



Belfast City Council

Report to: Parks and Leisure Committee

Subject: **Parks Events Small Grant Scheme**

Date: 15th October, 2009

Reporting Officer: Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure, ext 3400

Contact Officer: Robert Scott, Conservation and Promotion Manager

Purpose of Report

To seek approval to run the parks events small grants scheme for 2010.

Relevant Background Information

Members are reminded that a parks event small grant scheme has been running for the last four years. Its purpose is to encourage groups and organisations to stage events in parks and thus increase a sense of ownership of parks.

The scheme has proved to be very popular with community groups, churches, friends groups and other organisations applying for funding to support events in our parks and open spaces.

In 2009, the Committee approved an allocation of £60,000 for the scheme and set the maximum grant payable at £2,250. This permitted 28 groups to be funded, resulting in over 30 events taking place in parks across the city which would not have taken place. Not all event report forms have been submitted to date, but initial feedback reports indicate that numbers attending these events will be similar to previous years, i.e. around 17,000 people.

Key Issues

The key issue for the Committee is whether it wishes to continue to offer this financial support in 2010. Given the financial position of the Council it is the view of officers that if the scheme is to continue the budget allocation be retained at 2009 levels and that the maximum amount payable similarly be retained at £2,250.

It would be the intention to advertise the grant scheme in the November issue of

City Matters, with supplementary advertising in the local community papers. Information and application forms will also be available on the Belfast City Council website. Officers will apply the pre-agreed criteria as outlined in Appendix 1.

Options

The Committee has four options:

1. discontinue the scheme;
2. increase the budget allocation;
3. decrease the budget allocation; or
4. maintain the scheme at 2009 levels.

Option 1 – Discontinue the scheme

Given the prevailing financial climate it would be understandable should the Committee decide not to continue with the scheme. It would result in a cost reduction of £60k plus administration and advertising costs. However, there is likely to be a negative reaction from community based groups and organisations which have benefited from the scheme in recent times.

Option 2 – Increase the budget allocation

Given the maximum grant has been set at £2,250 and that most groups seek the maximum amount, it would be necessary to increase the allocation by a minimum of £10,000 to make any appreciable impact. Given the pressure on revenue budgets it is therefore not proposed to increase the amount.

Option 3 – Decrease the budget allocation

It is the view of officers that the scheme has become established. Members are reminded that we have reduced the amount of the maximum grant available from £5000 to its current figure to enable to maintain the total amount of funding and support more groups. To decrease the figure would reduce the number of groups supported or would result in a reduction in the amount of grant payable which could result in a lack of take up or a reduction in the quality of events.

Option 4 – Maintain the scheme at 2009 levels

By retaining the scheme at 2009 levels we continue to provide tangible support to a wide range of local community based groups and organisations to provide quality events in our parks and open spaces and enhance the sense of community ownership.

Resource Implications

Financial

On the basis that the Committee approve Option 4, the scheme will require a revenue budget of £60,000. Provision for this has been included in the 2010/11 draft estimates.

Human Resources

No additional human resource implications. The scheme can be managed and administered within existing staffing resources.

Asset and Other Implications

Having groups organising their own events in parks helps to increase use of parks and encourage a sense of ownership of them.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee adopt option 4 outlined above and agree to make provision of £60,000 in the revenue draft estimates, subject to approval by Strategic Policy and Resources and ratification by Council.

It is further recommended that the criteria as outlined in Appendix 1 be adopted as in previous years.

Decision Tracking

Responsible officer – Robert Scott, Conservation and Promotion Manager
Closing date of scheme – Wednesday 27 January 2010
February 2010 – a further report will be brought to Committee for approval of the grants awarded.

Key to Abbreviations

None.

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 - Criteria for parks events grant scheme 2010.

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