

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Enterprise Planning and Infrastructure
DATE	31 May 2012
DIRECTOR	Gordon McIntosh
TITLE OF REPORT	Community Council Business Development Grant Competition
REPORT NUMBER:	EPI/12/117

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report highlights an opportunity to enable local Community Councils to support business development within their communities

2. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that committee support the delivery of a Community Council Grant Competition as outlined in the report.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Senior Officer for Employability, Skills and Community Enterprise has been on secondment to Aberdeen Business Improvement District from October 2010 to April 2012, during which full salary costs were recovered for the period of August 2011 – April 2012. In addition as there were no internal resources to continue the delivery of this service savings were also made from the Employability, Skills and Community Enterprise project budget. Agreement has now been received from finance that a sum of £ 30,000 can be carried over to be used for specific project delivery. This project enables revenue earned through the secondment of an Economic and Business Development staff member to be re-circulated into activities designed to promote enterprise within local Aberdeen communities. As such this activity is being funded at no net cost to the Council, using earmarked reserves.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Personnel

It is proposed if the recommendations in this paper are approved that staff from within Economic and Business Development Service will promote and manage the competition. It is anticipated that this will not

add any additional workload as the competition falls within the work plan of the Employability Skills and Community Enterprise Team.

Legal

Checks will be made to ensure each Community Council is properly constituted. The competition administered by a set of terms and conditions which will be passed to Legal & Democratic Services for consideration prior to issue

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

- 5.1 Community Councils are the most local tier of statutory representation in Scotland. They bridge the gap between local authorities and communities, and help to make public bodies aware of the opinions and needs of the communities they represent.

Their primary purpose is to ascertain and express the views of the community to the local authority and other public bodies. Many Community Councils also involve themselves in a wide range of other activities including fundraising, organising community events, undertaking environmental and educational projects, attraction of business to their area and much more.

The Scottish Government, in partnership with COSLA and the ASCC (Association of Scottish Community Councils) have developed 5 pilot projects involving Community Councils, focussing on budget management, elections and asset management, widening their areas of responsibility and increasing engagement with a more diverse cross section of their community. Although none of the pilot projects are within the Aberdeen city and shire area a precedent has been set to encourage the growth of the remit of Community Councils and ensure their ability to influence and positively impact the economic sustainability of their area.

Further to this a recent survey by the Association of Scottish Community Councils identified over 1,000 different activities which community councils have undertaken. These included road improvements, youth projects, environmental initiatives, upgrading of amenities, management of assets, business community engagement and community initiatives. Torry community council has been particularly active in expanding their role by establishing "Enterprising Torry".

- 5.2.1 Enterprising Torry is a new initiative from the Torry Community Council, designed as a forum for positive dialogue between businesses in Torry and the local community. The aim is to establish projects to encourage

business development in the area. To date a business breakfast and a cheese and wine evening have been held.

5.2.2 Currently there are 24 active Community Councils across the city, who may offer additional community services beyond their statutory function. This paper proposes that a one off grant pot of £ 30,000 be established to assist Community Councils develop the tools and support systems to support local business development and start up (commercial, community and social) within their local community. Increased business activity within the communities will increase vibrancy, create employment and training opportunities and work towards area regeneration.

5.2.3 Grants may be used to:

Develop information websites

Host business start up networking meetings

Support Business Plan Development

Promote Business Opportunities within the Community

Promote Business premises within the Community

Purchase legal advice

Offer Business Start up workshops within the Community

Initiate Community Asset management

Produce Marketing Materials etc.

5.3 Process

All 31 Community Councils within the city will be advised on the availability of the grant funding and invited to submit a proposal for funding up to £ 3,000

Officers will follow up with visits to those indicating an interest to outline the process and eligibility criteria.

Application packs will be issued to all those who note an interest

Applications will be assessed against a pre set criteria

Maximum of 10 x £ 3,000 grants will be issued.

Legal framework used for “Retail Rocks” will be modified to suit the project and reduce further impact on officer resources.

5.4 Outcomes

A successful project will work towards the establishment of new community based commercial, social and community businesses.

Profits may be reinvested back into the community

Increased opportunities for employment, training and work experience within the communities.

Opportunities to reduce the negative economic impact of the “Welfare reform Bill” on local communities.

Potential reduction of vacant properties

Increased community vibrancy and civic pride

Successful participation may generate interest and a desire to re convene the 7 inactive Community Councils

Reduction of unemployment ratio within communities

Increase in local entrepreneurial activity

Potential Co-operative formation

Increase in local services

Increased interaction between the Community Councils and the local Community Centre.

Local Community councils are empowered to assist the development of community based business

Reduction of Aberdeen City Council Staff resource requirement for Community Business Development

5.5 Finance

The senior officer for Employability, Skills and Community Officer has been on secondment to Aberdeen BID from October 2010 to April 2011, during which full salary costs were recovered for the period of August 2011 – April 2011. In addition as there were no internal resources to continue the delivery of this service savings were also made from the ESCE project budget. Agreement has now been received from finance that a sum of £ 30,000 can be carried over to be used for specific project delivery. Therefore this proposed activity can be delivered at no financial cost to the council.

6.

IMPACT - CORPORATE

This report relates to the Single Outcome Agreement:

- National Outcome 1 : We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place for doing business in Europe;
- National Outcome 2: We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people.
- Local Outcome – Diversification of the Economy

Vibrant, Dynamic & Forward Looking

Ensure the sustainability of the successful economy of Aberdeen City and Shire

Continue to drive regeneration and take advantage of regeneration opportunities city wide as they present themselves and identify, in consultation with the local communities, immediate priorities for regeneration projects

The report also supports the Five year Business Plan strategic priority:

Ensure a sustainable economic future for the city.

The report also supports the main aim of Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure, which is:

Enable Aberdeen city to achieve increased sustainable economic growth for the benefit of all citizens, (by) ensuring people and communities are genuinely engaged in decisions relating to enterprise, planning and infrastructure issues in the city.'

IMPACT – PUBLIC

This paper is likely to create interest from members of the public who either participate in or have an interest in their local Community Council.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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