach the following principles were used:

- The maximisation of community benefit;
- The simplification of the model to assist those seeking funding;
- Ensuring value for money, especially in relation to administration;
- Creating clear linkage between resourcing and need; and
- Putting in place strong frameworks for review and evaluation.

To achieve this a 3-point process has been developed, which subdivides a total pot of £3,565,693 into 3 tranches:

1. A new Community Access Fund for grants under £10K.

This would bring together the current streams of Community Development projects, Seasonal Play scheme, Community Chest, Rolling Programme for the Arts and Support for Sport into one new Access fund with a common application form and criteria based on building and supporting community activity.

The fund would currently stand at £323K.

2. An Annual Grants Fund

This would bring together the current streams of Community Revenue, Annual Arts Grants and Development and Outreach into one annual grants process with different application forms, but review criteria in relation to maximising community and organisational capacity building.

The fund would currently stand at £1,100,000.

3. A Multi-Annual Fund

This would maintain the already existing Multi-Annual Arts fund and would introduce the Multi-annual concept to community grants under the existing Advice Services and Capacity Building streams. In addition, the Revenue (non-Grant) scheme would also become a multi-annual scheme.

This would create a current Fund of £2,122,703.

The whole process will be underpinned by the setting up of a central grants unit to administer all grant aid so ensuring common practice and standards and separating out grant decision-making from administration and review. The unit will be enabled through the current re-structuring process.

In order to move forward Members approval is sought in principle to:

- Work up the framework for a new Community Access Fund, including application form;
- Work through the implications of an Annual Funding stream.
- Work through the implications of a Multi-Annual Funding stream;
- Devise systems and structures, as appropriate.

Members are also asked to agree a series of Party Briefings and the possibility of a Special Committee in August to consider the new framework.

#### **Resource Implications**

The Department currently dispenses £3,565,693 in grant aid in any year.

#### **Recommendations**

That Members:

- Agree in principle, to moving forward as outlined in the report;
- Agree to Party Briefings on the matter;
- Agree to a Special Committee to finally approve a new framework in August 2009.

#### **Decision Tracking**

Further to agreement and ratification that a approval of a new framework be sought at a Special Committee.

Timeframe: August 2009

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#### **Documents Attached**

Appendix 1 – Summary of Current Grants Distributed