

Briefing Paper: Old People's Welfare Grant Funding

Purpose

This paper has been prepared in response to an invitation to attend the Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee and provide an update on the annual distribution of cash payments to old people in the Clydebank and Old Kilpatrick areas.

Background

The old people's welfare grant is an annual distribution of funds to various old people's welfare organisations throughout West Dunbartonshire. Historically old people in Clydebank and Old Kilpatrick have benefited from the individual cash payments. In 2009 this amounted to payments of £15 and £18 respectively.

Main Issues

Leaving aside the issue of accuracy and the procedure used to validate the right to such benefits the following points are worthy of consideration when determining the suitability of future cash payouts:

- 1) Security issues
 - Over £100,000 in cash was delivered to council premises last year. This money had to be counted and packaged before being transferred to distribution venues. The level of risk associated with such an operation is extremely high given the levels of violence displayed in robberies associated with much lower potential gains across the Strathclyde Police area last year.
 - Risk does not stop on delivery to the relevant distribution point. The security of the recipients and the individuals involved in the distribution of the cash prior to, during and after the event is also problematic given the widespread knowledge within the community of how and when the money will be distributed.
- 2) Additional Police Costs in 2009
 - Cost of escorting cash to distribution points and installing a police alarm system
 - Cost of providing officers at the venue and in additional local patrols
 - The hidden cost of removing officers from patrol duties to facilitate the above

Conclusion

While the cost to the police is readily calculated the Committee should be clear that the security issues noted above are real and the level of associated risk is extremely high. Although it is recognised that the decision to retain this payout is ultimately a political one, members should be in no doubt as to the risk associated with retaining a cash payment when alternative options are available. It is therefore recommended:

- 1) That the Committee discuss fully the viability of retaining the cash payout set against potential risk and liability
- 2) If a decision is taken to continue with the cash payout the Council, in conjunction with Strathclyde Police, undertakes a full security review at least 3 months prior to any future distribution and seeks to maximise the opportunity along with partner agencies to engage what is a traditionally vulnerable section of the community.

Submitted for information and consideration
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