

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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| COMMITTEE: | Education, Culture and Sport |
| DATE: | 15 th April 2010 |
| DIRECTOR: | Annette Bruton |
| TITLE OF REPORT: | Grants to Cultural Organisations 2010/11 |
| REPORT NUMBER: | ECS/10/032 |

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To present to Elected Members the proposed cultural projects recommended to be funded by Aberdeen City Council in 2010/11.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee notes the revised cultural grants application and evaluation process and approves the following recommendations:

- i. The allocation of cultural grants to the value of £408,282.72 to cultural organisations according to the table set out in the main body of the report.
- ii. Enable officers to provide recommendations to future Committees in regards to the disbursement of any remaining funds in response to potential additional applications against the Cultural Grants fund(s) within this fiscal year.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

A total of £408,376 is available within the 2010/11 budget to support the Cultural Grants process. The budgetary breakdown, identifying specific headings, is as undernoted:

£ 100,000 Core Cultural Grants, £ 38,376 Voluntary Arts Organisations

£ 200,000 (formerly the Arts and Creative stream of the Energising Aberdeen Fund)

£70,000 Culture and Leisure Development Budget for 2010/11.

Applicants were invited to be considered for grants of up to 50% of the costs of their projects, showing either match funding or an in kind contribution.

83 applications have been received, requesting funds of £810,970.95. It is recommended to allocate cultural grants to the value of £408,282.72 which will support projects to the estimated total value of £12.6 million to Aberdeen City residents.

Applications were considered in the context of cultural provision across Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire and, where possible, against cross-cutting support streams provided by Aberdeen City Council, in order to avoid potential duplication of funding.

By providing up to a maximum of 50% of the project funding, the Council's proportionate level of exposure is reduced and is designed to encourage partners to carefully examine the opportunities for a range of alternative funding streams, consider the further development of self sustainability within their projects and look to facilitate partnership working in the delivery of cultural opportunities for the Community.

4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

There is a requirement for all successful applicants to illustrate how their projects connect to one or more of the local outcomes in the Single Outcome Agreement. The Cultural and Active Aberdeen Forums for Aberdeen City lead on the three Local Outcomes lying under National Outcome 13 'We take pride in a strong and inclusive national identity' with local outcome

The projects proposed also directly relate to strands of the following Local Outcomes:

Outcome 2, 'Aberdeen will have high quality employment opportunities for its citizens',

Outcome 3, 'People of all ages take an active part in their own learning to achieve their full potential' and 'Learning and training is appropriate and accessible to learner's needs.

Both local outcomes for National Outcome 4, 'Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens'.

Outcome 7. 'Improve the quality of life in our most deprived areas.'

Outcome 12, 'Aberdeen is widely recognised as a City with high quality natural assets, biodiversity, architecture and heritage which instill civic pride in its citizens.'

Outcome 15, 'Our public services are consistently high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs.'

Guidance for Community Planning partnerships, from the Scottish Government entitled 'Culture Delivers' states: 'Cultural provision and infrastructure is part of the drive for best value. High quality should be promoted, continually seeking to improve its impact on communities and taking account of local aspirations and needs. Cultural activity can also help other sectors and services deliver in ways more closely matched to peoples wishes, and can assist in engaging citizens with civic life'.

The Aberdeen City Cultural strategy, 'Vibrant Aberdeen' is due to be launched on the 30th April 2010 and forms the framework for the outcome evaluation process, is based on a series of core objectives which support the principles of service and community enhancement:

The five objectives are to:

- 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.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Other Key issues relate to:

- Cultural organisations in the City not being able to continue to operate should Council funding not be granted
- On occasion external funds will not be brought to the City if matching funds are not made available by the City Council.
- Funds not being used by organisations for the purposes for which they were granted.

These risks have and will be continue to be managed through a robust assessment of each application and through systems to monitor and review funded activities throughout the year.

There are no additional Legal, Resource, Personnel, Property, Equipment, Environmental or health and safety implications arising from this report at this time.

6. REPORT

6.1 Revised Aberdeen City Council Cultural Grants Application Process.

The revised Aberdeen City Council Cultural Grants Application Process which has been utilised for this current year was presented to the Culture and Leisure Trust Monitoring Working Meeting on January 18th 2010, which noted and supported implementation of the process.

6.1.1 Rationale

Historically, the Cultural Grant Application process was administered directly through submissions framed within the template of the Council's Funding Pack.

Having reviewed the existing application process, both internally and externally with current and previous applicants for cultural grants, it was clear that the current process, from the perspective of applicants and Aberdeen City Council was failing to effectively meet the needs of either party.

This mirrored feedback, arising from the Cultural Grants Application process over a longer period, which suggested that applicants felt that:

The form was difficult to complete and did not provide the necessary space to clearly illustrate the scope and purpose of the project.

Determining the cultural grant criteria in such a wide ranging generic document was overly challenging

The inability to submit applications on-line or via email was a material obstacle to enhancing access to the application process.

Too little guidance on the criteria and the reporting requirements following grant allocation was provided.

