



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Support for Sports Grants – proposed centralised approach
Date:	12 September 2013
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks & Leisure
Contact Officer:	Caroline Wilson, Neighbourhood and Development Manager Cormac McCann, Leisure Development Manager

1.	Relevant Background Information
1.1	At the Committee's meeting on 13 June 2013 members expressed concern that the high volume of applications so early in the financial year meant that all of the Small Support for Sport grants had been allocated within 4 months. It was agreed that a report on possible phasing of the grants would be presented to Members in the Autumn.
1.2	In August 2013, Committee agreed a series of mitigating actions in relation to the use of third parties to complete funding applications. This in line with the Good Relations policy of making a declaration that the application was completed by the club members and a series of checks are to be carried out by the Sports Development Officers.
1.3	Previously, in November 2012 the corporate Central Grants Unit (CGU) took over the administration of four grants within the Tourism, Culture and Arts Multi-Annual Funding and the Small Grants Tranche as part of a pilot scheme. The Support for Sport Grants did not enter into the centralised approach in the pilot phase.

2.	Key Issues
2.1	Members have raised concerns about the need to increase the developmental support available to assist sports clubs to develop their capacity and capability to submit successful applications. Sports Development Officers spend a significant amount of time supporting the administration of the Support for Sport grant scheme, particularly in relation to verification checks pre- and post-award. There is some evidence that clubs are using paid consultancy expertise to support their grant applications. Other clubs are submitting applications which do not meet the minimum standards for applicants.

2.2	Members have also expressed concern that all of the Small Development Grants funding was allocated within four months of opening. This means that many clubs who have not confirmed their programmes in the second half of the year are unable to receive support.
2.3	<p>A review of the pilot phase of the corporate Central Grants Unit (CGU) has taken place. The review notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The centralised system improved the experience for customers/grant recipients, by reducing the need to produce organisational documentation (constitutions, accounts, etc.) multiple times; – The ‘routine’ funding process tasks conducted by the CGU allow functional area staff more time to focus on development work / relationship building with organisations. This is generally considered to be a better use of functional area staff’s expertise and time and to maximise the expertise of both parties – Supports segregation of duties, as applications are considered by different people at different stages under the CGU-led approach, for example, eligibility checks conducted by CGU, assessment by functional area experts, review by independent assessment panels. This provides a better defence against allegations of bias in the award of funding i.e. award of funding is not just one person’s decision. – There are efficiencies in a corporate approach to advertising, funding administration and enables better information to be obtained of the amount of funding being awarded to individual organisations and to particular geographic areas. Improved funding data also enables the Council to better detect cases of duplicate or overlap funding
2.4	It is therefore proposed that the administration for the Support for Sport grants (small and large development grants) transfer to the CGU. This would enable Sports Development Officers to support clubs to plan effectively and develop stronger applications. Support for Sport (small grants) would be open 2 times a year, and a report would be brought to P&L Committee for information. The larger development grants would be brought to P&L Committee for their approval.
2.5	Discussions are ongoing related to bringing the Support for Sport events fund under the management of Parks and Leisure, currently managed by the Development Department. Based on the nature and scale of many events, the Leisure Development Unit is better placed to offer the type of support needed by event organisers. It is likely that a change in focus with the funding would lead to better strategic outcomes linked to improving community health and wellbeing through sport. A further report on this matter will be brought to Committee in due course.

3.	Resource Implications
3.1	Human: None

	<p>Financial: The existing Support for Sport budget allocation of £240,000 will remain unchanged and continue to be managed by leisure Development</p> <p>Asset: None</p>
--	---

4.	Equality Implications
4.1	There are no equality or good relations implications at this stage. Equality and good relations implications will continue to be monitored in a centralised approach and regular updates will be sent to the Equality and Diversity Officer.

5.	Recommendations
5.1	Committee is asked to authorise the transfer of the administrative responsibility to the Central Grants Unit for the Support for Sport grants scheme to commence in the new financial year.

6.	Decision Tracking
	None

7.	Key to Abbreviations
	None

8.	Documents Attached
	None