



**Report to:** Development Committee

**Subject:** Support Measures for Lagan Village Youth and Community Group

**Date:** 6 November 2012

**Reporting Officer:** John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470

**Contact Officers:** Cate Taggart, Community Services Manager

<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>								
1.1	Community Services have funded Bridge Community Association (BCA) for more than 15 years. In recent years this has included funding under our revenue, summer scheme, project and community chest grants streams.								
1.2	Grants allocations in 2011/12 were:- <table border="1" data-bbox="438 1310 893 1444"><tbody><tr><td>Revenue Grant</td><td>£18,733.86</td></tr><tr><td>Summer Scheme</td><td>£3,000.00</td></tr><tr><td>CDP Grant</td><td>£500.00</td></tr><tr><td>Total</td><td>£22,233.86</td></tr></tbody></table>	Revenue Grant	£18,733.86	Summer Scheme	£3,000.00	CDP Grant	£500.00	Total	£22,233.86
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1.3	In May 2012, Belfast Regeneration Officer make raised concerns over the financial position of the organisation due to an over spend in one of the projects (Education by Choice) and that this over spend has a major impact upon the viability of the organisation. The group are currently working with DSD on a recovery plan. Council staff have been liaising with the group and and have formal correspondence confirming this position.								
1.4	As a direct result, BCC revenue grant funding for 2012/13 was put on hold pending completion of our annual monitoring return for the previous year and confirmation of the group's current financial position. On the 7 <sup>th</sup> August the Bridge Community Association confirmed that the organisation would close on the 30 <sup>th</sup> September with the Community Centre in Balaret Street reverting to DSD.								

1.5	BCA confirm the over spend relates to the Education by Choice project and that the youth and community activities had not been a contributing factor. It is apparent that the EBC project had anticipated an income stream which did not actualise. BELB reduced the guaranteed income to this project when they cut the number of pupil places they would fund on this alternative programme. However an internal investigation concluded that the project was not downgraded to reflect this reduction in finance rather increasingly the expenditure was covered via the BCA bank overdraft facility
1.6	DSD have confirmed they have no issue in regards to any financial irregularities and they have concluded that all the grant monies provided by them was spent appropriately.
1.7	As noted above the BCC annual revenue grant award to BCA of £19,000 was withheld because BCA did not pass the monitoring exercise. BCA have listed BCC as creditors to the amount of £7,000, however, this wholly relates to withheld grant and BCC is not therefore liable.
1.8	BCC do not fund the Education by Choice project which concluded in June 2012, in line with the academic year. Also, there were no elected members on the BCA Committee so there is no related liability risk.
1.9	BCA suggest any further investigation will now be carried out by the insolvency practitioners.

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	BRO and BCC were approached to see if they would allow the centre to operate under the management of a newly constituted group, Lagan Village Youth and Community Group (LVYCG). This group has been formed from representatives from the existing user groups and from local people. It can be noted that in their private capacity, two local councillors and a MLA also sit on the committee. There is no involvement from previous committee members of the Bridge C.A. This new group is seeking to ensure that the local community continue to have access to the centre and to the services that can take place within it.
2.2	DSD have initially granted a 4 week lease of the centre. This short lease was put in place to allow the group to officially take control of the centre and to start operating while allowing officials to finalise proposals to the Minister to consider authorisation of the lease renewal on a rolling 3 month basis.
2.3	BRO are continuing to fund the 2 Youth and Community salaries through the East Belfast Community Development Agency (EBCDA).
2.4	In order to support the ongoing provision of local service, and in line with DSD and BRO actions, officers recommend that committee consider the following measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The re-allocation of community services grant support contracts from the Bridge Community Association to the newly formed Lagan Village Youth and Community Group from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2012.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All grant to be subject to our agreed monitoring requirements, however, to support compliance we suggest grant should be released on a quarterly basis while the group continue to demonstrate compliance.</li> <li>- Work with EBCDA to agree and deliver a management training programme for LVYCG similar to that offered to Ballymacarrett /Connswater Community &amp; Leisure Services Ltd. This programme will assess and then provide training and support to ensure the new group have adequate management skills and operational capacity.</li> <li>- Allocate related officer time to both support and monitor LVYCG</li> <li>- Continue to allocate BCC play staff to deliver services in the centre</li> <li>- Implement a programme of Community Development Outreach support to identify local need and seek increased local involvement. This will include seeking ways to work in a more coordinated way with neighbouring community groups, for example, Willowfield Parish Community Association, Oasis Caring in Action, Short Strand Community Association, Lower Castlereagh Community Group etc.</li> <li>- Ongoing BCC officer and grant support will be reviewed to take account of the outcome of the current audit investigation.</li> </ul>
2.5	If agreeable, these measures could be put in place for a period of 18 months up to 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2014 to allow the group to become established and to apply for grant support in their own right.
2.6	This time-frame is in line with the committee approved extension of grant contracts to support the development of the new Belfast Community Investment Programme.

<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	If agreed, the related grant commitment can be met from within the agreed 2012/13 Community Services Grant Aid programme budget and our revenue estimates for 2013/14.
3.2	The 2012/13 grant package would be allocated to LVYCG on a pro rata basis.
3.3	The 2013/14 Revenue grant to LVYCG would be approved as part of the committee agreed extension to all current revenue grant contracts in order to support the design of BCIP.
3.4	LVYCG would be eligible to apply for 2013/14 community services small grant funding including Summer Scheme and Project Grants.
3.5	Proposed officer support within current staffing arrangements.

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
4.1	There is no anticipated negative equality and good relations impact.

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	<p>Members are asked that, subject to continued support from BRO, they consider and agree the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. the package of officer and support measures as outlined</li> <li>ii. the pro-rata transfer of current grant commitments from Bridge Community Association to the newly formed Lagan Village Youth and Community Group for the period to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014</li> <li>iii. All support would be subject to LVYCG fully engaging in the BCC officer support programme and their meeting all monitoring and related compliance requirements on a quarterly basis.</li> <li>iv. Support arrangements to be informed by and reviewed in light of audit recommendations.</li> </ol>

<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
<p>The implementation of this project will be monitored by Community Services officers on a monthly basis with the production of quarterly reports to Service management.</p> <p>Responsible Officer: John Nelson</p>	

<b>7</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
<p>BCA – Bridge Community Association  BRO – Belfast Regeneration Office  DSD – Department Social Development  MLA – Member Legislative Assembly  LVYCG – Lagan Village Youth And Community Group  EBCDA – East Belfast Community Development Association  BCC – Belfast City Council  CC&amp;LSLtd – Coneswater Community &amp; Leisure Services Ltd  BCIP – Belfast Community Investment Programme</p>	

<b>8</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
<p>N/A</p>	