

**STRATEGIC EVENTS AND FESTIVALS FUND –ROUND 2 2020/21 FUND**

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**1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the details with regard to Round 2 - 2020/21 of the Council's Strategic Events and Festivals Fund. The report provides details of the bids submitted, the assessment process and recommendations for funding in response to submitted bids.
- 1.2 The Strategic Events and Festivals Fund and process was initiated at the Policy and Resources Committee on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2018 to enable organisations involved in the running of strategically important events and festivals to bid to the council.
- 1.3 The application process is competitive and a number of changes were made to the original application process, developed in 2018, following a lessons learned exercise. These changes were agreed by Policy and Resources Committee on 15 August 2019. The purpose of the changes were to enhance the process and ensure it is robust and transparent, focusing on strategic events and festivals that will result in the maximum economic value being secured from the available council funding.
- 1.4 A total of 10 applications have been submitted to the round two 2020/21 fund. The total funding sought from the 10 applications is £95,500.00. The total budget available to be allocated for 2020/21 is £90,000.00

**2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommended that Members of the Policy and Resources Committee:
- a) Consider the information provided in the report including the assessments process undertaken and;
  - b) Endorse the recommendations to enable the award of grant funding to the strategic events and festivals taking place across Argyll and Bute in 2020/21 as detailed in Table 1 of this report.

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**STRATEGIC EVENTS AND FESTIVALS FUND – ROUND 2 - 2020/21 FUND**

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**3.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 3.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the details concerning Round 2 - 2020/21 of the Council's Strategic Events and Festivals Fund. The report provides details of the bids submitted, the assessment process and the recommendation with regard to the bids being put forward to receive grant funding.
- 3.2 The Strategic Events and Festivals Fund was firstly taken forward as a competitive fund in 2019/20. The Fund was open to all strategic event and festival organisers in Argyll and Bute. A total of 12 strategic events were supported by the council in 2019/20.
- 3.3 A critical element of the application requirement is that the event or festival be held in Argyll and Bute and be of a strategic nature, i.e. having the capacity to attract people from out with the area, with a focus on national and international visitors, and generate significant economic benefits for the local community.
- 3.4 As Members will recall the initial round (2019/20) was significantly oversubscribed with a total of 21 bids received. The total funding request, based on all bids submitted was £221,060.00, almost double the amount of funding available. For the 2020/21 round a total of 10 applications have been received with a funding request totaling £95,500.00. The total budget available for 2020/21 is £90,000.00
- 3.5 The 2020/21 submissions demonstrate a greater focus on delivering what would be defined as strategic events and festivals. This reflects the changes to the application process put into place following the lessons learned exercise undertaken by officers and approved by Policy & Resources Committee in August 2019. These changes sought to deliver a robust and transparent application and assessment process with a focus on strategic events and festivals that would achieving maximum economic benefit to Argyll and Bute.

**4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 It is recommended that Members of the Policy and Resources Committee:
- a) Consider the information provided in the report including the assessments process undertaken and;
  - b) Endorse the recommendations to enable the award of grant funding to the strategic events and festivals taking place across Argyll and Bute in 2020/21 as detailed in Appendix A, Table 1 of this report.

## 5.0 DETAIL

- 5.1 Following the decision of the Policy & Resources Committee in August 2019 amendments were made to the strategic events and festival competitive grant process for 2020/21 and the fund was opened to bids for a period of 6 weeks commencing 26 August 2019 and closing 14 October 2019. A total of 10 application bids were received within that period. The total funding request, based on all bids submitted, is £95,500.00, (see Table 1, Appendix A).
- 5.2 The applications cover a wide area geographically and demonstrate a variety of event types, from literary events and festivals, to highland games and sporting events. The proposed events also take place at varying times throughout the year (2020/2021).
- 5.3 All applications to the 2020/21 Argyll and Bute Council's Strategic Events and Festivals Fund were expected to demonstrate that the event would contribute significantly to the culture, heritage and economy of Argyll and Bute, and be able to reach a national/international audience. The criteria for applications to meet was set out as follows:
- Attract visitors from out with the area and bring inward investment by increasing Argyll and Bute's visitor and tourism offer
  - Market to a quantifiable target out of region visitors (national and international)
  - Demonstrate a good return on public investment (leverage) by demonstrating the economic value of the event to the local economy
  - Demonstrate the economic, cultural, social, environmental and promotional value of the event to Argyll and Bute.
- 5.4 All applications had to submit marketing and business plans together with a budget breakdown including other funding sources and to meet the following principles:
- The proposed fund was open only to organisers who were intending to hold **strategic** events and festivals, that is events and festivals which contribute significantly to the culture, heritage and economy of Argyll and Bute;
  - The proposed event/festival location must be within the **Argyll and Bute** area;
  - The proposed event/festival had to be held between the dates of **1st April 2020 to 28 Feb 2021** to allow all financial payments and reporting to be concluded by 31 March 2021;
- 5.5 The fund is not intended for **local and small scale** events and festivals as there is the possibility for these to be supported through the Supporting Communities fund (formerly the third sector grant funding). This fund is currently open for applications and the closing date is 6 December 2019. The Carradale event fits within the more local event category and this event is therefore not being recommended for funding through the strategic events and festivals fund.
- 5.6 In addition to the main criteria and principles above a number of changes were introduced to the application/assessment process for Round 2 of the Strategic Events and Festivals Fund 2020/21 in order to make the process fairer and more streamline. These are detailed below;
- 1) Single grant pot. A single application form with accompanying guidance was developed, and designed to be suitable for all events regardless of scale in an effort to support consistency and fairness. Applicants were advised that the presumption would be that the

