



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Request for Funding
Date:	19 February 2010
Reporting Officer:	Julie Thompson, Director, Finance and Resources Department Ext. 6781
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Relevant Background Information

This paper presents a request for financial assistance from the City of Belfast Youth Concert Band towards a tour to the USA.

Under Section 115 of the Local Government Act (NI) 1972, the Council has discretion to consider exceptional requests for financial assistance. A small, special expenditure budget (Grants and Subscriptions) within the Finance and Resources Department makes provision for such requests providing:

- (i) The Council has statutory authority to make such payments
- (ii) Assistance is not available from the remit of another Committee.

The criteria for assessing requests for assistance which would fall within the Council's Special Expenditure budget is included at Appendix 1.

Key Issues

The City of Belfast Youth Concert Band consists mainly of students from the Belfast School of Music which is funded by the Belfast Education and Library Board. There are over 70 members in the band aged between 14 and 20 who are drawn from all communities in the city.

The band is seeking a contribution towards a tour to New York and Washington DC. It will perform at a number of venues, including events normally reserved for professional musicians, "offering invaluable experiences for members of the band."

The cost of the tour is approximately £90k and participants are expected to undertake fundraising and sponsorship seeking activities to help defray expenses.

Consideration

The request states that the tour

“...will allow us to be ambassadors for the youth of Northern Ireland and we believe carrying out these concerts will help promote Northern Ireland as a tourist destination.....we feel that the tour will highlight most effectively the contribution the School of Music has to make to the community.... and will portray our youth in a very positive light.”

On previous occasions the Committee accepted there was benefit to be gained from assisting annual overseas tours undertaken by students from the Belfast School of Music. Contributions of £5k towards tours by the City of Belfast Youth Concert Band and the City of Belfast Youth Orchestra were awarded by the Council in each of the last 3 years.

The Youth Concert Band or other groups from the Belfast School of Music are not in receipt of funding from any Council Department. As in previous years, the Committee has discretion as to whether it wishes to support this request. If assistance is agreed the Youth Concert Band will be required to acknowledge support from the Council in publicity material etc.

Resource ImplicationsFinancial

The Committee may wish to consider a contribution of £5,000, the sum provided towards previous tours. Resources exist within current budget.

Human Resources

None.

Asset and Other Implications

None.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee considers a contribution of £5,000 towards the City of Belfast Youth Concert Band tour to the USA and, if agreed, passes the under-noted resolution:

That the expenditure in respect of the aforementioned event 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.

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 - Criteria for the assessment of requests for financial assistance.

Decision Tracking – Finance and Resources Department will confirm the decision of the Council to the applicant in March and arrange payment and conditions if agreed

APPENDIX 1

B Policy and Resources Committee,

2772 Friday, 18th June, 2004

Special Expenditure Budget - criteria to be applied in the assessment of requests

- (1) whether there are sufficient funds remaining in the Council's Special Expenditure budget for the relevant financial year;
- (2) whether the application for financial assistance links to any of the Council's Corporate Objectives;
- (3) whether the direct benefit to be obtained is specific to the Council or its district or inhabitants;
- (4) whether the activity or initiative in respect of which assistance is being sought is being promoted by a person or organisation living or operating, or otherwise having a direct connection with, the City;
- (5) whether the request for financial assistance relates to an event or initiative which falls within the remit and statutory power of any other Committee of the Council (in which case it should be so referred);
- (6) whether the request relates to a specific event, activity or initiative as distinct from a request for a contribution to general funds;
- (7) whether the benefit to be obtained will be commensurate with the payment to be made.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Council would nevertheless reserve to itself the right to give special consideration to any particular request for financial assistance if the Members consider that special circumstances apply and legal advice has been sought where appropriate.