

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

EMERGENCY POWERS COMMITTEE – 21 DECEMBER 2006

THE HOLY FAIR - MAUCHLINE

Joint report by Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services and Acting Executive Director of Development and Property Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** This report seeks approval of a grant of up to £20,000, payable to The Mauchline Burns Club and to be used towards the costs of funding a 'Holy Fair' event in Mauchline in May 2007.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The 'Holy Fair' in Mauchline has formed an integral part of The Burns an' a' That Festival for the past four years. Initially run as a "fringe event", The Holy Fair was incorporated into the main Festival Programme. Over the years, the Festival has seen increasing numbers of attendees at events, with a total attendance at all events estimated at almost 65,000 people, 63% of whom were from Ayrshire, 30% for other areas in Scotland and 7% from either England or overseas. It is estimated that in 2006, the attendance at The Holy Fair was in the region of 15,000 people.
- 2.2** To date, The 'Holy Fair' has been planned and organised by the Burns Festival organisers, with a significant input from Mauchline Burns Club who have brought bring a considerable amount of local influence and community ownership to the event.
- 2.3** The Burns Club has now approached the Council to advise that they now wish to plan and organise the event themselves, with direct funding and 'in kind' support from the Council. The Club is of the view that it has the capability and capacity to make the event a success, through a range of innovative suggestions which would refresh the event and attract more visitors. The Club also believes that it can achieve significant savings in cost.
- 2.4** The Burns an' a' That Festival will be held between 23 and 29 May 2007 and it is proposed that the Holy Fair be held on Saturday 26 May 2007. This means that The Holy Fair will be centrally placed in the main Festival programme and subject to meeting certain criteria specified by the Board of the Burns Festival Company, will allow the Burns Club to take advantage of the wider publicity and marketing of the entire Festival.
- 2.5** The Council's contribution to the Burns an' a' That Festival in 2006 was £40,000 and the cost of the Holy Fair was in the region of £30,000. The additional £10,000 was allocated towards the overall marketing budget for the Festival.

- 2.6** However, in the interest of event planning it is important that the Burns Club is advised as soon as possible whether or not the Council is prepared to support The Holy Fair in 2007. Detailed costs have not yet been finalised but preliminary discussions with Officers have suggested that the event will cost in the region of £20,000, depending on the levels of external funding and sponsorship that the event can secure. This represents a significant saving on previous years.
- 2.7** Accordingly, it is proposed that the Council awards a grant of up to £20,000 to the Mauchline Burns Club, to finance The Holy Fair in Mauchline. It would be an essential condition of the grant that a Service Level Agreement would be concluded with the Club to ensure that not only is the Council receiving value for money, but also that appropriate Health and Safety and Insurance provision will be made.
- 2.8** In planning and arranging the event, expenditure is necessarily incurred in advance, by way of deposits for performers, equipment to be hired etc. Accordingly, acknowledging that the event will take place in the financial year 2007/08, the Burns Club has requested the facility of an early advance payment of £5,000, from which these deposits and prepayments can be made in January / February 2007.
- 2.9** The cost of running the Burns an' a That Festival in 2007 has yet to be determined by the Board of the company. A report on the Council's continued participation in the event will be submitted to the appropriate Committee(s) early in 2007.

3. POLICY AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1** Awarding of this grant application would be consistent with the commitment of the Community Planning concept of community management and Improving Opportunities.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1** The proposed grant of £20,000 can be met from the Grants to External Bodies Budget, which is held by the Development Services Committee and is administered by the Department of Development and Property Services. The advance payment of £5,000 would be paid from the contingency element of the 2006/07 budget (within which there is a sufficient balance) and the remaining payment of £15,000 would be made from the 2007/08 budget, once approved in the annual budget process.

5. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** Arising from this report, there are no immediate personnel implications for the Council. However, nearer the time of the Holy Fair, officers of the Council will provide "in kind support" through the provision of relevant professional

services (such as preparing roads closure orders) etc, the costs of which will be absorbed by the service departments.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1** The Holy Fair event has been very successful in previous years and plays a major part in the cultural and tourism 'calendar' for East Ayrshire. Mauchline Burns Club is now keen to assume responsibility for the organisation and management of the event. It is felt that community management of the event would not only reduce costs since it would be done on a voluntary basis, but it would also bring various other benefits such as a sense of community ownership.

7. RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1** That the Committee approve a grant of £20,000 to Mauchline Burns Club towards the cost of the Holy Fair which will be held in Mauchline on 26 May 2007, payment being split between the financial years 2006/07 and 2007/08, as detailed in section 4 of the report.

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WS/JK/KH

11TH December 2006

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

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