

ARMAGH BANBRIDGE CRAIGAVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Title of Policy:	Financial Assistance Policy Guidance Manuals (Officers), (Applicants)
No of Pages (including appendices):	13
Version:	2.0
Issue Date:	
Policy Nominated Officer:	Godfrey McCartney Pamela Matthews Louise Moore Robert Stockley
Equality screened by:	Godfrey McCartney Pamela Matthews Louise Moore Robert Stockley
Equality screening dates:	November 2014, December 2015
Amendment Version Issue Date:	
Sent out by:	
Approved by:	Leisure and Community Services Committee January 2015 Leisure and Community Services Committee September and December 2015
Review Date:	The policy will be reviewed in 2019

AMENDMENT RECORD SHEET

Remove and destroy old pages. Insert new pages as indicated.

Revision Number	Date Revised	Original policy approved in 2014	Description of Revision
1	Sep 2015		purchase of equipment capped at £500
	Sep 2015		Further ineligible costs added: donations, trophies (except in exceptional circumstances), flags, bunting, private or unfunded pensions, alcohol, refreshments, salaries and wages, bank/loan interest, musical instruments, accountancy, legal fees (except under programme 2 Capital

			Projects), kits/uniforms; food (except in exceptional circumstances eg sweets/selection boxes for Christmas Tree switch-ons); consultants fees (where a service is already being provided by local support networks)
	Sep 2015		Assessment panel membership for assessment of grants up to £10,000 to be 2 officers
	Sep 2015		Decision review process added
	Sep 2015		6 grant programmes and 17 sub-programmes reduced to 5 grant programmes and 14 sub-programmes
	Sep 2015		grant award guidelines introduced for summer schemes, Christmas tree switch-on events and Community Events
	Sep 2015		grant award framework introduced based on score achieved
	Sep 2015		Groups are allowed a maximum of 2 applications in any financial year plus a Christmas Switch-on event if appropriate
	Sep 2015		Groups permitted to reprofile up to 10% with prior Officer approval
	Dec 2015		Community Development and Good Relations Medium Grants to be capped at 50% of maximum eligible costs (previously capped at 30%)
	Dec 2015		Trips/activities outside NI to be ineligible

Policy Screening Form

Policy Scoping

Policy Title: Financial Assistance Policy Guidance Manuals (Officers), (Applicants)

Brief Description of Policy (please attach copy if available). Please state if it is a new, existing or amended policy.

This is the first revision of the Council's new Financial Assistance policy and there are two manuals accompanying the policy. It was initially screened in November 2014. The first call for applications was in March 2015. As applications were being assessed, it became apparent to the Officers responsible for both advising the groups on the process for making applications and assessing the applications that there were areas of the policy that required amendment. As a result of this, the Financial Assistance Policy Working Group which consists of Officers and elected members from each of the parties met to discuss the proposed changes.

A paper including the proposed changes was prepared and presented to the Council's Leisure and Community Services Committee in September 2015. Workshops were held with community groups to highlight the changes. Further amendments were brought to this Committee in December 2015. All of the changes are summarized and attached on p.2

The purpose of the manual for Officers is to provide guidance for Officers in operating the new Financial Assistance Policy for the Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council. Foremost in the minds of those operating the policy should be a desire to address the Council's primary purposes and objectives in the most efficient and effective manner.

Typically this will involve providing financial assistance to a range of external organisations which can do things that the Council may not be able to do, may be able to do them better than the Council, and in some cases, at lower cost.

The purpose of the manual for Organisations is to set out the new funding programmes and describes the process for making applications

Intended aims/outcomes. What is the policy trying to achieve?

The purpose of the two manuals is to provide guidance for Officers in operating the new Financial Assistance Policy for the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council and to provide guidance for organisations in relation to the application process.

The most significant change from previous policies across the three legacy Councils is the move towards focusing on achieving maximum outcomes rather than focusing on how funding is utilized.

