



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Request for Funding – Common Purpose Belfast (Bursaries)
<b>Date:</b>	23 April 2010
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Julie Thompson, Director of Finance and Resources
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	David Cartmill

### Relevant Background Information

This paper presents a request for financial assistance of £6,000 to Common Purpose Belfast in connection with its 2010 “Navigator” emerging leaders programme. The application seeks support to fund 3 bursaries for course applicants, usually from the community or voluntary sector, who are unable to meet participation costs. The total number of participants in the “Navigator” programme is in the region of 30-35 per year.

Common Purpose programmes are designed to draw together local 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 by providing bursaries for candidates selected by the Common Purpose programme board.

### Key Issues

Until 2007 the Council funded two bursaries annually for community/voluntary sector participants in Common Purpose programmes. In view of other demands on resources and the fact that Common Purpose has benefited from support for some considerable time, the Council did not fund any bursaries in 2008 and provided for one bursary only in 2009.

The Regional Director of Common Purpose Belfast has written recently to the Council seeking support for the 2010 programme. She emphasises the importance attached to endorsement of Common Purpose programmes by the Council and cites three main reasons for an increase in the number of bursaries requested.

- (i) The need to develop strong leadership skills and collaboration to enable Belfast to prosper beyond the current economic downturn
- (ii) The need to create and promote partnership working
- (iii) The need to learn from best practice internationally as provided by linkages to Common Purpose programme participants in England and in India.

The programme Director reports that despite the current economic circumstances interest in Common Purpose programmes remains high. She feels this reflects recognition of the need for 'joined up working' amongst organisations in Belfast.

### **Discussion**

A programme evaluation amongst Councillors and staff attending Common Purpose courses concluded that they are generally highly regarded and deemed beneficial to the Council. Feedback from course participants overall is positive, highlighting the benefit of shared consideration of contemporary issues in Belfast.

The Committee is, however, aware of pressures on Council resources and may wish to curtail expenditure on Common Purpose courses towards participation by Members or council staff only.

In light of the above it is recommended the Committee considers the following options:

- (i) Accede to the request for £6,000 to offer three part funded places for emerging leaders from the community and voluntary sector in Belfast
- (ii) Agree to a lesser amount of £2,000 to enable one part-fee bursary
- (iii) Revert to the position adopted in 2008 whereby the Council did not support bursaries in view of budget restrictions and its existing commitments to Common Purpose.

### **Resource Implications**

#### **Financial**

Resources are available to cover the maximum funding option of £6,000.

#### **Human Resources**

None

#### **Asset and other Implications**

None

**Recommendation**

The Committee is invited to consider the 3 options above and, if agreeing to offer support (either option (i) or (ii)), pass the undernoted resolution.

That the expenditure in respect on 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.

**Decision Tracking**

The decision of the Committee, following ratification by Council, will be communicated to the applicant in **May 2010** including payment towards bursaries if agreed.

**Document Attached**

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

## 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.