funding sought would be for £5,000 or less to support their event, in order to maximise the limited budget and to demonstrate best value for the public purse.

- 2) Grant available. Requests for funding were requested to be kept to a minimum, and no grant request should be greater than 20% of the total cost of the event.
- **Expected upper limit**: Applicants could apply for over the expected upper limit of £5,000 however a substantial justification and substantial evidence in support of the application was sought in this case. Seven of the 10 applications are within the upper limit of £5,000 with Carradale Music festival being the lowest request at £1,000.
  - Funding requests for **substantial additional growth**: Applicants were advised that consideration would be given to applications of between £5,001 and £15,000 where applicants could demonstrate a significant step change through the ambition to grow their event. One of the 10 applications falls into this range – Mull of Kintyre Music Festival. The Festival is actively seeking to expand their fringe events and attract new audiences and have provided strong evidence to support this and therefore meet the requirements.
  - Funding requests for **events considered to be exceptional**: Applicants were advised that consideration would be given to providing funding of between £15,001 and £30,000 to events for which it could be demonstrated that over 10,000 people will be in attendance and over £1,000,000 will be generated in economic benefit to the local economy. Two of the 10 applications are seeking funding within this range - Mull Rally and Cowal Highland Gathering. These two events meet the criteria above and the submissions were accompanied by a substantial amount of evidence to show precisely why such levels of funding are required. The request for Mull Rally was for a grant of £25,000.00. The recommendation is that the actual grant award should be £21,000.00. This would allow the council funding to focus on the marketing and promotion elements as well as the delivery of the new community event.

5.7 Other factors that have been assessed under the new process are as follows;

- Affordability. Alongside a balanced budget breakdown, applicants were asked to show that they have applied for match funding where relevant, and if successful provide evidence that this is forthcoming to ensure the event will go ahead.
- Not-for-profit distribution organisations. Only organisations which operate on a not-for-profit distribution basis are eligible to apply for funding
- Inclusivity. Events are required to involve local people, and if the event is run wholly by the community in a volunteering capacity the event scores highest in this category.
- Fragility. In order to score an extra point, the area where the event is to be held has to be within the top 20% SIMD data zones. Island communities also scored an extra point as their constrained geography means that they cannot match the capacity for growth of mainland events.
- Debts to the council. Applicants were asked to declare that the organisation had no outstanding debts to the council, beyond usual terms, in relation to their event.

## **6.0 CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 Over the last six years, the Council has made a significant contribution to the development of strategic events and festivals, and this has provided a successful economic stimulus across the area. It has also enhanced cultural and sporting activity in many places in Argyll and Bute. For the first time in 2018/19 bids to the Fund were competitive and subject to a scoring mechanism.
- 6.2 Following the agreed amendments to the initial process, there has been a greater focus by applicants on strategic events and festivals and consequently the vast majority of the applications and the associated funding requests have been recommended for approval by Members.
- 6.3 The Strategic Events and Festivals being supported through the 2020/21 fund will continue to make a very positive socio economic impact on communities across Argyll and Bute and will build on previous investment and secure a greater return on the Council's investment.

## **7.0 IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 Policy - The Council's Economic Strategy supports the value of events and festivals for their positive impact on the economy.
- 7.2 Financial – £90,000 in grant has been made available for a second round of Strategic Events and Festivals Funding for 2020/21.
- 7.3 Legal -Grant contracts will be provided to third parties that are successful in securing part of the fund.
- 7.4 HR - Administration of the grant will be undertaken using existing officer resource.
- 7.5 Fairer Scotland Duty:
- 7.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics –
- 7.5.2 Socio-economic Duty - – Positive contribution to fragile areas
- 7.5.3 Islands
- 7.6 Risk -.None
- 7.7 Customer Service - None

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Appendix A – Table 1