



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Department Grant Aid 2012/13
Date:	27 September 2011
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development,
Contact Officer:	Cate Taggart, Community Development Manager, Kerrie Sweeney, Tourism Culture & Arts Manager David Orr, Business Support Manager

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	The Development Department manages a significant grant funding programme to a range of clients enabling community and cultural organisations to make a real difference in people's lives and to the success of the city. Our grant funds are a crucial enabling resource towards achieving the goals laid down in our Departmental and Corporate Plan.
1.2	In 2010-11 the Department dispensed £4 million in grants to organisations across the city. While we are obviously much more than a grant-maker, we must seek out how best to use our grant-making function to build on assets and opportunities, to encourage self reliance and social responsibility and to overcome the obstacles to economic growth.
1.3	The departmental grant programme is managed across 2 service areas and includes a range of small and larger grant investments. The small grant schemes are subject to application and are allocated competitively against agreed criterion. The grant programme for 2011/12 is operating within current procedures and it is intended to continue this approach in 2012/13 in advance of any potential new small grant programme.
1.4	This report relates primarily to the portfolio of larger grants across the department. <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Community: Revenue Grant, Capacity Building Grant and Advice Services- Economic Initiatives: Culture and Arts Annual and Multi Annual Funding

1.5	All programmes in the larger grant category are fully committed for the current financial year. Decisions are now pending on how we progress the programme for the period from 1 April 2012.
1.6	The SP&R committee are currently reviewing grant funding on a corporate basis. They hope to report related appropriate findings and recommendations with a view to a planned implementation across council from April 2013.

2	Key Issues
2.1	During the intervening period there have been significant changes in the strategic environment across all our work areas. There is no doubt that the current economic climate and budgetary pressures facing the entire public sector within Northern Ireland will result in a reduction in many of the traditional grant schemes to the sector. It is likely that we will see very significant change to current support arrangements with an emphasis on rationalisation and the ending of current contracts to be replaced with more targeted support arrangements. Central government have also indicated their intent to explore Social Impact Bonds and alternative finance sources, including philanthropic sources, and to help voluntary and community organisations ease their dependency on government grants.
2.2	BRO are reviewing their approach to Neighbourhood Renewal investment in the region.
2.3	Council officers are continuing to liaise with officials at office of the first minister and deputy first minister (OFMDFM) to gauge opportunities in relation to the recently established £80million Social Investment Fund and the proposed Social Protection Fund that will assist those most in need within our wider community. While the specifics of both funds are still unclear, it is important that we assist government to identify what we feel the priorities should be.
2.4	Economic Initiatives has been working closely with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) Whilst there have been cuts to their budgets, ACNI are working with clients to streamline their funding programmes, supporting the sector to develop 3 year business plans which will receive a three year package of funding. This will support the sector to address budget cuts at a strategic level. There are further cuts due to ACNI budget over the next few years but a forecast increase in lottery revenue will help to cover that deficit. Over 90% of the clients that BCC funds also receive funding from ACNI and therefore it is important that there is co-operation and that added value is created for both agencies and not duplication of effort or funding.
2.5	Alongside these regional initiatives, Belfast City Council are reviewing their approach to support in a number of programme areas. Our emerging Community Development Strategy, and preliminary work on a Neighbourhood Assets Strategy, demonstrates our commitment to working in partnership to secure the necessary resources to make things happen set alongside a greater focus on delivery against targeted outcomes at both a city and neighbourhood level.

