



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Request for Funding - Common Purpose Belfast (Bursaries)
Date:	22 February 2008
Reporting Officer:	Trevor Salmon, Director of Corporate Services
Contact Officer:	David Cartmill, Acting Head of Corporate Services Directorate

Relevant Background Information

This paper presents for consideration a request for financial assistance for a sum of £8,450 to Common Purpose Belfast in connection with its 2008 Navigator programme.

Common Purpose programmes are designed to draw together leaders, emerging leaders and senior managers from all walks of life who could potentially play a role in shaping the future of Belfast. The Council has supported Common Purpose Belfast since its inception in 1996 through hosting elements of the programme; funding participation every year by one member and one officer and providing two bursaries annually for local community/voluntary sector applicants.

This request concerns bursaries for course applicants who are unable to meet participation costs.

Key Issues

The Council has traditionally funded two bursaries for voluntary/community sector participants in Common Purpose programmes. Last year, the Council provided £8,400 by way of bursary support. Some members did however express concern at the increasing cost of support to Common Purpose. When agreeing to fund bursaries for 2007 the Committee requested that an assessment of the benefits to Council from assisting Common Purpose be completed before future support was considered.

As directed, an assessment of Common Purpose, based on a survey of members and staff who have participated in programmes has been completed. Discussion has also been held with Common Purpose staff who have furnished results of their own survey of graduates which was conducted in 2007.

The results of both exercises provide positive endorsement of its benefits to the Council.

Responses to Key questions in the BCC survey indicated:
 (Based on 19 Returns from 28 participants who remain elected to or employed by BCC).

(1) How useful was the Common Purpose Course in relation to your job?

Not at all Useful 0%	Not Useful 11%	Not Sure 5%	Useful 47%	Extremely Useful 37%
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(2) Do you consider time spent on the course as a good investment by BCC?

Strongly Disagree 0%	Disagree 5%	Not Sure 5%	Agree 47%	Strongly Agree 42%
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(3) How would you rate Common Purpose with other development courses attended?

Worse than most others 5%	Similar to most others 21%	Better than most others 74%
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Key findings from the Common Purpose research amongst graduates throughout the UK indicated:

- 80% of graduates said that they have improved their overall effectiveness as a leader
- 91% have improved their ability to see the wider context and their role in it
- 85% have increased their willingness to engage with a diverse group/different approaches
- 80% now look for innovation in different places
- 78% have improved their ability to think more strategically.

Discussion

The programme evaluation results confirm that Common Purpose courses are generally highly regarded by those who have participated and would be deemed beneficial to the Council. Given the anticipated leadership/co-ordination role expected by Local Authorities post RPA it would seem desirable that the Council remains supportive of a programme which seeks to connect decision makers in the city.

Against this, the Committee will be aware of pressures on Council resources and the need to demonstrate efficiency. The Council has already committed, separately, to fund Members/staff on Common Purpose 2008 programmes at a cost of £12,675.

In light of the above it is suggested the Committee consider the following options regarding support for Common Purpose bursaries:

- (i) Accede to the request for **£8,450***.
(Which would fund 2 full-fee places and one part-fee place on the Navigator programme (£3,500 per person) which targets emerging and high potential leaders)
- (ii) Agree to continue to fund 2 Bursaries - for the Navigator programme at a cost to the Council of **£7,000**.
- (iii) Agree to reduce funding level to one bursary only for the Navigator programme at a cost to the Council of **£3,500**.

Resource Implications

Financial

Resources are available to cover the maximum funding option of £8,450

Human Resources

None

Asset and Other Implications

None

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee agrees to continue to support bursaries to the Belfast Common Purpose programme via one of the 3 options listed above and passes the undernoted resolution.

That the expenditure in respect of the aforementioned be approved under Section 115 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972, it being the opinion of the Committee that the expenditure would be in the interest of, and would bring direct benefit to the District, and inhabitants of the District, with the Committee being satisfied that the direct benefits so accruing would be commensurate with the payments to be made.

* This represents the amount for participation by 2 people in the Senior/Experienced leaders programme normally funded by BCC.

