



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Area Advice Consortia- Funding Arrangements 2010/11
Date:	10 February 2010
Reporting Officer:	Tim Husbands, Acting Director of Development, ext. 3470
Contact Officer:	Cate Taggart, Community Development Manager, ext 3525 John Nelson, CSAM East Belfast, ext 3541

Key Issues

Belfast City Council is a major funder of Advice & Information Services via a consortia model based on geographical providers. This approach to funding and advice delivery was established in 2005/06 and involves over 20 organisations and includes both the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and Independent Advice providers. Essential criteria for receiving BCC Advice funding are that organisations need to give generalist advice and be associated to Citizens Advice or Advice N.I. Any requests for BCC funding from specialist advice providers are signposted to the relevant Government Department.

BCC funding is allocated on a pro-rata basis based on a deprivation-weighted population. While bodies receive funding from other sources, BCC & DSD are the core funders of advice in the City. An independent review of the Belfast model was completed by Deloitte in 2008. The review, which was positive, recommended that future provision should build on the significant investment in development of capacity and relationships to date (consortia).

In light of the DSD preparations to move to a proposed new Model for Advice Services in NI (Opening Doors Strategy 2007), our recent review of the consortia model and to inform advice provision post 2011, the Community Services Business Plan notes the intention to review and refine the BCC Support Strategy for Advice Services post 2011 and a related action plan. This work is pending and will be developed closely with Members and key stake-holders.

During a recent round of Party Briefings in relation to the number and location of area advice centres, Members agreed in principle that the 2010/11 period should be considered as an interim year during which :

- the current funding model would be extended
- the current 5 consortia would be challenged to address various best practice and possible convergence issues.
- Preparations would be made to agree and implement a new BCC strategy

The purpose of this report is to outline proposals for the administration of funding support to the Five Area Advice consortia for the interim period 2010/11. The report comprises three updates:

1. BCC Core Advice Grant
2. DSD Supplementary Advice Grant
3. DSD proposal that BCC administer BRO advice funding.

1. BCC Core Advice Grant for 2010/11

The current level of BCC Advice funding for 2009/10 is £355,729.00 and is allocated to the consortia as follows:

North Belfast :	27.33%
South Belfast :	13.51%
East Belfast:	16.82%
West Belfast:	32.34%
City centre:	10.00%

Within each area consortium the allocation of funding per organisation is determined by the number of enquires that each organisation receives.

DSD intends to implement its new regional advice strategy in partnership with local Councils in 2011/12. This currently proposes changes to the BCC model: 4 consortia with area advice centres and a network/programme of outreach.

Given the potential for significant change modelling for the advice sector with the formulation of the BCC Advice Strategy which in turn will help prepare for the possible introduction of the DSD Opening Doors Strategy in 2011, the Committee is invited to consider a number of options for interim funding arrangements.

Option 1:

Funding arrangements to stay the same as previous years, that is, split across the 5 consortia. Given there would be no substantial reassessment of need, we do not recommend any change in the percentage funding allocation to each consortia. However, each of the consortia should actively seek to include any new advice organisations operating in Belfast and that also meet the current BCC funding criteria.

This option would enable the retention of current practice, capacity and successful working relationships while also making provision, if required, for any new organisations to be included in relevant consortia.

Any assessment would be dependant upon the submission of a business plan outlining aims, objectives, associated actions, target beneficiaries, detailed budget information and related performance framework.

Bids would be expected to demonstrate improved consortia working, ensuring improved access to advice services in each area and addressing noted monitoring/evaluation issues.

Option 2:

Retain the present consortia arrangements but recalculate the allocation within each area dependent upon the most recent advice enquiry figures.

This option seeks to retain the present area allocation but would facilitate the recalculation of the deprivation weighted allocation across the City. This has the potential to be a lengthy and possibly divisive process which will again require substantial resource allocation.

Any assessment would again be dependant upon the submission of a business plan outlining aims, objectives, associated actions, target beneficiaries, detailed budget information and related performance framework. Bids would be expected to demonstrate improved consortia working, ensuring improved access to advice services in each area and addressing noted monitoring/evaluation issues.

Option 3:

Re-open for new area applications with a resultant recalculation of allocation across all 5 consortia. This option would require a new open call for application which would be time consuming and resource intensive.

In preparation for Council consideration of Departmental budget estimates, the Committee is invited to agree the most appropriate arrangements for the BCC core advice grant in the 2010/11 interim funding year.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Option 1 be agreed as this allows the general continuity of the consortia arrangements whilst still allowing any other potential Generalist Advice Organisations to be included in the relevant area consortium.

Resources

Option 1 requires no additional resources. Options 2 and 3 would require substantial officer time and or the use of a consultant.

Decision Tracking

Further to agreement, the options have varied decision tracking:

Option 1 – to initiate grant payments in April pending submission of all the required information

Option 2. – recalculate the area allocation in April and initiate grant payments in May and June

Option 3.- Open for application in April, assessment and allocation in May/June and initiate grant payments in July and August.