2.6	<p>A Steering Group comprising of senior representatives from Belfast City Council (BCC), Department of Social Development (DSD) Belfast Regeneration Office (BRO) and DSD Voluntary and Community Unit (VCU) was established to oversee a review into the way in which Community Development / Infrastructure services were supported across Belfast. The Group are considering how these could be better integrated and improved to ensure that the best possible impact is made with the funds administered in this area. This work will inform how BRO, VCU and BCC might work more collaboratively and effectively in the area of Community Development/ Infrastructure in the period up to the transfer of functions under RPA. (abbreviation needed)</p>
2.7	<p>The project recognises the need to simplify current processes and target the limited resources available in a more cost effective way. The number of different funding streams, each supported by its own administrative process leads to limited co-ordination as well as potential duplication and displacement of activity on the ground both within the community and voluntary sectors and within and between BCC/DSD. The evidence indicates that the needs of local communities could be better met with a restructuring of the current arrangements. It is anticipated that recommendations from the group will inform funding post 2013 but with opportunities to pilot collaborative approaches in the interim period. This review will impact on the Community Services larger grant programme, that is, Capacity, Revenue and Advice & Information Services.</p>
2.8	<p>Economic Initiatives through the work of the Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit is currently reviewing Belfast's Integrated Cultural Strategy. The previous strategy was adopted in 2007 and runs for 4 years. A new environment now exists for culture and arts organisations in the city, new venues such as the Lyric, An Culturlann and the Mac have opened (or due to open shortly), the economic climate has impacted on public sector funding and income through ticket sales e.g. audience figures have in some instances declined, tourism remains a strong sector and there are opportunities to increase visitors by promoting greater access to the arts and in turn contribute to the sustainability of organisations. Engagement has commenced with the sector and a draft plan is due to be presented to committee in November 2011. This plan will require a minimum of 8 weeks consultation in line with BCC's equality screening and therefore it is unlikely that any changes to how the culture and arts organisations are funded will be ready for implementation before February / March 2012.</p> <p><u>Conclusion</u> The outcomes from these various pieces of work will add value to our grant funding programme. The timescale for conclusion will dovetail with and tie in with the overall corporate timescale of the grant project.</p>
2.9	<p>We therefore suggest an interim period (2012/13) in order to allow time to align our grant programmes to any new corporate strategy, to the outcomes of the collaborative DSD / BCC pilot and the new Integrated Cultural Strategy.</p>
2.10	<p>In order to facilitate this, we suggest that committee agree 12 month extensions to our current portfolio of larger grants across the department as follows:</p>
2.11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advice & Information Services - Revenue Grant - Capacity Support Grant

	<p>- Culture and Arts Annual Fund</p> <p>This approach will minimise disruption to funded groups in that any anticipated changes to our grant programme and related systems will be managed in an integrated, and hopefully simplified, approach. That is, changes to assessment criteria, systems and processes, etc, coming from these distinct pieces of work will be implemented in line with the recommendations coming forward from the corporate grants project.</p>
2.12	<p>As part of the review of our consortia approach to Advice & Information support, Committee requested that Officers re-evaluate the allocation equation which informs current investment. This work is underway and a further report will be tabled for Committee consideration and agreement in advance of 2012/13 grant committal.</p> <p>Estimates for 2012/13 include sufficient funds to cover the necessary resources to extend contracts for a further 12 months. All awards will continue to be subject to receipt of business plans and appropriate monitoring returns.</p>

3	Resource Implications
3.1	<p>Estimates for 2012/13 include sufficient funds to cover the necessary resources to extend contracts for a further 12 months.</p> <p>Multi Annual Funding £697,264 Annual Funding £301,835 Revenue Grant £818,097.85 Capacity Grant £651,331.00 Advice & Information £825,619.38</p>

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	None

5	Recommendations
5.1	<p>Committee are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Note the contents of the paper. ii. Agree to continue the current Small Grant programme and related procedures for 2012/13. iii. Agree to 12 month extensions to all grant contracts subject to receipt of business plans and appropriate monitoring returns.

6	Decision Tracking
Cate Taggart and Kerrie Sweeney to implement committee decision.	

7	Key to Abbreviations
<p>(OFMDFM) office of the first minister and deputy first minister (ACNI) Arts Council of Northern Ireland (DSD) Department of Social Development (BRO) Belfast Regeneration Office (VCU) Voluntary and Community Unit</p>	

8	Documents Attached
<p>Appendix 1: Multi annual and Annual funding 2012/13 proposed grants to organisations.</p> <p>Appendix 2: Revenue Grants 2012/13 proposed grants to organisations.</p> <p>Appendix 3: Capacity Grants 2012/13 proposed grants to organisations.</p> <p>Appendix 4: Advice & Information allocation information 2011/12.</p>	