

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Interim Executive Director of Corporate Services

Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee: 18 January 2012

Subject: Update on Elderly Welfare Grant Funding

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the current process and seek Members' approval to amend certain elements of the process, with a view to smoothing out the payment process for 2011/12 for as many elderly residents and groups as possible.

2. Background

- 2.1 Following a review of the current process and options for change, a report was submitted to the Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee on 22 June 2011 recommending a change to the way in which the grant funding held for older people was allocated, paid and used, which was subsequently approved at Committee.
- 2.2 An update was given at the Special Committee on 20 October 2011. At that time the total applications being reviewed (still to be finalised for checking) was noted as:

	Number
Nominated to self:	7,542
Nominated to groups:	<u>2,484</u>
Total	<u>10,026</u>

- 2.3 The total budget allocated in 2011/12 was £190,010 (including Dumbarton Common Good).

3. Main Issues

- 3.1 Following further checks, particularly in relation to duplication and nominations, total numbers to date currently stand at:

	Number	Value (£)
Nominated to self:	7,688	115,320
Nominated to groups:	<u>1,640</u>	<u>30,800*</u>
Total	<u>9,328</u>	<u>146,120</u>

*Includes Dumbarton Common Good allocated directly to Dumbarton Senior Citizens, per Committee 20 October 2011

Group funds

- 3.2 A number of the groups have now received their grant funding, with a number of application forms not yet received. A summary of the position is attached as appendix 1 for information.

- 3.3** It can be noted from the appendix a few groups do not intend to accept the funds nominated. Where this has been confirmed, the nominating individuals have been written to ask for a new nomination.
- 3.4** As noted within the appendix, there are a number of groups receiving less than £100. Following normal grant funding procedures introduced through 'following the public pound', the current process of completing an application form (now revised and minimised for the purpose of this grant funding – appendix 2) and providing information to verify existence and sustainability (i.e. constitution, financial statements, bank account details, etc) is proving laborious for a number of groups for very little financial benefit. Members are asked to consider minimising the information, for payments below £100, to only the revised application form and a copy of a recent bank statement (to confirm details).
- 3.5** At its meeting on 20 October, the Committee agreed that 'to ensure no group is unable to operate due to members not assigning their £15 to them....committee delegates authority to officers, in consultation with the spokesperson, to approve grants as required in order to meet the needs of the group'. Council officers have had initial discussions with /supplementary application form from two groups:
- Age Concern Renton - indications are that additional funding will be required/ requested. As yet no details have been received to confirm this need; and
 - Dumbarton Senior Citizens Committee. Historically this group has received approximately £21,000 annually for events held by the group. This year the allocation to this group through nominations was £225, with Members agreeing at the Special Committee in October 2011 that the funds (£6,200) allocated from the Common Good Fund would be directed to this group outwith the nomination process. The group has therefore received a total of £6,425 for 2011/12. The group has now applied for funding from the Common Good Fund to the value of £20,000 for events and contributions to organisations within the group's 'umbrella' (appendix 3 gives further information). Members will note that officer's recommendation of £5,000.
- 3.6** To date, the Council has had one late submission of a group listing (Age Concern Renton). The group has received a small level of funding from initial individual nominations, however based upon the listing the group would be due more. There are possibly a number of groups in this position and Members are asked to allow payment of late submissions for 2011/12, in consultation with the spokesperson.
- 3.7** To date, one group due funding in excess of £1,000 does not meet the requirements of the process – it does not have a constitution. Under delegated authority, the group has been paid the funds with agreement to work with the Council towards agreeing a constitution prior to future payments.

