

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Diamond Jubilee Commonwealth Travel Bursary Working Group
DATE	21st November 2013
LEAD OFFICER	Chief Executive
TITLE OF REPORT	Commonwealth Travel Bursary – Update on progress
REPORT NUMBER:	ECS/13/077

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report brings to the Working Group an update on the Diamond Jubilee Commonwealth Travel Bursary (the Bursary).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Working Group:-

- a) To approve the project brief, application, selection process, and guidelines for applying to the scheme as presented in Appendix 1.
- b) To approve the dates proposed to launch the initiative and the closing dates for applications in 2014/15.
- c) To recommend to the Finance, Policy and Resources Committee that powers be delegated to officers to take decisions on the allocation of travel bursaries within the scheme approved by it on 13 June 2013, based on consideration of the recommendation put forward by the Delivery Partner and the independent assessment panels: and that the remit of the working group be altered in order to oversee the process, receive updates on progress, to hear presentations on successful bursary awards and to act as ambassadors for the initiative
- d) To instruct officers to report progress to the Working Group on an ongoing and timeous basis
- e) To approve that their next meeting will be in May 2014 to be updated on the results of the selection process and the communication of the programme.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Finance and Resources Committee at its meeting on 21 February 2013 resolved that a maximum sum of £50,000 be made available for the Bursary. The Committee further resolved at its meeting of 13 June 2013 that this sum was a one-off budget.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Given both the specialist nature of the Bursary and the wide range of potential opportunities offered by the diversity of the countries of the Commonwealth, the Working Group should be aware that it is

considered likely that supporting prospective applicants with their applications and then supporting those who are successful will be a significant additional call on existing staff resources and expertise. This support is also likely to require ongoing liaison with other appropriate bodies both in the UK and the intended country to be visited. The benefit of providing this liaison should result in projects and initiatives with a longer term and more beneficial impact on the individuals concerned and the city as a whole.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

5.1 Background

At its meeting of 2 May 2013 the (then) Diamond Jubilee Working Group considered a report by the Chief Executive updating it on the development of the Diamond Jubilee Commonwealth Travel Bursary (OCE/13/19). The Working Group considered the report and resolved to approve the draft guidelines and instruct officers to make all necessary arrangements for applications to be sought for the first round of Bursary awards

5.2 Progress to date

Officers are continuing to develop the bursary scheme to ensure it as successful as possible. Since the last meeting of the working group this has included consideration of the most applicable time-frame and process as well as identifying and contacting relevant local and international delivery partners. Presented below is a summary of this work.

5.2.1 Application & Selection process

Following on from the draft guidance, it is viewed that up to three travel bursaries per year represents a realistic and manageable level.

In terms of the selection process and the identified challenges in attracting applicants, following discussions with local partners, it has been determined that a nomination process, alongside an open call, is the most suitable method. On this basis, it has been determined that for the first application round, the following will apply:

- a. One applicant will be recommended by North East Scotland College
- b. Two applicants will be recommended by an independent panel.

It is proposed that there will be no upper limit placed on the level of support that can be requested through the Bursary. Officers will instead work with partners and applicants submitting through the open process to develop projects which are manageable and ensure Best Value. This allows different projects to be developed based on their scale, meaning both small and large projects may be recommended for support.

Owing to the nature of this Bursary, which will likely require the flexibility to quickly adapt to circumstances and scenarios where projects may not be confirmed until the summer months, it is proposed that officers take decisions on the allocations based on the recommendations put forward. Should this be approved by the Working Group, officers will ensure that all recommendations are fully scrutinised in the line the criteria, provide Best Value and that all progress is reported in a comprehensive and timeous fashion.

5.2.2 Application Deadlines

It has been identified that the majority of applicants will be interested to travel during the summer. For that reason it is proposed that the process will start at the beginning of the year, giving adequate time for applicants to prepare their proposals (with the support of ACC officers and North East Scotland College) and for decisions to be taken. On this basis, it is proposed that the opportunity will be launched on Monday 13th of January 2014 with a deadline of Friday 28th March 2014.

5.2.3 Delivery Partners

In order to ensure the bursary reaches a broad and relevant group of young people, discussions have been held with relevant partners. This, it is hoped, will provide young people with the necessary support to identify opportunities, make contact with international groups and to develop an application.

Thus far, the following have been agreed in principal with North East Scotland College (NESC):

- NESC will recommend one of its students or recent graduates for the bursary. The selection process will be decided by the college, making use of the ACC guidelines.
- NESC staff will offer advice on developing an application/ proposal to all candidates wishing to apply (including non-college applicants)
- NESC will offer to all successful applicants a workshop on the use of social media and new technologies to record and communicate the development of the project/participant.
- NESC will support the post-evaluation if required.
- NESC will offer presentation/exhibition space for the participants to present their work upon return to an invited group.
- NESC will participate and assist in promoting the Bursary and its results.

NESC staff and lecturers have already designed their internal processes and drafted their application forms, based on the ACC templates.

The ACC Creative Learning Team has agreed to offer mentoring to all applicants to develop their project and identify their development targets.

The Aberdeen City Youth Council have not to date responded to the request to involve them in the initiative. However, Young Scot will support and act as an advocate for the award.

5.3 NEXT STEPS

A communication campaign will be designed in partnership with NESC. A dedicated online space will be created to provide information and access to applications and guidelines. Further meetings with the Creative Learning Team and NESC staff will take place to manage the communication and the incoming inquiries and applications.

6. IMPACT

This report has the potential to positively impact upon the following priorities:

‘Aberdeen – the Smarter City’

- We will improve access to and increase participation in arts and culture
- We aspire to be recognised as a City of Culture, a place of excellence for culture and arts

The Service Action Plan for the Education, Culture and Sport directorate is currently being reviewed. The plan has four priorities, one of which is ‘extending quality cultural opportunities’: draft actions which are proposed include:

- Developing a step change programme to build capacity
- Increase participation in cultural activities
- Develop volunteering opportunities for those involved in arts and culture
- Develop our existing production and festivals
- Develop links with national bodies and arts organisations for local delivery

Community Planning Aberdeen’s Single outcome agreement 2013 articulates culture as ‘a high profile deliverable which requires commitment from all the partners, and will support the delivery of the City Vision’ with the following outcome:

- Aberdeen delivers a year of culture in 2017 which can be seen to impact every aspect of the 2022 vision

Whilst the bid for UK City of Culture 2017 was unsuccessful, the Council has articulated an intention to deliver a step change programme to help develop the cultural infrastructure of the city to achieve lasting change.

The Cultural strategy for Aberdeen, ‘Vibrant Aberdeen’ presents a vision of Aberdeen as a ‘vibrant, creative and ambitious city’ with five strategic objectives:

- Establish a cohesive cultural sector
- Increase community engagement in cultural activity
- Improve the city’s cultural profile
- Increase investment in culture
- Effectively monitor and evaluate the impact of culture

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

The establishment of the Diamond Jubilee Commonwealth Travel Bursary has the potential to enhance the reputation of the Council and to augment the global links the City already enjoys. As with all grants schemes, adherence to the established criteria for the use of the funding will be closely monitored to ensure that public money is used appropriately.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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