It is recognized that this cannot be done at the expense of good grant governance and must work hand in hand with good financial audit and governance practice. However, work in assessing, monitoring and reviewing grants must be commensurate with the level of funding and focused on achieving maximum impact.

Vouching will continue to be a feature of monitoring in some cases but must be commensurate and risk based.

The guidance documents set out the new funding programmes and describe the process for considering eligibility and assessing applications.

A broad generic approach applies to all programmes however it is important to note that larger amounts of funding should inevitably require a more rigorous process and more input by elected members.

Another new feature of this policy is the introduction of risk assessment.

These processes will be new to many Council Officers however the effective utilization of risk assessment and a sound monitoring process which leads to end of project evaluations and genuine feedback to future assessment processes will maximize the impact of any Council spend.

A staged application process is to be used which will encourage applicants to self assess. Evidence/documents would only be requested if an application is successful, although applicants are asked to ensure these are available when they apply.

The application process is now online for the second call for applications.

Policy Framework

Has the policy been developed in response to statutory requirements, legal advice or on the basis of any other professional advice? Does this affect the discretion available to Council to amend the policy?

The policy has been developed taking into account good financial audit and governance practice. However it has also been developed as a result of an extensive consultation exercise undertaken across the Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Council areas. An extensive community consultation, both on a face to face basis and through an online consultation was conducted and the views of key networking and support organisations were also sought. When the first version of the policy was finalised further targeted information sessions were made available to all potential applicants, and Council Members. Following the first review of the policy which resulted in a number of amendments, workshops were held with community groups highlighting the changes.

Are there any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the policy? If so, please outline.

A whole range of organisations representing a cross section of section 75 categories will be able to access funding through the Council's financial assistance policy. The organisations that participated in the online questionnaire deal with issues which include disability, youth, early years, school children, older people, women, good relations, ethnic minorities and faith. The Council believes that the new policy should improve the relationship between community organisations and develop inclusion and cohesion. It should reinforce peace and help to create the "new normal" by developing relationships across generations, religious/political groupings and between people from different ethnic backgrounds.

Although rural needs is not a section 75 category a common theme that arose through the community consultation was that of rural isolation and the difficulty of connecting people with provision. This usually centred on transport needs, particularly for young people and older people. This policy addresses this need by introducing a rural linkages grant.

Who initiated or wrote the policy (if Council decision, please state). Who is responsible for implementing the policy?

Who initiated or wrote policy?	Who is responsible for implementation?
Godfrey McCartney Pamela Matthews Louise Moore Robert Stockley	The Council is responsible for implementation.

Are there any factors which might contribute to or detract from the implementation of the policy (e.g. financial, legislative, other)?

The amount of funding made available

Main stakeholders in relation to the policy

Please list main stakeholders affected by the policy (e.g. staff, service users, other statutory bodies, community or voluntary sector, private sector)

Officers responsible for operating the policy, elected members, organisations accessing funding

Are there any other policies with a bearing on this policy? If so, please identify them and how they impact on this policy.

Available Evidence

Council should ensure that its screening decisions are informed by relevant data. What evidence/information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy? Specify details for each of the Section 75 categories.

Section 75 category	Evidence
Religious belief	<p>This policy has been developed as a result of an extensive consultation exercise undertaken across the Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Council areas.</p> <p>To ensure maximum participation, consultation events were organised in each Council area with afternoon and evening sessions in each area. Two were held in Banbridge Town Hall, two in Armagh’s Market Place Theatre and two in Craigavon Civic Centre. Through the three Councils, all community groups and other voluntary sector organisations on the Councils’ Database were notified about the events. In addition adverts were placed in seven local newspapers. Those contacted were given the opportunity to contribute by a number of methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through a link to an online questionnaire –this provided an opportunity to offer detailed information about current organizational needs and future priorities. The organisations that participated in this online questionnaire deal with issues which include disability,
Political opinion	
Racial group	
Age	
Marital status	
Sexual orientation	
Men and women generally	
Disability	
Dependants	

