

# WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

## Report by the Chief Executive

Corporate Services Committee : 28 November 2006

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### Subject : The Attraction of External Funding to West Dunbartonshire

#### 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report updates Committee on the plans to re-organise External Funding resources within the Council to reflect changes in the national external funding climate and to acknowledge the role of Community Planning.

#### 2. Background

- 2.1. In recent years, the External Funding function within West Dunbartonshire Council has been organised across two departments; namely Housing, Regeneration & Environmental Services (HRES), which hosts a full time European Officer, full time Urban II Projects Officer & part time Urban II Clerical Assistant, and the Chief Executive's Department which hosts a full-time External Funding Officer. There is currently no officer within the Community Planning Partnership with a specific External Funding remit.
- 2.2. In February 2006, Council agreed a number of changes to the departmental structure. One element of the decision requested that – with regard to external funding - the Chief Executive:  
*“bring a report to the next Council meeting that considers options for internal structural change. This change should look at the creation of a small funding unit, working with our Community Planning partners. The unit would be well placed to work alongside partners and the voluntary sector to develop joint funding bids to external sources.”*
- 2.3. In April 2006, having considered an initial report, Council agreed to support the principle of an External Funding Unit, led by the Council, involving officers seconded by the Council, and serving all Community Planning partners. Council requested that the Corporate Management Team, (CMT), should consider further information on the staffing implications. It was further agreed that the implementation of this approach be remitted to the Chief Executive in conjunction with the chair of the Community Planning Partnership. Following this, a series of discussions took place regarding secondment and line management arrangements.
- 2.4. In August 2006, the Community Planning Partnership Board also agreed to:-
- Support the creation of a pilot External Funding Team for West Dunbartonshire.
  - Request the Partnership Manager to progress development of a pilot by confirming support arrangements with individual partner agencies.

- Review the pilot prior of the end of CRF, (before March 2008), and that this should inform decisions on the longer term position of the External Funding Team.

**2.5.** Details of the changes in the national External Funding Environment are summarised in appendix 1 to this report. The anticipated benefits of the External Funding Team are summarised in appendix 2.

**2.6.** At the meeting of the Corporate Services Committee in September 2006, it was agreed to note that, as the Funding Officer's post had become vacant, the presentation (on grants), would not take place until the position had been filled; and, that a report would be submitted on the set up of the External Funding Team, to the next meeting of the Committee. This report seeks to provide this information.

### **3. Main Issues**

**3.1.** It has been agreed that the strategic direction of the External Funding Team will be set and monitored by a Steering Group composed of Community Planning partners. The Team will be line managed by the Economic Development Section of the Department of Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services.

**3.2.** Within the Council structures, the posts which will become part of the External Funding Team are:-

- External Funding Officer (currently vacant). This post has been upgraded using CRF resources to provide a lead officer for the Team
- European Funding Officer, (currently vacant)
- Urban II Project Officer (currently vacant)
- P/T Urban II Clerical Officer

**3.2.** Community Planning partners and Community Regeneration Fund (CRF) resources will provide additional support. This will take the form of funding for:-

- an additional officer to work with community groups
- administrative support
- a development budget to allow the production of publicity material, training provision etc

The Community Planning Manager has met with partners who are best-placed to contribute to the Unit. The Community Health Partnership, SED and Clydebank College have all indicated that they are interested in becoming involved in contributing towards the development of the Unit. Other partners have expressed an interest in the proposal and may be prepared to become involved once it has been established. The Unit could also draw down additional CRF to meet any shortfall in costs in the short-term if required, subject to agreement of Community Planning Partners.

- 3.3. The first round of recruitment for the Lead Officer for the Team was unsuccessful, however the post was re-advertised, (with a closing date of 10 November 2006). Interviews will take place before the end of November.
- 3.4. The European Officer post has been advertised with a closing date of 17 November, and an interview date of 28 November.
- 3.4. It is hoped that the External Funding Team will be operational by the end of 2006.

#### **4. Personnel Issues**

- 4.1. The personnel issues relate to changes in line management, responsibilities within the Council. Additional employee costs will be met from partner/CRF resources.

#### **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1. There are no additional financial implications for the Council, although it has been agreed that the Council will provide premises for the External Funding Team.

#### **6. Conclusions**

- 6.1. The development of the External Funding Team has the potential to produce added value, both for Council and partner activities in attracting external funding to West Dunbartonshire. The development of the Team will be monitored, and a full report provided prior to the end of CRF funding in March 2008.

