

UPDATE ON EVENT GRANT FUNDING TO EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The report provides an overview of the position on event grant funding provided to external organisations in 2020-21.
- 1.2 There are two separate papers on the agenda: Strategic Events and Festivals and Councils Supporting Communities Fund.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Business Continuity Committee are asked to note the different approaches in terms of the timing of distributing funds and the carry forward to future years and give consideration to the recommendations in the two separate papers on the agenda.

3. DETAIL

- 3.1 The Council has two Funds that provide grants to support events and festivals across Argyll and Bute:
 - Strategic Events and Festivals Fund – aimed at events more strategic in nature, with capacity to attract people from outwith the area. Amounts allocated are generally higher than those allocated via the Supporting Communities Fund.
 - Supporting Communities Fund – aimed at more local and smaller scale activities including community events, sporting events and gatherings of people.
- 3.2 For 2020-21, nine events were allocated funding from the Strategic Events and Festivals Fund totalling £90,000 and 51 groups were allocated funding from the Supporting Communities Fund totalling £98,199.
- 3.3 For the Strategic Events and Festivals Fund, the first tranche of funding (usually 90%) is distributed to the organisations 8 weeks prior to the event date. The remaining 10% is paid upon our receipt of evidence of spend and a fully completed Economic Assessment form. No monies have been paid out from this Fund in 2020-21.
- 3.4 For the Supporting Communities Fund, the funding, which is on a much smaller scale and therefore carries less risk, is distributed to the organisations once the awards are agreed at the Area Committees in March each year.
- 3.5 There are two reports on the agenda in relation to the treatment of grant awards that will not be spent within financial year 2020-21 due to the impact of COVID-19.

- The Strategic Events and Festivals report advises that 5 of the 9 events have been cancelled with the grants being conditional on the event being held within the year. These events are of a larger scale and will have a significant amount of preparation and on discussion with event organisers it is clear that expenditure has been incurred in preparation for the summer events. The paper recommends that in order to support the organisations that have had to cancel their event, the Council pays a grant to cover costs incurred by the organisation up to a maximum of 75% of the original grant award.
- The Supporting Communities Fund report advises that correspondence has been received from several groups concerned they will be unable to spend their funding this year due to the Government restrictions as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. It proposes the funding distributed in 2020-21 can be carried forward into 2021-22 if the restrictions are not relaxed to an extent that they can continue with their event in 2020-21. This will provide flexibility should events be delayed into the following year. It is further recommended that no applicant group can apply for funding in 2021-22 for a project/event/activity which duplicates that which has been funded in 2020-21.

3.6 As Section 95 Officer, I am supportive of the recommendations in both the reports and am of the view that, although there is a differing approach both approaches are considered to be reasonable in relation to the scale of the grant awards, the risks associated with them and the economic impact.

3.7 The Strategic Events and Festivals report also asks the Committee to approve a third round budget allocation for 2021-22 of £90,000. The Council is currently incurring additional costs bringing in less income due to the COVID-19 pandemic which could continue into the medium term, however, approving this small budget of £90,000 in advance of setting the Council's 2021-22 budget in February 2021 is recommended as these strategic events will play a critical role in the economic recovery of the area and they also contribute significantly to supporting local businesses and communities by bringing in additional income.

4. IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Policy – Both Funds support the economy with Argyll and Bute.

4.2 Financial – Budget has already been allocated for the Events in 2020-21.

4.3 Legal – For Strategic Events and Festivals, awards letters been distributed and grants are currently conditional on the event being held. For Supporting Communities Fund, contract extensions would be required.

4.4 HR – None.

4.5 Fairer Scotland Duty – The Supporting Communities Fund supports community groups in tackling poverty, reducing inequality and building a fairer and more inclusive Scotland.

- 4.5.1 Equalities - None
- 4.5.2 Socio-Economic Duty – The Funds seek to support economic growth of the areas.
- 4.5.3 Islands Duty – The Funds seeks to support islands communities.
- 4.6 Risk – By offering a partial grant towards costs already incurred in relation to strategic events, this will contribute positively to the economic recovery of the area. There is a risk that by carrying forward the supporting communities funding for a further year that there is difficulty in recovering any monies not spent but this is assumed to be a low risk.
- 4.7 Customer Service – None

Kirsty Flanagan
Section 95 Officer
29 May 2020

Policy Lead for Financial Services and Major Projects: Councillor Gary Mulvaney