From the Council's perspective as funder, the findings of the review carried out by the Culture and Sport Strategy team confirmed that the previous applications pack:

Was unable to provide the stimulus to receive the information required to easily make a balanced decision on grant allocation.

Did not provide scope to include the identified objectives within the draft cultural strategy and was administratively inefficient.

Contained out of date and misleading information.

Lacked adequate guidance on reporting which had and could lead to difficulties in the monitoring and reporting of grants as a result of the huge variations in terms of the quality and level of information provided.

6.1.2 Revised Process

Whilst retaining and to an extent, expanding the principles outlined in the Council's Funding Pack, to more closely align with both the guidance outlined in the Council's own 'Following The Public Pound' policy and observations made by Internal Audit as part of a Service review in 2009, the first step in the revised process was to categorise the cultural grants in line with the level of grant funding requested. It was determined that this was an appropriate format as it enabled application forms and reporting to be pitched at a level which:

Allowed applications to be more fairly considered within the context of comparative requests and;

A. Ensures that Aberdeen City Council receives the necessary extent of information relevant to the level of grant in compliance with the 'Following the Public Pound' guidelines.

B. New grant criteria, which considered the Council's wider and cultural objectives, were developed along with revised application forms and reporting templates which were made available via the Council website and in hard copy both as a full funding pack and as individual files.

Reflecting the widening role of the Cultural Strategy, the additional option of submitting a direct on-line application via email was also created through a new generic web address, (vibrantaberdeen@aberdeencity.gov.uk)

To further streamline the administration of the application process, acknowledgement of applications and notification of the outcome of applications will be provided to applicants by a stated date through their allocated email address. This will be complemented by written confirmation should the applicant request this.

6.1.3 Managing the Change

The Culture and Sport Strategy team identified that the transition to the new grants process needed to be managed carefully and put measures into place to ensure this was done effectively.

Firstly, potential applicants were been kept informed of the planned changes through a mailing list and through Creative Cultures. They also received the application packs on the 21st of December 2009 to allow additional time to consider applications before the official beginning of the application process. In order to assist applicants with the new process, the application schedule was also extended through until the end of February.

While the majority, if not all, of the 2009/10 applications for cultural grants utilised email as a communication method, the postal application option was, nonetheless, maintained to ensure that all access routes were maintained.

Additionally to provide support, the Culture and Sport Strategy team scheduled a series of cultural grants workshops during the application phase. This included an overview of the cultural grants session in partnership with Creative Cultures, three application specific workshops and a 'making applications' workshop in partnership with the Cultural Enterprise Office. Applicants who were unable to attend any of these sessions or required further advice and information were encouraged to contact the Culture and Sport strategy team directly. This resulted in 12 individual sessions to provide additional support.

6.1.4 Benefits

Applicants

Through the applied revisions, applicants now have a process which provides clear and structured guidance on the grants and also an increased level of flexibility through the online administration process. Administratively, benefits are also gathered, particularly for smaller applications, from entering a process which requests only the level of information and detail which reflects the level of grant sought.

In providing an increased level of ongoing support and information through the grants workshops and the option of directly contacting the Culture and Sport Strategy team, applicants were able to access both pre-application advice and will, subject to the Committee's acceptance of the above recommendations, receive feedback on their application which can be used for future applications to both Aberdeen City Council and other external funding providers.

Aberdeen City Council

Aberdeen City Council has and will benefit from this revised process by aiding the robustness of the evaluation process through the provision of more relevant and up to date information from applicants.

In aligning the reporting templates with the application framework, it is anticipated that projects will be more easily measured against the grant criteria

and the detail provided in the original application and ensuring that applications in line with the Council's priorities.

By linking the reporting templates to the application process, a streamlining of the administration procedure is delivered which allows for a reduced level of administrative support in both the processing and monitoring of the Cultural Grants scheme.

6.2 Grants to Cultural Organisations

A table is attached as Appendix One which lists all the applications and the recommendations of the cultural grants selection panel for funding for 2010/11. The criteria for which the selection panel made the attached recommendations for the dispersal of funds included:

- Links to the Single Outcome Agreement
- Links to 'Vibrant Aberdeen' – The Cultural Strategy for Aberdeen
- 50% match funding (in kind or cash)
- Evidence of beneficial partnership working
- A report back on last years funding, where relevant, and the submission of a full application for 10/11.

Of the 83 applications received for 2010/11, it is recommended to provide an allocation to 76 of the organisations. The organisations that are not recommended for an allocation were judged by the selection panel to have not successfully met the grant criteria. This included organisations that did not have the required level of match funding, whose project was unnecessary duplication or whose application did not provide the necessary level of information. It is planned to provide feedback and additional support to organisations in order to assist future applications.

6.2.1 A full copy of the Cultural Grants application pack, containing all relevant documentation and criteria has been lodged in the Members Library.

7. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Culture & Leisure Trust Working Group January 2010 – 'Revised Aberdeen City Council Cultural Grants Application Process'
'Vibrant Aberdeen' Cultural Strategy for Aberdeen 2010 – 2015
'Culture Delivers' – Scottish Government paper on the Arts and Community Planning.