

Agenda Item No: 6

Report to: Charity Committee

Date of Meeting: 8th December 2014

Report Title: Foreshore Trust Small and Events Grants

Report By: Sandra Garner
Chair of the Foreshore Grant Advisory Panel

Purpose of Report

To seek approval from the Charity Committee for the adoption of a revised grant application process and associated forms.

Recommendation(s)

- 1. To adopt the revised small and events grants processes and associated forms as set out in this report and its appendices.**

Reasons for Recommendations

Improvements to the forms and associated documentation are suggested to make the process simpler, less confusing for applicants and easier to assess, while maintaining an efficient, transparent and auditable process.

Foreshore Trust (FT) Small and Events Grant Programme

Background

1. The Foreshore Trust operates two grant programmes during the year. The FT Small Grants programme has a total fund of £50,000 and offers a maximum grant of £5,000 per application. The FT Events Grant programme has a total fund of £20,000 and offers a maximum grant of £2,000 per application.
2. During 2014, we received 41 applications for FT Small Grants and 21 for FT Events Grants. The small grants programme in 2014 was oversubscribed by £97,142 and the events grants programme by £18,253. This shows a very high level of interest in the two grant funding streams by local community groups.

Current grant application process

3. The current FT Small and Events grant application form is divided into seven sections: the first two ask for details about the applicant organisation, the next two sections deal with the proposed event and its anticipated impact, the fifth section asks for details about the intended beneficiaries, and the sixth and seventh relate to submitting the application.
4. The feedback from using this application process during the last two rounds was that that the forms were difficult to complete, questions were repetitive, and not proportionate to the level of funding available.
5. Members of the Grant Advisory Panel (GAP), responsible for assessing the applications, also expressed concern that they found the form difficult to assess and the scoring system unfairly prioritised the wrong questions. They also stated that the scoring criteria were over-complicated and some assessments not required by panel members as they related to administrative processes.

Revised form and process

6. The GAP met on 23rd September 2014 to consider changes to the application form and assessment method. The main changes to all the forms and guidance notes were as follows:

Application Form Changes

7. The application form has been reduced from 6 to 3 pages.
8. There are five main sections to the application form with much more focus on the project idea, delivery, costs, the difference it will make and evaluation feedback. The numbers of questions have also been reduced to minimise repetitiveness.
9. Both the Events and Small grants application forms have been designed to follow the same format, thus making it easier for applicants to complete and for the GAP to appraise.
10. There are some suggested changes to the application form as follows:

- It is now explicit regarding the requirement to seek permission to hold the event from HBC, Police, and ESCC as appropriate.
- A new section has been added to both forms that directly ask the applicant to demonstrate how their proposal meets the Foreshore Trust's aims and objectives.
- The application forms no longer include an Option B, where the applicant could describe how their project could be progressed if reduced funding was granted. A number of applicants had found this option confusing. The panel agreed that they could make recommendations on the level of funding awarded as they considered each application.
- All the explanation notes and assessment scoring boxes have been removed from the application form to the guidance notes and a new assessment form.

Guidance Notes Changes

11. The panel did not suggest any changes to the funding priorities. The current priorities were thought to be clear, met the objective of being a charity, and encouraged applications from all members of the local community.
12. The panel noted that only events taking place on Foreshore Trust owned land and which were free to the public would be eligible for funding under the events grants programme. The panel did not feel that these requirements limited the scope of applications received. Moreover, promoting events on Foreshore Trust land would contribute to the revival of the seafront. It was not recommended that the Charity Committee be asked to reconsider these conditions at this time.
13. The panel underscored that all of the Foreshore Trust's aims were of equal importance when assessing an application for funding. However in order to encourage a broad range of applications, the panel recommended deleting the introductory paragraph to the application form, which suggested that priority may be given to applications which met certain priorities. These were not clear in the first place and the statement could discourage potential applicants from applying. It was suggested that the sentence should also be removed from the application guidance.
14. The panel recommended that applicants provide details of their free or unrestricted reserves as a percentage of their annual turnover. The panel commented that if an applicant is seen to hold unrestricted reserves above the levels recommended by the Charity Commission, this may be taken into consideration when making recommendations on grant allocations.
15. The panel recommended that the use of the words "targeted neighborhood" be amended to "specific neighborhood".
16. The requirement for staff and volunteers to be CRB checked would be updated to DBS checked throughout both applications.
17. The panel agreed to add a note to the grant application form, highlighting that indemnity insurance would be required for events.

New Assessment Form

18. There is now a separate new form to assess each application. It was previously part of the application form.
19. The advisory panel has now agreed that a minimum of two panel members will assess each application. It would be difficult and time consuming for all 8 panel members to assess often 30 to 40 application forms during each round.
20. The new assessment method allows the assessor to appraise each application and decide under each category whether the application meets, partially meets or does not meet the criteria. The assessment form requires each assessor to note down his or her reasons with a final overall section of 'recommended', 'not recommended' or 'undecided'. These notes can be used to feed back to applicants if required.
21. This new process allows for discussion of any applications on which the panel members have differing views, and then for an overall recommendation for all the applications to be made. The previous scoring system was thought to be unfair because adjustments had to be made to individual scores at the end of the process to reflect the overall panel decisions.
22. The suggested newly revised Events and Small Grants, Application Forms, Guidance Forms and Assessment Forms are shown in the following appendices:
 - Appendix 1: The Foreshore Trust Event Grant Programme Application Guidance
 - Appendix 2: Foreshore Trust Event Grant Programme Application Form
 - Appendix 3: Foreshore Trust Events Grant Programme Application Assessment Form
 - Appendix 4: Foreshore Trust Small Grant Programme Application Guidance
 - Appendix 5: Foreshore Trust Small Grant Programme Application Form
 - Appendix 6: Foreshore Trust Small Grants Programme Application Assessment Form

Policy implications

23. The suggested changes reflect the views of all GAP members and informed by their experience of processing two recent Foreshore Trust grant rounds.

Wards Affected

None

Area(s) Affected

All

Policy Implications

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)
Risk Management
Environmental Issues
Economic/Financial Implications X
Human Rights Act

Organisational Consequences
Local People's Views

X

Officer to Contact

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