



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Community Revenue Grants
Date:	10 February 2010
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Relevant Background Information

At the 14 October 2009 Committee, Members considered a report on the Departmental Grants Review. This report noted that there would now be three strands of funding - the Community Access Fund, the Annual Fund and the Multi-Annual Fund. These strands were determined by the average level of funding currently allocated to successful organizations, under £10,000, between £10,000 and £25,000 and £25,000+.

At this meeting, Members agreed on the re-categorisation of the Community Services Revenue Grant as an annual fund, based on its size. The Community Services Revenue Grant had been previously distributed as a multi-annual grant.

The Revenue Grant is available to eligible organisations delivering wide ranging community development programmes at neighbourhood and area level. While assessment focuses on the range and content of the local service, this Grant specifically assists groups with general building costs, e.g. utilities, insurance, administration and equipment.

Key Issues

Given the necessary time required to complete the collective Departmental organisational review, it has not been possible to set up the new Central Grants Unit within the original timescale. A paper confirming the structure of the new Unit is being presented to Committee today.

This timetable has had knock-on effects for the timely delivery of the Revenue Grant Fund for 2010/11.

Had the originally anticipated progress been made there would have been an open call for the Revenue Grant as an annual fund, as per the October 2009 Committee decision. Following the October report, all other Community Services grant streams have opened as per the Committee's decision.

However given these circumstances, this will now allow for synchronization between all three Community Services larger grant streams. Groups will receive funding for a one year interim period under the Capacity-Building Grant and the Advice Grant as part of the transition to the final multi-annual programme. Opening the Revenue Grant for one year (2010/11) would enable it to be synchronized with these two other funds. Therefore, in 2010/11 these three funds would run concurrently.

In these circumstances Community Services now needs approval to extend the Revenue Grant stream for one year.

The recommendation to Members is that the Community Services Revenue Grant is extended for one year, with no less than 90% of the budget being allocated to the groups which are currently funded and up to 10% being held for new groups who wish to access the fund.

It should be noted that feedback has been received from a number of Elected Members, Community Groups affected and Community Services' Area Managers, in relation to the appropriateness of the fund being created as an annual fund programme. In relation to this aspect, it is therefore also recommended that an options paper be prepared for a future Committee after a period of engagement with the sector in relation to the issue.

The intention is for the options paper to be brought to the Development Committee in the context of the final stages of implementation of the Central Grants Unit, with all confirmed streams of funding opening in autumn 2010 for the financial year 2011/12.

Resource Implications

Financial – The Revenue Grant Fund for 2010/11 is £ 818,577, currently supporting around 79 organisations. In order to accommodate new applications, this fund would need to be uplifted by up to £81,858 (up to 10%).

Human Resources - the Revenue Grant programme has traditionally attracted a large volume of applicants with an intensive staff resource input to assess applications, make site visits, digital mapping of applicants, and prepare recommendations for Committee approval.

Recommendations

Committee are asked to approve:

- 1) An extension of the Community Services Revenue Grant Fund for a period of one year (2010/11), with no less than 90% of the budget being allocated to the groups which are currently funded and up to 10% being held for new groups who wish to access the fund.
- 2) That an options paper be prepared for a future Development Committee in relation to the issue of the appropriateness of the Revenue Grant Fund being provided as an Annual Fund or a Multi-Annual Fund, after further engagement with the sector.

Decision Tracking

An options paper will be prepared for a future Development Committee outlining final proposals with regard to the long-term future of the Community Services revenue grant.

Time line: June 2010

Reporting Officer: Catherine Taggart

Key Abbreviations

AF: Annual Funding
MAF: Multi-Annual Funding

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