



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Review of Community Development/Infrastructure Services in Belfast/BCC Grant Funding
Date:	13 December 2011
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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	In early 2011 the Chief Executive chaired a series of meetings with senior officials from both DOE Planning Service and DSD in an effort to develop work streams which would help prepare for the transfer of planning and regeneration functions as set out in the Review of Public Administration proposals.
1.2	Subsequent to those discussions it was agreed that a Steering Group comprising of senior representatives from Belfast City Council, DSD Belfast Regeneration Office (BRO) and DSD Voluntary and Community Unit (VCU) would be established to oversee a review into the way in which community development and infrastructure support services were supported across Belfast.
1.3	The purpose of this work was to consider how these services could be better integrated and improved to ensure that maximum benefit is obtained from the funds administered in this area.
1.4	The project was taken forward by a joint Working Group consisting of BCC, BRO and VCU officials. The Working Group has now produced a detailed report based on the research and analysis undertaken.
1.5	The report includes an analysis of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. the current levels of funding allocated to the sector from existing BCC And DSD resources by District Electoral Areaii. Physical community assetsiii. The DSD and BCC administrative resources employed in supporting

	community development and infrastructure interventions.
1.6	The collective notional administrative overhead costs are estimated to be at least £350k. The total funding allocated in 2011/12 was approximately £10m.
1.7	Some 121 organisations are in receipt of funding from BCC Community Services and DSD, 56 of which are in receipt of multiple funding streams which produce similar outputs and outcomes.
1.8	Currently there are 8 main funding streams in place, each supported by its own administrative processes. This leads to limited coordination, duplication and an unnecessary administrative burden on the recipient groups.
1.9	In order to address this issue the report proposed the development of a Single Funding Stream with 3 distinct strands as set out in Appendix 1.
1.10	The report considers six options for the delivery of such a programme and ultimately concludes that the preferred option is the transfer of DSD funds to BCC with an interim joint management / governance structure being put in place for one year, followed by full transfer to BCC. It is envisaged that the initial transfer would take place in the financial year commencing 1 April 2013.
1.11	Before committing to the options set out in Appendix 1, the Council will wish to consider the ability of the Community Services Resource Team and the Central Grants Team within the Development Department to absorb the administration of these grants, not least the monitoring and evaluation processes which will be required by DSD.
1.12	The Council will also have to carry out the necessary due diligence with regard to the potential transfer. Issues to be considered include: public consultation; political engagement and potential conflicts of interest; framework to manage; implications of NR Action Plan; equality impact; reserves policy; legal and audit.

2	Key Issues
2.1	<p><u>Central Grants Team</u></p> <p>The Central Grants Team was set up within the Development Department as a result of recommendations from the FGS McClure Watters review in 2009 and the BCC Strategic Finance Group project which was approved by COMT in May 2010. The aim of the corporate project was to consolidate all our grant streams into 3 simple, accessible funding streams based on size of grant (small, medium and large).</p>
2.2	<p>Almost 1200 applications were funded by BCC, totalling £5m, via 600 organisations in 2009/2010. Only 30% (340) of the organisations were funded once with the other 70% in receipt of multiple funding streams potentially producing similar outputs and outcomes. One group availed of funding from 10 separate grant funding pots in 2009/2010.</p>
2.3	<p>Currently there are 23 main funding streams in place, each supported by its own administrative processes. This leads to limited coordination, duplication and an unnecessary administrative burden on the recipient groups.</p>

2.4	The project was planned to be implemented in April 2013.
2.5	<p><u>Community Development /Infrastructure Services in Belfast and BCC Grant Funding Projects</u></p> <p>Both projects are of equal merit and both meet the following principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The maximisation of community benefit; - The simplification of the model to assist those seeking funding; - Ensuring value for money, especially in relation to administration; - Creating clear linkage between resourcing and need; - Putting in place strong frameworks for review and evaluation
2.6	There are significant risks associated with attempting to transfer the grant administration from other areas of the Council whilst at the same time seeking to implement the recommendations within this report regarding the transfer of DSD programmes. It is recommended therefore that the Council proceed with both projects in parallel.
2.7	The Central Grants Team will proceed with the Corporate project which will amalgamate all small grants within the Council into 1 stream and will review and implement a single separate funding stream for Tourism Culture and Arts. The Community Support Programme grants will be removed from this project as it is part of the Community Development/Infrastructure Services transfer from DSD.
2.8	Should the Council agree to the proposed transfer of resources from DSD, a full project plan will need to be developed and a joint working team put in place to deliver the plan. The Community Services Resource Team will initially provide the resource and in order to assist the smooth transition it would be beneficial to have one or two members of staff seconded from DSD until the project is successfully completed.
2.9	<p>Whilst working in parallel there will be areas of mutually benefitting joint working i.e.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grant management system; - Processes – promotion, application, assessment, monitoring
2.10	This work will bring the consistency, in approach and in process, which will allow the 2 project teams to come together, possibly in 2015, following a transitional transfer period of funding from DSD.
2.11	A Grant Management System is a fundamental part of both projects and if this approach is approved a business case will be presented to the Corporate Governance Panel in December 2011. It is anticipated that the system will cost less than £30k.
2.12	The Central Grants Team and the Resources Team have limited resources and given the significant risk of progressing, as detailed above, the structures would have to be revisited urgently to establish the resources required to deliver these programmes of work recommended in this report along with the Development Department Business Support Team.
2.13	With regard to the Community Development / Infrastructure Services project it is proposed that the current Steering Group would oversee the project and provide the necessary governance. It is recommended that the Director of Finance &

	Resources becomes a member of this Group.
2.14	The Central Grants Team will continue to report to the Strategic Finance Group.

3	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
3.1	There are no Equality and Good Relations implications associated with this request at present.

4	Recommendations
4.1	Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Note the content of the report - Give approval to officers to continue to work on this project

5	Decision Tracking
5.1	The Director of Development will present regular reports on the project to future meetings of Development Committee.

6	Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Proposed Single Funding Programme