

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Executive Director of Corporate Services

Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee: 25 February 2009

Subject : Old People's Welfare Grant Funding

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee of feedback from both the Community Participation Committee and the Focus Group regarding the best use of grant funding for Elderly Welfare Organisations.

2. Background

- 2.1** The Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee in October 2008 and December 2008 asked that a paper be brought to the Community Participation Committee for discussion regarding possible alternatives for use of the Old People's Welfare grants budget, with a view to maximising the benefit to as many elderly residents within the Council area as possible.
- 2.2** A Focus Group meeting was also requested with the Old People's Welfare groups who presently receive a distribution, to allow open discussion of the current procedures and possible improvements.
- 2.3** There have been a number of adverse comments made to the Council from elderly people and their families over the inconsistent use of the grant monies. Historically, elderly members from Dumbarton and Alexandria benefit from the grant through social events – such as a Christmas lunch or outing. Whereas, elderly members within a wider area of Clydebank benefit from a cash payout.
- 2.3** Over the past few years the Council's Finance and ICT Service has become more involved in the grant distribution to the Clydebank organisations. Indeed, since 2006/7, the Council's Finance and ICT Service has actively managed the Clydebank Christmas payout after Member request for help. In being involved in the full process, a number of issues were highlighted – such as, security of staff and the elderly people with such large sums of money; the time required to process the system previously set up; issues affecting the health of the elderly (e.g. waiting in queues, historically outside in winter); public frustration inappropriately voiced at staff.
- 2.4** This led to staff contacting other local authorities - with a similar payout at Christmas - to identify other processes working more fairly and securely.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** Both the Community Participation Committee and the Focus Group were provided with information received from other local authorities on how money is distributed and used within their areas (attached as Appendix 1 for information).
- 3.2** The feedback from the Community Participation Committee (CPC) was mixed with the general consensus that the recommendations to this Committee should come from the Focus Group. Consistency over the West Dunbartonshire area and ensuring all relevant residents benefit from the grant funding were also issues raised by the CPC.
- 3.3** The Focus Group, held on 29 January 2009 was attended by 39 representatives for 19 of the 22 groups invited to attend. The main points of feedback include:
- There are issues for and against each current use of the grant (as noted in appendix 1 – e.g. risks of security and not all eligible persons benefit from either system)
 - Each representative confirmed they do not have any complaints from their members on how their individual group spends the money, or on how others spend it.
 - Some groups who give a cash payout commented on group representative contact details being given to individuals in the community. Agreement was reached on taking this issue forward, if appropriate.
 - Groups would prefer to keep the status quo – with the choice being left with them on how the money is spent.
- 3.4** If Members agree to leave the system as it is, officers will be required to review the current position on e.g. Council administration for Clydebank payout, security for groups and individuals regarding cash held. A report will be presented to this Committee on completion.

4. Personnel Issues

- 4.1** There are no personnel implications at this stage.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1** There are no financial implications.

6. Risk Analysis

- 6.1** No additional risk analysis was necessary at this stage.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1** Based upon previous experience, the Council is considering a change of practice to be more consistent council-wide and more safe and secure for elderly residents.
- 7.2** The Community Participation Committee advised that the recommendations should be made by the Focus Group. The Focus Group unanimously recommend to Committee leaving the current system running as it is.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1** The Committee is asked to consider feedback from the Community Participation Committee and the Focus Group and discuss options available for fair and secure distribution to elderly organisations which would be easily managed by the Council.

Joyce White
Executive Director of Corporate Services
Date: 12 February 2009

Wards Affected:	All Wards
Appendix:	Appendix I - Advantages and Disadvantages of alternative methods of distribution
Background Papers:	Committee Report October 2008 'Christmas Payments to Elderly People's Organisations' Responses from questionnaire to other local authorities Community Participation Committee Report and Feedback January 2009 'Old Peoples' Welfare Grant Funding' Notes from the Focus Group held January 2009
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