

Extract from minutes of –

DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

14th MAY, 2008

**“Community Festivals Fund**

The Committee considered further the minute of the meeting of 9th April under the heading “Community Festivals Fund” which had been taken back by the Chairman at the Council meeting on 1st May at the request of Councillor Stoker. An extract of the minute in this regard is set out hereunder:

*‘The Committee considered the undernoted report:*

**“Relevant Background Information**

*A previous report was brought before Committee in January 08 regarding the proposed transfer of Community Festivals Funding from the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure to Local Authorities. This funding was previously administered through the Northern Ireland Events Company.*

*The report raised a number of issues with the proposed transfer. A letter indicating the Councils position was sent to Hazel Campbell at DCAL. A Copy of this letter is available on Modern.gov.*

**Key Issues**

*A Letter of Offer has been received for the sum of £77,300 for the Community Festivals Fund for the period April 2008 to March 2009, which is available on Modern.gov.*

*There has not, however, been a specific written response to the points raised in the letter sent to DCAL on 8 February, however, officials from DCAL have met with Council officers and there have been information sessions organised through NILGA.*

*The following points have emerged in relation to the points outlined in the letter.*

**Funding**

- 1) There will be no alteration to the funding allocation to Belfast at this stage.*

- 2) *Funding allocated to Local Authorities that cannot be distributed will be redistributed to other Local Authority areas, it is expected that this will be achieved through a quarterly review of the funding distributed.*
- 3) *Feedback from other Councils indicates that the challenge for some will be to develop sufficient capacity to make use of the funding allocation and for others the match funding required will be an impediment to utilising the funding.*
- 4) *The level of redistributed funding would then form the basis for future allocation of funds.*

#### **Staffing Resources**

*No additional resources will be made available for administration, however, up to 10% of the grant claimed can be put towards administration*

#### **Duration of Funding**

*The funding for Community Festivals Fund is secure for a three year period. No commitment is given beyond that point.*

#### **Transitional Fund**

*It is anticipated that some additional transitional funding will be made available in the coming financial year, however, this may be restricted in terms of the number of organisations funded and level of funding.*

#### **Contact through NILGA**

*It is expected that communication regarding the funding will be maintained through NILGA*

#### **Timescale**

*DCAL have accepted that due to the short timescale a flexible approach is required towards the processes adopted for the distribution of funds in this financial year. It may therefore be possible to consider distribution in line with existing mechanisms of funding provided they are publicly advertised and within the spirit of the fund.*

*Members need now to consider how Council wishes to respond to this letter of offer. Clearly the concerns raised by Committee and communicated to DCAL via letter have not been addressed, with the DCAL position remaining as it was in January 2008. To accept the offer requires Council to identify £77,300 to match fund the DCAL offer and to create a "Community Festivals" fund for Belfast.*

***This has obvious financial and administrative implications as well as directly impacting on funds we are currently committing to this area. In addition, the amount represents a drop in the total resources available for Belfast in a situation where the announcement by DCAL is likely to have increased demand for such funding.***

### **Resource Implications**

#### **Financial**

***Resources of £77,300 will be required to provide match funding for the Community Festivals Fund.***

#### **Human Resources**

***There are implications for additional staffing resources required to administer any proposed fund.***

### **Recommendations**

***That Members consider whether Belfast City Council wish to accept the offer of funding as outlined in the letter of offer.***

### **Key to Abbreviations**

**DCAL - Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure  
NILGA - NI Local Government Association"**

*During discussion in the matter, several Members expressed disappointment that the concerns which the Council had expressed earlier in the year regarding the proposal from the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure to transfer the funding of community festivals to local authorities had not been addressed by the Department in its recent Letter of Offer.*

*The Director informed the Committee that when officials had been asked by her staff whether organisations in Belfast would be disadvantaged should the Council decide not to accept the funding from the Department, the officials had declined to answer the question.*

*Several Members expressed the view that, since the majority of local authorities in Northern Ireland had agreed to accept the transfer of the Community Festivals Fund, it was possible, should the Council decide not to accept the offer, that the sum of money which had been set aside for Belfast would be re-allocated to those Councils, thereby depriving organisations in Belfast of funding for community festivals.*

*In answer to Members' questions, the Director indicated that, whilst the Council had been offered an amount of £77,300 for the 2008/2009 financial year, she could not confirm the amount which would be provided to the Council in the following two years.*

*After further discussion, it was*

*Moved by Councillor Stoker,  
Seconded by Councillor Paul Maskey,*

*That the Committee agrees not to accept the Letter of Offer from the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure regarding the Community Festivals Fund.*

*On a vote by show of hands eleven Members voted for the proposal and four against and it was accordingly declared carried.'*

The Director informed the Committee that the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure had indicated that it would be prepared to provide the Council with approximately £77,000 during the next two financial years towards the Community Festivals Fund. Twenty-two of the Local Authorities in Northern Ireland had accepted the amounts which the Department had offered and it was likely that three further Councils would do so.

In response to a Member's question, the Director indicated that the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure would permit the Council to use 10% of the amount offered towards the costs of administering the Fund and that it would be her intention so to do. However, the costs which would be incurred by the Council in administering the scheme would be considerably higher than the £7,730 which the Department would permit.

A Member pointed out that the sum of money which would be available under the proposed scheme for community festivals in Belfast would be less than the amount which had been provided previously by the Northern Ireland Events Company. In addition, it was likely that organisations which had received funding for festivals in the past would either receive no funding or lesser amounts than previously. He therefore suggested that the Council should request the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure to increase the amount which it would provide to events in Belfast. He pointed out that the Belfast Festivals Forum would be supportive of the Council making such a request and had indicated that, since it believed that the amount of money being offered by the Department was less than the sum which was required, it had been supportive of the Committee's decision of 9th April not to accept the funding from the Department.

Several Members expressed the view that, since it appeared that Belfast would be the only Council in Northern Ireland not to accept the transfer of the Community Festivals Fund, communities in the City would be unable to receive funding for festivals which had been held for many years. They suggested that the Committee should accept the money which had been offered by the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure in order to commence the operation of the Fund and then seek additional funding from the Department. They pointed out that because the Committee had declined the offer of funding at its meeting on 9th April, it was likely that a number of festivals which were due to take place in the summer period would not now be able to obtain funding from the Council.

The Director of Development reminded the Committee that her Departmental Budget would not be able to provide the amount of £77,300 to match the amount on offer from the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure in order to operate the Community Festivals Fund and that it would be necessary therefore for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to consider if finance were available from elsewhere in the Council's overall budgets.

Following a lengthy discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Humphrey,  
Seconded by Councillor McCausland,

That the Committee makes available in the current financial year £120,000 for the Community Festivals Fund, subject to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agreeing to provide the additional finance required, accepts the amount of £77,300 from the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and requests that it increase the amount which it is providing to the Fund by £42,700 to match the Council's contribution.

On a vote by show of hands six Members voted for the proposal and five against and it was accordingly declared carried."