#### **7. Recommendations**

- 7.1. **The Committee is invited to note the progress with the establishment of the External Funding Team.**

**David McMillan**  
**Chief Executive**  
**Date: 16 November 2006**

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**Wards Affected:** All

**Background Papers:** Report to Council and Minutes of Council – February 2006  
Report to Council and Minutes of Council - April 2006

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### **The External Funding Environment**

1. Europe – The European Funding programmes currently accessible by West Dunbartonshire Council come to an end in 2006. Replacement funding programmes which might be accessed by the area will be greatly reduced. (ESF will reduce from £563m to £239m for the whole of Scotland, and ERDF will reduce from £742m to £334m, again for the whole of Scotland.)
2. The new European Funding programmes, and the reduced levels of funding available, make it imperative that West Dunbartonshire organises itself in such a way as to maximise its potential for attracting whatever funding becomes available. A key factor in this will be the ability to identify appropriate match funding sources in order to access the reduced European pot.
3. National Lottery – The distributors of the National Lottery Good Cause funding have recently undergone a fundamental re-organisation resulting in the creation of a new distributor called The Big Lottery. The Big Lottery has responsibility for distributing 50% of all Good Cause funding from the National Lottery, which in Scotland amounts to some £257 million to 2009.
4. As part of the re-organisation of the National Lottery Good Cause Distributors, increased control of the identification of funding priority areas has been passed to the Scottish Executive. This increased control has resulted in the Big Lottery in Scotland being directed to follow the Community Planning priority areas within Scotland and to work closely with Community Planning bodies. This direction has already been evident in recent Big Lottery funding programmes which have emphasised the requirement for partnership working among applicant bodies across sectors.
5. In addition to the re-organisation which resulted in the formation of the Big Lottery, the other Good Cause distributors in Scotland are also reviewing the way in which they distribute their National Lottery Funding. For example, Sportscotland, the agency which distributes Good Cause funding for sport is currently reviewing the way it distributes funding throughout Scotland. This has already resulted in the appointment of development officers to work with local authorities and Community Planning Partnerships with a view to using Sportscotland funding in a more strategic way within authorities and in line with local Sport/Health improvement strategies.
6. The two remaining Good Cause distributors in Scotland are the Scottish Arts Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund. The Scottish Arts Council is currently reviewing the whole question of Arts funding in Scotland with a more localised focus in line with Sportscotland likely to be the outcome. The Heritage Lottery Fund continues to be directed by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in Westminster.

- 7 Other Local Authorities in Scotland - A recent benchmarking exercise carried out by The Scottish Local Authority External Funding Officer Group (SLOG) highlighted several local authorities who operated an External Funding section. This section comprised expertise in European and domestic funding within one section, which was used as a corporate resource and in some cases, a Community Planning Partnership resource. In some of these sections, administration of small local grants programmes was also carried out. Since the benchmarking exercise and through the SLOG network it has become clear that several other authorities have recently adopted similar External Funding sections including East Ayrshire, Falkirk, Angus, and North Lanarkshire.
  
- 8 Funders Forum – As a result of the changing nature of the External Funding environment in Scotland, and the increased influence of the Scottish Executive over National Lottery funding, a Funders Forum has been set up by the Scottish Executive to better co-ordinate and organise funders within Scotland. The Funders Forum is administered and chaired by the Big Lottery Fund in Scotland and includes members from other National Lottery funders, Scottish Charitable Trusts, COSLA and SCVO.

**Anticipated benefits of a West Dunbartonshire External Funding Team**

It has been suggested that an External Funding team within West Dunbartonshire could provide a central resource for council departments and community planning partners to access high quality information on the whole spectrum of External Funding. This has been investigated in depth, and it is clear that the benefits could add value in a number of ways. These include:

- A central resource to monitor all areas of External Funding, identifying match funding opportunities for other External Funding sources along with possible match funding sources for funding sources such as CRF and other specific grants.
- The opportunity to group together officers with wide experience and demonstrable success in project development and application preparation within the External Funding environment. This team would be available to council departments and partner agencies to assist in project development and bid submission to the broad spectrum of External Funders.
- A central focus on increasing levels of External Funding being attracted to the authority. A team approach to External Funding with appropriate administrative and financial support would allow experienced officers to focus on attracting new funding to the area, with appropriate back-up monitoring of grant expenditure where necessary and would ensure that claims were made timeously and that proper evaluation was carried out.
- The opportunity to be proactive in encouraging and assisting service departments to make External Funding applications as and when funding becomes available. Positive encouragement to senior management and to the Community Planning Board could be focused through the External Funding Team to ensure that projects were developed and applications submitted to all funding programmes accessible by service departments or partners.
- A central focus for External Funding activity within the council and across Community Planning Partners would allow co-ordination and would minimise duplication. A central focus would also avoid partners from West Dunbartonshire competing with each other in the application process for available funding. A central External Funding Team would be in a position to identify where a partnership approach would benefit a project and could also act as a point of contact and referral for partners interested in a project.
- An External Funding Team with a full remit could also co-ordinate and deliver a full External Funding training programme to council and partner officers interested in accessing External Funding or those who work with the voluntary and community sector.
- An External Funding Team could also act as a single point of contact for External Funding bodies and as a communication hub regarding all External Funding information.