



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Departmental Grants Review
Date:	14 October 2009
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Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that a report went to Committee on 10 June 2009, describing the Departmental Grants Review and a proposal for the Department's grants to be split into three tranches (Community Access Fund, Annual and Multiannual). The Departmental Grants Review included recommendations on how to streamline and standardise the Departmental grants system including by implementing:

- A standard grants administration process and
- Standard grants assessment criteria.

Based on these recommendations, a grants review implementation plan has been developed and a number of party briefings took place to present the plan and discuss the main aspects of the grants review implementation process. The grants review implementation plan was welcomed. The recommendations received from Members have been integrated into this report and the wider plan.

A number of workshops were also held with the staff currently involved in the grant making process to discuss the grant review implementation and explore the most effective option of implementation and grant administration process.

This report covers the main aspects of the new grant process.

Key Issues

This new Departmental grant making system would provide many benefits to the Department and the Council:

- It would improve governance and simplify the process;
- It would also allow the Council to be more transparent with the impact of grants better recorded and reported, this would allow improved contribution to the corporate performance management system;
- Separation between the assessment process and financial monitoring would make the whole process more effective and would allow more time for the current staff to work on community, culture, arts and sports development.

The implementation of this new grants making system would last 18 months and a few issues need highlighted:

- Current year 2009/10 is a transition year when the new grant making process would be finalised and the grant making system set up;
- In the year 2009/10 all grant making units would administer their grants as planned, this means that Community Services, Culture and Arts and Support for Sport Grants will open some of their grants this year using the existing system;
- Grants would be transferred into the new system gradually and in phases over the course of the year 2010/11 and April 2011 would mark the beginning of a unified Departmental grant system.

Departmental grants would be split into three tranches:

1) Community Access Fund with a total of £323,000 and individual grants of under £10,000 combines:

- Community Development Projects – would be combined with a current Community Chest Grant into a single fund with a maximum £750 per grant.
- Community Festivals Fund
- Rolling Programme
- Seasonal Play Scheme
- Support for Sport

2) Annual Fund totalling £477,000 with individual grants averaging £10,000 consists of:

- Culture and Arts Core Annual Funding and
- Culture and Arts Development and Outreach Funding

3) Multi-annual Funding with a total of £2.6m and individual grants averaging £25,000 for 3 years, combines:

- Community Service Advice
- Community Service Capacity Building (this will initially be opened for 1 year as part of the transition process)
- Community Services Revenue (in order to prevent duplication, it is proposed that Community Development revenue and Capacity Building Grants be exclusive of each other, meaning the grant recipient cannot simultaneously receive one of the two grants) and
- Culture and Arts Multi-annual Funding

No significant change would be made to the grants criteria. A full criteria list is available on request from the Development Department.

All Departmental grants would use a single application form (with different subsections) and guidelines which would be available on the Council's website to ensure transparency and openness.

In order to process, monitor and administer grants, a 'Central Grants Team' would be set up. The Central Grants Team (CGT) would serve as the main point of contact between grant applicants and the Council and would manage the whole grant making process from promotion to application through to post-funding review and evaluation.

Setting up the CGT will be cost neutral and it will improve the grant making process by:

- Improving governance
- Providing greater consistency in systems and processes
- Ensuring separation between assessment, award and monitoring and evaluation
- Acting as a single point of contact and
- Effectively managing the whole grant-making process.

In order to assess the applications, 'Grant Assessment Panels' would be set up for different thematic areas (Advice, Community Development, Culture and Arts, Play and Sport). These panels would consist of existing staff involved in grant making process with the expertise and knowledge in each of the thematic areas – again with no cost to set up. CGU would provide a secretariat for the Grant Assessment Panels. The final decision on the grants allocation would depend whether grants are under or over £5,000:

- For all the grants worth over £5,000 the Development Committee and the Council would have final decision as to which organisations should get funding.
- For the grants of under £5,000 it is recommended that the Director of Development have delegated authority in deciding on recipients for all such grants. Currently that authority exists only for some grant streams.

It is proposed to introduce an appeals procedure for all development grants which would follow the best practise model in grant administration.

Resource Implications

None:

- The total amount of grant budget would not change;
- The allocation of grants under different streams would stay the same;
- Setting up of Central Grants Unit and Grant Assessment Panels would not have any resource implications.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

1. Note the content of this report; and
2. Agree on the proposals outlined in the report, in order for the Department to commence the grant review implementation

Decision Tracking

Further to agreement and commencement of the implementation, members will receive updates on progress. After the first year, a full evaluation will be carried out and Members will be informed of the results.

Time line: October 2010

Reporting Officer: Director of Development

Key Abbreviations

CGT – Central Grants Team