Individual nominations

- 3.8** Following a number of checks against Council systems and information held by the Council, BACs payments were confirmed to 6,887 individuals. However, there are a number of remaining issues in relation to either wrong bank account details given or bank (or post office) accounts which do not accept incoming funds. Officers are currently writing out to individuals and requesting revised information. The nominations with outstanding queries have not yet been paid. The number of current queries are:

Post office accounts	125 (83 revisions now received, checking ongoing)
Bank details	<u>522</u> (101 revisions received, checking ongoing)
	<u>647</u>
Other queries	154 (now resolved and due paid this week)

- 3.9** At present, Committee decision is to make all payments by BACs transfer. However, there are some individuals who have advised that they do not have an alternative bank account they can use (either theirs or a trusted relative/friend). An alternative payment method which would allow individuals to receive the funds would be for Members to agree payment by cheque (under these circumstances). Cheques could be cashed at the Municipal Bank (or an housing area office) if required.
- 3.10** There have been a number of late nominations received (currently +50). Due to the timing of the historic Clydebank payout, officers anticipate more being received in the coming weeks. To ensure the funding reaches as many individuals as possible, officers recommend that the late submissions received be reviewed and paid (if appropriate) by the end of January 2012, for the 2011/12 payout.

4 People Implications

- 4.1** Any workload resulting in the process has been contained within the current staffing resources.

5 Financial implications

- 5.1** Any payments made to date have been contained within the current budget. There has been one full application for additional funding at this time, officers recommendation of £5,000 from the Common Good Fund. This has not been taken into account within the Fund's budgetary control statement reported to this Committee.
- 5.2** To date payments made and anticipated from the elderly welfare grant budget are within budgeted levels. Current indications are that if Members were to approve the payment of late submissions, the costs would remain within the budgeted level.

6 Risk Analysis

- 6.1** Due to action taken regarding checks on duplication and eligibility, it is anticipated that the potential for mis-use of funds is minimal.

- 6.2** The use of the Council's 'tell us once' policy should have minimised any funds being remitted when it was no longer appropriate.
- 6.3** A risk was previously highlighted regarding the possibility of inaccurate banking information. Officers are currently working their way through inaccurate bank account information and contacting individuals as necessary to correct information as necessary.

7. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 7.1** An Equalities Impact Assessment was completed for the recommendations regarding the change to processes per the Committee report on 22 June 2011. This update follows as part of that assessment.

8. Strategic Assessment

- 8.1** The report updates on a process to allocate funds already held within the budget. The Council has identified a strategic priority for 2011/12, namely Social and Economic Regeneration, to which this contributes.

9. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 9.1** Members are asked to note the progress made so far in processing payments to groups and to individuals and the number of issues that have been highlighted within the report.
- 9.2** Members are asked to approve the amendments to the policy to allow outstanding payments to be made and help smooth the process for as many individuals and groups as possible, as follows:
- (a) Minimising information requested for groups due funding below £100 as noted in 3.4 above;
 - (b) Payment of late group listings of memberships / late group nominations – received prior to the end of January 2012 subject to agreement with the spokesperson;
 - (c) Payment of funds by cheque (to be cashed through the Municipal Bank or a housing area cash office) where no alternative is available; and
 - (d) Payment of late individual nomination forms - received prior to the end of January 2012.
- 9.2** Members are asked to approve the recommendation for grant of £5,000 from Dumbarton Common Good Fund, as noted in 3.5.
- 9.3** Members are also asked to note that a further final report on the 2011/12 payments will come to Committee after the year end.

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Appendices:

- 1: Group Update
- 2: Revised Group Application Form
- 3: Detail of Dumbarton Senior Citizen's application form

Background Papers: Corporate & Efficient Governance Committee report 25 February 2009

Corporate & Efficient Governance Committee report 29 April 2009

Corporate & Efficient Governance Committee report 24 March 2010

Corporate & Efficient Governance Committee report: 26 May 2010

Corporate & Efficient Governance Committee report: 25 August 2010

Corporate & Efficient Governance Committee report 22 June 2011

Corporate & Efficient Governance Committee report 20 October 2011

Grant Applications & Nomination Forms

Wards Affected: All Wards affected.