

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

KILMARNOCK CENTRAL LOCAL COMMITTEE - 29 OCTOBER 2003

LOCAL COMMITTEE COMMUNITY GRANTS SCHEME - DISBURSEMENT OF FUTURE GRANTS BUDGETS

Report by Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to enable the Local Committee to consider a mechanism for the future disbursement of Community Grants funding.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 As Members of the Local Committee will be aware, the financial allocation made available for Community Grants for the current financial year was fully committed by September 2003. This level of early demand reflects a pattern which had become increasingly problematic over the last two or three financial years.

- 2.2 At its last meeting held on 2 September 2003, the Local Committee agreed that options for the future disbursement of the Local Committee's Community Grants budget be presented to it, including consideration of the mechanisms used by other Local Committees.

3.1 OPTION 1: IRVINE VALLEY LOCAL COMMITTEE MODEL

- 3.1.1 The Irvine Valley Local Committee prioritises its grant applications for the financial year based broadly on an analysis of the Local Committee's previous pattern of spending by category. In April 2002, the Local Committee agreed to apply the following categories/weightings:-

- Disability - 18%;
- Environmental - 18%;
- Leisure/Sport - 18%;
- Older People - 18%;
- Young People - 18%; and
- All other Miscellaneous Categories - 10%.

- 3.1.2 Thereafter, the Local Committee having calculated the amount of grants budget to be set aside for each category, sub-divided each of these amounts into equal proportions to represent the appropriate amount available to the Local Committee to spend under each category at the five Local Committee meetings throughout the financial year.

- 3.1.3 The Local Committee selected this option on the basis that it provided better control of the overall Community Grants budget, as it allowed budgeting on an 8-weekly basis and kept a check on the applications under each category rather than simply dealing with applications on a first come first served basis.

Further, it was noted that adjustments could be made between categories at meetings, e.g. if the Committee decided to spend more in one category one month, it may be off-set by a reduced spend in another area. Finally, it was noted that, where applications involved several events and projects spread throughout the year, the Local Committee could agree awards for imminent projects, while asking the group to re-apply nearer the time for later elements. This would mean that valuable Local Committee grants money would not be allowed merely to sit in another organisation's bank account until a much later date; organisations which applied later in the year would not be losing out as less grant money would be tied up; and, over time, relevant organisations would come to know to apply for any such projects in perhaps two stages during the financial year.

3.1.4 Based on an average of actual spend over the last two financial years, the following categories/weightings could be applied to the Kilmarnock Central Local Committee, were it to adopt the mechanism outlined above:-

- Older People - 32%;
- Sport - 20%;
- Leisure - 18%;
- Early Education & Childcare - 10%;
- Community Councils, Arts & Cultural and Young People - 5% each; and
- Miscellaneous - 5%.

3.1.5 Clearly, the Local Committee, if it so wished, could alter these categories/weightings to meet its own priorities. However, using the categories/weightings outlined in 3.1.4 above **as an example only**, a total allocation for the 2003/2004 financial year has been calculated and these total allocations have then been sub-divided into equal portions representing the approximate amount which would have been available to the Local Committee to spend under each category at the five Local Committee meetings throughout the financial year (Appendix 1).

3.2 OPTION 2: CUMNOCK AREA LOCAL COMMITTEE MODEL

3.2.1 The Cumnock Area Local Committee requires organisations to submit their applications no later than 28 February each year irrespective of when the group's proposed activity or event is due to take place. All applications received by the due date are considered by the Local Committee as soon as possible following commencement of the new financial year. In order to facilitate the submission of applications by local groups, the appropriate Officer arranges (a) for those organisations who have applied for Community Grant funding the previous year to be advised of the arrangements for applying for the current year and to be issued with a Community Grant Application form; (b) for posters to be displayed at Council premises advising of the arrangement; and (c) for an advertisement to be placed in the local press.

3.2.2 The Cumnock Area Local Committee recognises that the main benefit of this approach is that the Committee should be in a position to consider the relative merits and priority of individual applications having regard to the other

applications received and the total funding available for disbursement. In addition, from the point of view of the local organisations, each organisation is given an equal opportunity of applying for, and receiving a grant award.

3.2.3 It should be noted that, in light of the likely volume of Community Grant applications to be received, it is anticipated that, should a closing date be specified for applications for the Kilmarnock Central Local Committee, operational difficulties could arise in processing the applications both in respect of Assessing Officers and Administrative Officers' time. Experience of operating such a mechanism in connection with Cumnock Area Local Committee grants during the last three financial years has given rise to a disproportionate burden being placed on staff time and processing and assessing these applications over and above the other applications still requiring to be processed by the other Local Committees and Service Committees. Additionally, it is important to ensure that quality in the assessment process is maintained and is not unduly affected by time pressures. Previous research further indicates that, whilst some groups were in favour of a closing date being stipulated which assist in their forward planning, some other small local groups are not in favour because they feel that a closing date puts undue pressure on them to apply for a grant too far in advance and restricts spontaneity in applying for grant assistance. Moreover, a requirement for organisations to apply for a grant at the start of the financial year can mean that some proposals can be speculative. Finally, this arrangements does not allow the Local Committee to be in a position to consider grant awards in respect of groups which might be formed during the year, emergency applications or, indeed, any cross-boundary applications received during the year which include that particular Local Committee area.

3.2.4 In operational terms, the Cumnock Area Local Committee set a closing date for applications of 28 February over the last two years. This has resulted in awards being paid out in early July, following proper assessment and consideration at a special meeting. In an effort to make earlier grants payments, the Cumnock Area Local Committee is reviewing its grant process. It is considered, however, that the earliest grants could be dealt with is mid May. Were the Kilmarnock Central Local Committee to opt for a 'closing date' approach to applications, it should take into consideration the inevitable delay between receipt of applications and payment of awards.

4. LEGAL/POLICY/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS - Nil.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. It is recommended:-

- (i) that the Local Committee considers the methods employed by other Local Committees for the disbursement of grants as outlined in Section 3 of the report with a view to determining the Kilmarnock Central Local Committee's own approach in the future;
- (ii) that it be remitted to the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources to implement any new mechanism for the disbursement of grant monies; and

(iii) otherwise, to note the contents of the report.

Fiona Lees
Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources

MJA/SM
13 October 2003

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS - NIL

Any person wishing further information on this report should contact Bill Walkinshaw, Administration Manager on Tel No (01563) 576135.

Implementation Officer: Bill Walkinshaw, Administration Manager

APPENDIX 1

<u>CATEGORY</u>	<u>% allocation</u>	<u>27 MAY 2003</u>	<u>2 SEPT 2003</u>	<u>29 OCTOBER 2003</u>	<u>JANUARY 2004</u>	<u>MARCH 2004</u>	<u>ALLOCATION FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2003/04</u>
Older People	32%	1,131	1,131	1,131	1,131	1,132	5,656
Sport	20%	707	707	707	707	707	3,535
Leisure	18%	636	636	636	636	637	3,181
Early Education & Childcare	10%	353	353	353	353	356	1,768
Community Councils	5%	176	176	176	176	180	884
Arts & Cultural	5%	176	176	176	176	180	884
Young People	5%	176	176	176	176	180	884
Leaving % of Budget for all other categories	5%	176	176	176	176	180	884
TOTAL	100%	3,531	3,531	3,531	3,531	3,552	£17,676.00