

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Community Challenge Fund Applications Panel** held in Committee Room 3, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, on Tuesday, 18 December 2012, at 9.00 a.m.

Present

Mr D Hendry
Dr D Alston

Mr J Gray

Officials in attendance:

Ms M Morris, Assistant Chief Executive
Mr D Robertson, Head of Accounting and Budgeting, Finance Service
Ms L Lee, Committee Administrator

1. Apologies for Absence:

Ms F Robertson, Mrs C Wilson.

2. Declarations of Interest:

None.

3. Appointment of Chair

AGREED: Dr D Alston.

4. Making the Community Challenge Fund a Success

There had been circulated Report No. CCF1/12 which presented a proposed process for encouraging and dealing with applications to the Council's Community Challenge Fund. There was also tabled a draft wording for the Council's web page, providing guidance and FAQs relating to the Fund.

The Assistant Chief Executive drew attention to the main points of the report and provided background information, including:

- details of how the proposals had been drawn up
- communication with Trades Unions: TUs had been given an assurance that, should any applications give rise to staffing implications, the Council's normal consultation process would be followed
- the proposed process: expressions of interest sought → preliminary scrutiny of these by relevant officers → Panel consider officers' recommendations as to which proposals

should be worked up → Panel decide which applicants be requested to submit a full application → scrutiny of full applications by officers → Panel consider officers' recommendations → Panel make recommendations as to funding to be granted to Council meetings in May, September and December 2013

- review of the process: to be carried out after one year of operation, in December 2013; matters to be considered to include: the impact of the forthcoming Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill, and officer/business support capacity - the level of demand for the scheme being unknown at present
- publicity: the Council's annual newsletter (published 18 December 2012) would contain a link to a Community Challenge Fund page on the HC website; full information to go on the Council's website in the near future.

Members were advised that, whilst the Council did not wish to create an administrative burden for applicants, groups must be able to demonstrate that they were properly constituted and had appropriate governance. This was the case for all grant funding schemes operated by the Council, and served to protect the interests of the Council and service users. The assessment of applications would take account of procurement legislation and any wider financial implications of projects, such as potential increases in overhead costs for existing services, should part of their activity be taken on by community groups; or, for example, potential staffing implications.

With reference to paragraph 2.5 of the report, Members discussed whether applications from staff groups should be permitted, and were of the view that these should be not included in the scheme meantime, in view of potential implications arising from the forthcoming Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill. The position would be reviewed in December 2013.

In response to questions raised, Members were advised that applicants seeking support with drawing up full applications would be signposted to outside groups such as local councils of voluntary service or equivalent bodies.

Arising from discussion, Members were informed that, whilst there could perhaps be scope in future to create a centralised pool of expertise dealing with all funding applications, which might help maximise access to European funding, at present it was proposed to continue current arrangements with services processing applications.

Members welcomed that the scheme was being kept as open as possible, as this would allow a wide range of applications to be considered.

The Panel **NOTED** the report and the information given, including in particular the issues raised in section 3 of the report relating to potential risks to be managed in order for the Community Challenge Fund to be successful; and **AGREED**:

- i. the proposals set out in section 2 for the operation of the scheme, with the exception of paragraph 2.5;
- ii. accordingly, that applications from staff groups be **not** considered meantime, with this position being reviewed in December 2013;
- iii. that full information be posted on the Council's website over the Christmas/New Year period;
- iv. that funding rounds be timed to feed into the full Council meetings cycle, with deadlines for expressions of interest being 1 February, 1 May and 1 September 2013, with the Panel's recommendations being brought to full Council at its meetings on 9 May, 5 September and 19 December 2013; and
- v. that the scheme would be reviewed after 1 year's operation, in December 2013.

Meeting ended at 9.25 a.m.