Time line: April 2010

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2. DSD Supplementary Advice Grant

In addition to the BCC Advice Grant, DSD and BCC have for the last 4 years also provided funding to enable the consortia to provide outreach advice services in areas of little or no provision.

The historical level of funding provided has been:

	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/09
DSD match	£152,725	£152,725	£309,725	£309,725
BCC match	£0	£152,725	£152,725	£152,725
Total	£152,725	£305,450	£462,450	£462,450

However, the level of DSD grant in 2009/10 is £469,902.00 with this linked to the BCC Advice budget. This reflects an additional commitment of funds due to the increased pressure on advice services due to the economic downturn. These DSD funds are conditional on a set level of advice support from BCC of £355,729.00 in 2009/10.

This DSD/BCC funding has historically been allocated to the consortia against the same deprivation-weighted population index as the BCC grant: this translates to the same geographical percentages as the core BCC grant.

Resources

Financial:

It is anticipated that the DSD/BCC advice arrangement and current level of funding will be maintained in the future although this will not be confirmed until DSD issues a letter of offer early in the new financial year 2010/11.

Upon receipt of the letter of offer, a report will be prepared outlining the DSD funding offer and any related conditions including the level of BCC leverage required.

Recommendation

It is recommended that upon confirmation of the available DSD supplementary funding for Advice Services, this is allocated across the consortia on the same basis as that agreed for the BCC core funding for the year.

Decision tracking

DSD will issue the letter to Council in April/May 2010 and grant payments will be initiated in June, pending submission of all required information.

3. DSD proposal that BCC Administers BRO Advice Funding

At the April 09 Development Committee it was agreed that BCC would take over the funding of 5 to 7 advice worker posts which had previously been funded by the Belfast Regeneration Office as a result of applications from advice delivery organisations. The Committee report included information received from DSD on the breakdown of funds to recipient groups and the nature of related expenditure. This was restricted to salary costs with a total value of £113,434.57

We have now received revised information from DSD which significantly differs from the April 2009 proposal.

The number of posts has now been increased to 11, 8 starting in April 2010 with the

possibility of a further 3 at a later date. In addition, the Council is being asked to provide and administer revenue funding costs associated with 5 of the projects, 4 to start in April with the final one associated with one of the possible future posts. The total value of the programme for the 8 posts and 4 revenue costs in 2010/11 has risen to £165,140.00 and if all 11 posts and 5 revenue costs are put in place, it will rise to £245,000.00

Advice services are under pressure given the increase in demand for their services; to lose these posts would severely impact upon the level and quality of advice services provided.

Resources

Funding for the advice posts and associated revenue costs would be received from VCU and ring-fenced within the BCC Community Support Plan.

The posts would only be funded for as long as funding (for these posts and costs) was received from DSD. At present this is for the period April 2010 to March 2011 but it is anticipated that this may be extended. Should DSD funding however not continue post 2011, recipient groups may look to BCC to ensure service sustainability.

There are no direct financial implications for BCC, however, substantial officer time will be required to manage, administer and monitor these posts. Business Support (finance) has raised concerns over the management, processes involved and the associate time/costs.

Recommendation

Advice services are experiencing an increased demand for services therefore it is recommended that Members agree to the proposals from the DSD Voluntary and Community Unit but that further funds be sought from DSD to cover the BCC administration costs.

Decision Tracking

The Community Services Manager will inform DSD of Committee's decision and BCC will begin administration of these posts in April.

Time line: April 2010

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Key to Abbreviations

NI – Northern Ireland
BCC – Belfast City Council
BRO – Belfast Regeneration Office
VCU – Voluntary Community Unit
CSP – Community Support Plan
DSD – Department of Social Development

Documents Attached

Appendix 1. BRO Advice Funding Breakdown

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APPENDIX 1

BRO Advice Funding: breakdown of funds

ADVICE POSTS TRANSFERRING TO VCU

AREA	PROJECT	NO of POSTS	SALARY COSTS	RUNNING PROGRAMME COSTS
WEST	Springfield Charitable Association (Care & Advice) IW/NRI/30/08 & IW/NRI/12/09	2	£21,962 10/11	£16,800 10/11 * Programme costs for volunteer expenses
	EPIC - Welfare Advice Programme IW/NRI/38/08 & IW/NRI/19/09	1	£24,830 10/11	NIL
	Falls Womens Centre – Advice, Advocacy & Family Support IW/NRI/17/09	3	£39,974 10/11	NIL
	Greater Turf Lodge Residents Association (Advice Service) GW/NRI/33/08	1	£25,630 10/11	£6,981 10/11
NORTH				
	Ballysillan Community Forum NB/NRI/47/08	1	£25,547 10/11	£3,416 10/11