



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Community Services Grant Aid Programme 2011/12
Date:	6 December 2010
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen Director of Development ext 3470
Contact Officer:	Cate Taggart, Community Development Manager, ext 3525

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Belfast City Council is a major funder of Advice & Information Services via a consortium model based on geographical providers. This approach to funding and advice delivery was established in 2005/06 and involves over 20 organisations which include both Citizens' Advice Bureau 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.
1.2	The current ongoing economic downturn and resultant uncertainty facing many households has resulted in an increase in the numbers of people accessing the services of advice agencies particularly, but not exclusively, in relation to debt and money advice services. The advice sector is experiencing difficulties in responding to this increased demand.
1.3	Following considerable lobbying from both the Advice providers and local government the Department for Social Development agreed an additional £500,000 for local advice services across Northern Ireland, of which £157k was taken up by Belfast providers.
1.4	The BCC administered total financial support for Advice Services in Belfast last year was £997,836. This allowed the sector to process 112,693 enquiries of which over 18,000 were debt related. Monitoring returns demonstrate the funds levered an additional £12,175,133 in claimed benefits.

1.5	Officers have requested a BCC budget of £369,610 in support of advice services in the 2011/12 revenue estimates. If approved, this may lever a further £469,902 from DSD: an indicative figure based on last year's grant. No formal notice of the level of DSD funding for 2011/12 has yet been received.
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2	Key Issues
2.1	In recent correspondence, Ards Borough Council have outlined their intent to write to the Minister for Social Development asking him to review and increase his Department's contribution to the Citizen's Advice Bureau in light of present socio-economic climate and the Bureau's continually increasing workload. A copy of the letter is attached as Appendix 1.
2.2	They further resolved to draw this resolution to the attention of all other Councils in Northern Ireland and to ask them also to write to the Minister in support of it.
2.3	If supportive, committee may wish to amend any correspondence to the Minister to reflect the consortia approach to advice provision in Belfast.

3	Resource Implications
	None

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
	There are no related equality or Good Relations considerations

5	Recommendations
	Committee are asked to consider the request from Ards Borough Council.

6	Decision Tracking
	Time line: January 2011. Reporting Officer: Cate Taggart

	Documents Attached
	Appendix 1: Letter from Ards Borough Council