

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 15 JUNE 2000**

#### **EXTERNAL FUNDING SUPPORT**

##### **Report by the Chief Executive**

#### **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To propose the creation of a new post of External Funding Support Officer to support the Council and the local voluntary sector in conjunction with partners in securing increased external funding to realise key projects in East Ayrshire, subject to consultation with Trade Unions.

#### **2.0 CONSIDERATIONS**

- 2.1 On 5 June, the Culture Secretary announced a package of measures to ensure that former coalfield areas receive more benefit from National Lottery money in the future. The announcement follows a recognition that many areas of the country, particularly those that are suffering from deprivation, do not receive their fair share of Lottery funding. The overall effect of these packages of measures will be to attempt to target resources at low take-up areas and provide additional support to organisations applying for funds. It is anticipated in relation to the East Ayrshire Coalfield Social Inclusion Partnership area that this will result in a Lottery Officer working within the SIP.
- 2.2 Within East Ayrshire as a whole, many voluntary sector organisations turn to the council for support and advice in preparing Lottery applications and a number of departments have developed considerable expertise in matters relating to the various Lottery funds (for example in the Community Services Department). While the council has been keen to provide this support, and many applications have been very successful, the creation of a dedicated support officer would supplement existing resources and help to lever additional Lottery funds into organisations and projects throughout East Ayrshire. The proposed support officer would co-ordinate existing expertise within the Council in order to maximise all external funding opportunities via internal departmental collaboration. Through utilising specialist and generic information in relation to external funding it will be possible to establish a more structured approach from which to progress bids, having a greater impact across East Ayrshire.

- 2.3 In addition to Lottery funds, there are a number of new funding initiatives coming on-line, including revised European funding arrangements and the Coalfield Regeneration Trust, which could be targeted to support projects and proposals within East Ayrshire. The council's ability to secure funding from these new sources would be greatly increased if it was able to dedicate a resource to developing the expertise that would be required to make successful bids on behalf of the council and in conjunction with other agencies.
- 2.4 Also, it is clear that more and more central government funds for local authorities are going to be secured through 'challenge' applications. While the council and its partners have had some considerable success in securing funding (the recent award of £2.1M for combined service provision within Drongan and Dalmellington is a good example), developing an in-house resource capable of concentrating solely on these bids would ensure that the council is better placed to respond to new funding opportunities.
- 2.5 The council is also able to secure funding from various European sources. However the application process for this can sometimes be complex and bids require to be related to overall council strategies and area priorities. Expertise has been developed in this field within the Development Services Department and a new complementary resource would be able to coordinate external funding across the council as a whole.
- 2.6 At the Development Services Committee on 11 April 2000, it was agreed that a report be referred to the Policy and Resources Committee in relation to arrangements for ensuring that all council services achieve maximum benefit from European funding opportunities. The creation of the post of External Funding Officer will assist in the achievement of this objective.
- 2.7 Additionally, the Social Inclusion Strategic Partnership Group, at its meeting on 30 March 2000, recognised the importance of securing external resources and in particular asked that appropriate Council officers discuss with project partners the possibility of the creation of an external funding officer.
- 2.8 It is therefore proposed that a post of External Funding Support Officer be appointed to the Council at grade SO8 (£26,769 - £28,746). The post holder would be located within the Corporate Development and Communication Unit of the Corporate Resources Department and work with the council as a whole and voluntary groups throughout the whole of the East Ayrshire area.
- 2.9 It is proposed that this post be established for an initial period of two years but be subject to extension following a review of performance.

### **3.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 The creation of this post, and the benefits that are anticipated to arise from it, will help to deliver the council's social inclusion objectives throughout the whole of East Ayrshire. In addition, increased service development and improvement could be secured with increased external funding for local initiatives.

### **4.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 None arising from this report.

### **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 It is anticipated that part support funding for this post could be secured from the council's partners as the resource would be used to prepare and support multi-agency bids for external funds. Early discussions have already taken place with Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire which supports the proposal in principle and is identifying whether it can make a financial contribution to the cost of the post.
- 5.2 However, it is felt that early recruitment should take place to allow East Ayrshire to begin to reap the benefit of the new post as soon as possible and in advance of any formal funding being able to be confirmed by partners.
- 5.3 It is therefore proposed that the cost of the post in the current year (approximately £24,000) be met initially from the Policy and Resources Central Grants budget with the future full year funding arrangements being established through the budget process for financial year 2001/02 (£33,000 per annum including employer costs).
- 5.4 After all of the commitments to organisations that are subject to funding agreements with the council are taken into account, this cost can be accommodated within unallocated balances within the grants budget.

### **6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Policy and Resources Committee is asked to:-

- (i) agree, subject to consultation with trade unions, to create a post of External Funding Support Officer SO8 within the new Corporate Resources Department as detailed within the report;
- (ii) agree that the costs of the post in 2000/01 be met from the Policy and Resources Grants budget with a detailed future funding package for the post being considered as part of the budget process 2001/02;
- (iii) remit the detailed arrangements for recruiting the post to the Head of Personnel Services in conjunction with the Director of Corporate Resources (designate); and

(iv) to otherwise note the contents of the report.

**8 June 2000**

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. Development Services 11 April 2000, European Structural Funds Programme 2000/06, report by the Director of Development Services
2. Social Inclusion Strategic Partnership Group minutes 30 March 2000
3. Culture Secretary Announces Action to Tackle Lottery Shortfall in Coalfield Areas, Department of Culture, Media and Sport, 5 June 2000.

For further information please contact Fiona Lees, Depute Chief Executive, Tel. No. 01563 571019.

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**AGENDA**