



Belfast City Council

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| Report to: | Strategic Policy and Resources Committee |
| Subject: | Request for Funding – Common Purpose Belfast (Bursaries) |
| Date: | 24 April 2009 |
| Reporting Officer: | Trevor Salmon, Director of Corporate Services |
| Contact Officer: | David Cartmill, Acting Head of Corporate Services Directorate |

Relevant Background Information

This paper presents a request for financial assistance for a sum of £4,000 to Common Purpose Belfast in connection with its 2009 Navigator programme. The request concerns bursaries for course applicants who are unable to meet participation costs.

Common Purpose programmes are designed to draw together leaders, emerging leaders and senior managers from all walks of life who could potentially play a role in shaping the future of Belfast. The council has supported Common Purpose Belfast since its inception in 1996 through hosting elements of the programme; funding participation every year by one member and one officer; and providing bursaries annually for local community/voluntary sector applicants.

Key Issues

Until last year the council funded two bursaries for voluntary/community sector participants in Common Purpose programmes.

At its meeting in February 2008 the committee declined to make available an amount of £8,450 sought by Common Purpose to support two full-fee and one part-fee place on its Navigator programme. The decision reflected pressures on council resources and the fact that Common Purpose had benefited from council support for some considerable time.

The Regional Director has written recently to the council seeking support for the 2009 programme. An extract from her letter is enclosed below:

1. Given the current economic climate I would be grateful to apply for £4,000 which would allow us to offer two part-funded places for emerging leaders in Belfast. I understand that the Council may also have financial restrictions and I want to demonstrate my eagerness to work with you on a revised amount.
2. In order for Belfast to prosper now and beyond the recession, strong leadership is essential. We need leaders who have creative, visionary skills to navigate us through and beyond uncharted waters. Leaders that can take responsible risks as some would argue that it was irresponsible risk taking that got us where we are today. Leaders that understand the levers of power in society and can effectively network and form collaborations with those from a diverse range of organisations. Finally, leaders who can drive transformational change making Belfast a prosperous city with a unique selling proposition i.e. its skilled leaders. The navigator programme focuses on developing this type of leader. It is this type of leader that will weather the current storm and be resilient in the face of adversity as they have the right set of skills to prosper as citizens in Belfast, as business leaders in Belfast and as leaders in Belfast society.
3. The programme has also changed from when you initially supported it. It now has a 'strong' international element. Participants in Belfast via technology and our 360 website will come into contact with fellow participants in other parts of the world. They will inspire each other and provide valuable insights into their respective cultures. The level of understanding that Belfast participants will acquire from Indian, Chinese, American, European etc. markets and vice versa will foster a better level of understanding and improve Belfast's chances of doing business globally, hence prospering as a city. Knowing that strong talented leaders are behind a city is a great foundation for international collaboration.

Belfast City Council continues to support our programmes by way of nominating participants onto them, for this we are very grateful especially in such challenging times. I do hope that based on what I have outlined you may reconsider supporting our Navigator programme.

Discussion

A programme evaluation amongst Councillors and staff attending Common Purpose courses concluded that they are generally highly regarded and deemed beneficial to the council. Against this, the Committee is aware of pressures on council resources and may wish to curtail expenditure on Common Purpose courses to Members/staff only.

In light of the above it is recommended the Committee considers the following options:

- (i) Accede to the request for £4,000 to offer two part funded places for emerging leaders in Belfast
- (ii) Agree to a lesser amount of £2,000 to enable one part-fee bursary
- (iii) Maintain the position adopted last year whereby the council did not support bursaries in view of current budget restrictions and its existing commitments to Common Purpose.

Resource Implications**Financial**

Resources are available to cover the maximum funding option of £4,000.

Human Resources

None

Asset and other Implications

None

Recommendations

The Committee is invited to consider the 3 options above and, if agreeing to offer support, pass the undernoted resolution.

That the expenditure in respect on the aforementioned be approved under Section 115 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972, it being the opinion of the Committee that the expenditure would be in the interest of, and would bring direct benefit to the District, and inhabitants of the District, with the Committee being satisfied that the direct benefits so accruing would be commensurate with the payments to be made.

Decision Tracking

The decision of the Committee, following ratification by Council, will be communicated to the applicant in **May 2009** including payment towards bursaries if agreed.
Officer Responsible – **David Cartmill**.

Document Attached

Special Expenditure Budget criteria to be applied in the assessment of requests.

APPENDIX 1

B Policy and Resources Committee,

2772 Friday, 18th June, 2004

Special Expenditure Budget - criteria to be applied in the assessment of requests

- (1) whether there are sufficient funds remaining in the Council's Special Expenditure budget for the relevant financial year;
- (2) whether the application for financial assistance links to any of the Council's Corporate Objectives;
- (3) whether the direct benefit to be obtained is specific to the Council or its district or inhabitants;
- (4) whether the activity or initiative in respect of which assistance is being sought is being promoted by a person or organisation living or operating, or otherwise having a direct connection with, the City;
- (5) whether the request for financial assistance relates to an event or initiative which falls within the remit and statutory power of any other Committee of the Council (in which case it should be so referred);
- (6) whether the request relates to a specific event, activity or initiative as distinct from a request for a contribution to general funds;
- (7) whether the benefit to be obtained will be commensurate with the payment to be made.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Council would nevertheless reserve to itself the right to give special consideration to any particular request for financial assistance if the Members consider that special circumstances apply and legal advice has been sought where appropriate.

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