

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Finance and Resources
DATE	25 April 2013
DIRECTOR	Stewart Carruth
TITLE OF REPORT	Small Financial Assistance Grants – Application Process
REPORT NUMBER	CG/13/055

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to update the committee on the progress in reviewing the process for financial assistance, in response to the item included in the committee business statement.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the Committee:-

- i) agree to update the criteria and process for small financial assistance grants; and
- ii) agree to provide information on the criteria and timescales for processing applications on the Council Grants and Funding webpage as detailed in section 5 of the report.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications directly associated with this report.

The awarding and approval of grants and financial assistance is a significant element of council business and as such millions of pounds are paid to external organisations each year. Appropriate and suitable means of approval following the principles of 'Following the Public Pound' require to be maintained in order to ensure Best Value.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

The award of grants and financial assistance provide benefits to the City of Aberdeen and its citizens.

5. BACKGROUND

Current Arrangements

The Finance and Resources Committee has considered many requests for financial assistance and has requested that officers bring forward proposals for streamlining the way in which the grants applications process works, particularly with regard to reporting to Committee.

In October 2011 the Council approved a revised Local Code of Guidance for Funding External Organisations and Following the Public Pound and this is the basis of the relationship between the Council and recipients of grant funding. The Council has a range of grant funding pathways with most being very specific to a statutory duty or business objective. Examples of these are Sports Grants, Holiday Playscheme Grants and Home Improvement and Repair Grants. The full list can be accessed from the Councils 'Grants and Funding' webpage below.

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/community_life_leisure/grants_and_funding/grants_and_funding.asp

While the above schemes have specific budgets and criteria against which each application is judged it has been less clear what the process is in relation to one-off financial assistance or grant funding requests that are received from time-to-time, which fall outside the criteria for specific budgets.

These one-off requests have usually been received by the Lord Provost, Chief Executive or Head of Finance and a report to Finance and Resources Committee has been prepared for the next meeting following the request.

Requests have been judged against a set of criteria (set out below) however the Committee has had the discretion to judge each on its own merit and determine an outcome that it feels is appropriate, i.e. the Committee is able to award funding for a request that does not meet the general criteria set.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Applications from individuals seeking sponsorship, for taking part in fundraising events abroad or for placements with charitable organisations or trusts in developing countries, are declined.b) Applications from individuals or groups seeking assistance towards costs of excursions outwith the City are declined.c) Applications which tend not to be supported are those from national organisations, unless there is some clear and measurable local benefit, and health related applications, which are seen as the clear responsibility of the health authorities.d) On a number of occasions assistance is provided to both local and national organisations, either in whole or in part, with the costs of hiring accommodation such as the Beach Ballroom for various fund-raising events and gatherings. |
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An analysis of the ad-hoc requests for funding over the last couple of years shows that a high proportion are for requests to cover costs relating to hiring the Beach Ballroom for events, whether they are charitable or otherwise, and for individuals or groups seeking assistance with excursions and travel outside the city.

There is no specific time scale for requests being received and no deadlines have ever been set due to the ad-hoc nature of most requests. What is evident is that where an organisation has received funding in one year it is highly likely they will return to the same source of funding in the future.

Updating the Process

In relation to reviewing and streamlining the process of grant funding and in particular making it clear where funding requests are to be addressed a number of principles have been set out:

1. An application for funding will be considered in relation to the current grant funding budgets and established grant funding streams that exist in the Council;
2. Where an established grant funding budget exists then it will be sent to the relevant service and consideration of the matter will be subject to regular criteria and time scales set down for that grant;
3. Where an application does not fit into any established grant funding budget a check of the Central Register of Grant Funding will be made to establish if the person, group or organisation is in receipt of other Aberdeen City Council funding;
4. If funding is already in place for the person, group or organisation the application will be rejected and the applicant notified by officers;
5. Where an application is successful in securing ad-hoc financial assistance it will not be repeated in the subsequent financial year;
6. If the reason for the application is expected to be recurring then suitable information will be provided to the applicant to allow for consideration of alternative funding streams;
7. An award for ad-hoc financial assistance will not exceed £2,500 for any application
8. It is recognised that in exceptional circumstances that the Committee deems fit funding in excess of £2,500 may be approved and if this were to occur then arrangements in relation to the Local Code of Guidance on Funding External Organisations and Following the Public Pound would require to be put in place; and
9. The financial assistance budget is set each year and means that the availability of funding is cash limited.

It is recommended that the above principles determine the arrangements to be used by the Council for awarding of small financial assistance grants that are of an ad-hoc nature.

The criteria used currently should be continued and amended to reflect the above principles. These would now be amended to take account of the principles, and will provide a general framework against which to initially judge an application.

Small Financial Assistance Grants – Assessment Criteria

- a) An application will only be considered where there is no established Council funding budget alternative;
- b) An application can be submitted by an individual, group or organisation for a clear and specific purpose and must include relevant background information and financial circumstances;
- c) If funding is being provided to the applicant from another Council budget the application will not be considered;
- d) Funding, where awarded, will not be available in the subsequent year from this budget;
- e) Funding, where awarded, will not exceed £2,500;
- f) Applications from individuals seeking sponsorship, for taking part in fundraising events abroad or for placements with charitable organisations or trusts in developing countries, will be declined;
- g) Applications from individuals, groups or organisations seeking assistance towards costs of excursions outwith the City will not be supported;
- h) Applications from national organisations will not be supported unless there is some clear and measurable local benefit;
- i) Applications in relation to health related matters, which are seen as the clear responsibility of the health authorities, will not be supported;
- j) Costs associated with hiring the Beach Ballroom either in whole or in part, can be considered, for fund-raising events and gatherings;
- k) An award of financial assistance will only be considered where budget remains available.

It is recommended that the criteria are made available on the Grants and Funding webpage.

While the primary grant funding schemes in many cases have specific deadlines, the very nature of ad-hoc financial assistance applications does not lend itself to the setting of deadlines. However it is possible to be clearer in relation to when an application will be considered if it's received at a particular time and to which Committee cycle that would relate.

Financial Year 2013/14	
Month Application Received	Finance & Resources Committee
April	June
May	June or September
June	September
July	September
August	September or December
September	December

October	December
November	December or February
December	February
January	February or May
February	May
March	May

It is recommended that the timescale information be made available on the Grants and Funding webpage to advise applicants of the time needed to address an application request.


6. IMPACT

The City Council will, within financial constraints, seek to support external organisations and partnerships within the City. All applicants will be given equal consideration within the general criteria for the disbursement of grants and donations from the budgets.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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