

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL
Report by Chief Executive
Corporate Services Committee – 28 November 2006

Subject : Update from the Grants Working Group

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to provide Committee with information on a number of areas in relation to the grants process being reviewed by the grants working group and to note that a future report will be brought to the Corporate Services Committee in due course.

2. Background

- 2.1** Following favourable feedback on points of best practice within our procedures in an Audit Scotland review 'Following the Public Pound', a working group was set up to build on the positive foundations to enhance the Council's grants process.
- 2.2** A grants working group was set up to improve on the consistency of grant recommendation criteria; to review the terms and conditions of grant and follow up procedures; and to discuss service level agreement preparation. The group agreed that the main areas to be reviewed were:
- (a) Reviewing current processes and problems
 - (b) Aligning recommendations to Council policies
 - (c) Monitoring and reporting requirements
- 2.3** The working group membership crosses departmental boundaries to ensure all relevant issues are considered before finalising recommendations to Committee.
- 2.4** The proposed timescale for implementing changes in current practices is 1 April 2007 – that is, for all grants to be paid from 2007/08 budget lines.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** There is a need for firm criteria to be developed to allow recommendations to be applied on a consistent basis to all applications received.
- 3.2** The working group made contact with 13 other local authorities by questionnaire to gather ideas of 'best practice'. Six other authorities responded and it is apparent that each authority manages their grants administration differently. However, there were some ideas for changes in practice identified, including:-

- (a) Further use of officers' delegated powers;
- (b) Requirement for identified levels of match funding;
- (c) Advertising of grants;
- (d) Number of Council contact points / allocation of link officers for larger grants;
- (e) Frequency of grant approval;

3.3 In addition, the working group identified the following further issues to be addressed:

- (a) Linking the application and grant to Council priorities – this will entail an amendment to the application form.
- (b) Identifying further criteria to be met – such as what and who the grant scheme is aimed at; identifying types of expenditure or groups the Council would not fund; categorising grants into start-up / events / running costs; consideration given to a maximum percentage of contribution; appropriateness of year on year funding for the same organisation.
- (c) Ensuring appropriateness regarding mainline budgeted payments for 'services' instead of awarding of grant funding.
- (d) Ensuring grant thresholds / conditions of grant are set to best suit the Council and organisational requirements. Currently there are three threshold levels - <£500, £500 - £4,999 and >£5,000.
- (e) Revising monitoring procedures to ensure monitoring is adaptive and appropriate for the level of grant being awarded.
- (f) Ensuring appropriate training is given to staff involved to allow the process to run as smoothly as possible.

3.4 In essence, the working group agreed that:

- (a) Procedures need to be more transparent.
- (b) Clear criteria needs to be set to assist officers in their recommendations.
- (c) The application form needs to be revised and should include a section where organisations need to demonstrate how the grant fits in with Council priorities.
- (d) Monitoring procedures need to be revised to ensure monitoring is adaptive and appropriate.

3.5 The working group now needs to take the points identified in 3.4 forward and finalise recommendations of the new procedures to the Corporate Services Committee on 31 January 2007.

4. Personnel Implications

4.1 There are no personnel implications.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications.

6. Conclusions

6.1 The working group aim to have clearer, more transparent and standard criteria and procedures for officers to follow when making grant recommendations before the start of the new financial year. This will be reported to the Corporate Services Committee on 31 January 2007.

7. Recommendations

7.1 **The Committee is invited to note:-**

- (a) **progress achieved to date by the Working Group and comment thereon; and**
- (b) **that a full report will be brought to the Corporate Services Committee on 31 January 2007.**

David McMillan
Chief Executive
Date: 16 November 2006

Wards Affected: All wards

Appendix: None

Background Papers: Grants Working Group Minutes

Person to Contact: Gillian Jump, Manager of Accounting,
Council Offices, Garshake Road, Dumbarton, G82 3PU.
Telephone (01389) 737194
Email: Gillian.jump@west-dunbarton.gov.uk