	<p>youth, early years, school children, older people, women, good relations, ethnic minorities and faith.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the six public consultation exercises- these were facilitated by Williamson Consulting and sought to focus specifically on views relating to the current Grant Aid programmes, future priorities and principles and any other information groups wished to contribute, • By e-mail directly to Williamson Consulting • By telephone to Williamson Consulting. <p>In addition, face to face meetings were held with network organisations in the area.</p> <p>There was little disagreement about the key issues and groups consulted tended to provide similar responses, suggesting that the consultation is likely to be representative of the wider sector.</p> <p>Following the first review of the policy which resulted in a number of amendments, workshops were held with community groups highlighting the changes.</p>
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Needs, experiences and priorities

Taking into account the information gathered above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the following categories in relation to this particular policy/decision?

Section 75 category	Needs, experiences and priorities
Religious belief	<p>A whole range of organisations representing a cross section of section 75 categories will be able to access funding through the Council's financial assistance policy. The organisations that participated in the online questionnaire deal with issues which include disability, youth, early years, school children, older people, women, good relations, ethnic minorities and faith. The Council believes that the new policy should improve the relationship between community organisations and develop inclusion and cohesion. It should reinforce peace and help to create the "new normal" by developing relationships across generations, religious/political groupings and between people from different ethnic backgrounds.</p> <p>There is a specific good relations grant available to facilitate all organisations working at community level to deliver on the ground activities and actions which impact positively on Good Relations on an intra-</p>
Political opinion	
Racial group	
Age	
Marital status	
Sexual orientation	
Men and women generally	
Disability	
Dependants	

	<p>community or cross-community basis.</p> <p>Although rural needs is not a section 75 category a common theme that arose through the community consultation was that of rural isolation and the difficulty of connecting people with provision. This usually centred on transport needs, particularly for young people and older people. This policy addresses this need by introducing a rural linkages grant.</p>
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Screening Questions

1. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy for each of the Section 75 categories?		
Category	Policy Impact	Level of impact (Major/minor/none)
Religious belief	There is a specific good relations grant available to facilitate all organisations working at community level to deliver on the ground activities and actions which impact positively on Good Relations on an intra-community or cross-community basis.	
Political opinion		
Racial group		
Age	During the consultation, transport needs for older and younger people in rural areas was raised as an issue	The mitigating factor was to introduce a rural linkages grant
Marital status	The policy has been developed as a result of a wide community consultation and comments were received from organisations that represent a broad cross section of section 75 consultees. These comments have influenced the final policy. One of the overarching application principles is that the process will be inclusive and fair so that all sections of the community can apply for financial assistance if they are involved in meeting the needs which are the Council's priorities. Steps will be taken to advertise more widely. All organisations will benefit as a result of this new financial assistance policy as changes have been introduced	None
Sexual orientation		
Men and women generally		
Disability		
Dependents		

	to ensure that the application process is more user friendly and bureaucracy is minimized.	
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2. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 categories?		
Category	If yes, provide details	If no, provide reasons
Religious belief		The policy has been developed as a result of a wide community consultation and comments were received from organisations that represent a broad cross section of section 75 consultees. These comments have influenced the final policy. One of the overarching application principles is that the process will be inclusive and fair so that all sections of the community can apply for financial assistance if they are involved in meeting the needs which are the Council's priorities. Steps will be taken to advertise more widely. All organisations will benefit as a result of this new financial assistance policy as changes have been introduced to ensure that the application process is more user friendly and bureaucracy is minimised.
Political opinion		
Racial group		
Age		
Marital status		
Sexual orientation		
Men and women generally		
Disability		
Dependents		

3. To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion, or racial group?		
Category	Details of Policy Impact	Level of impact (major/minor/none)
Religious belief	There is a specific good relations grant available to facilitate all organisations working at community level to deliver on the ground activities and actions which impact positively on Good Relations on an intra-community or cross-community basis	
Political opinion		
Racial group		

4. Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Category	If yes, provide details	If no, provide reasons
Religious belief		No, as stated above there is a specific good relations grant available to facilitate all organisations working at community level to deliver on the ground activities and actions which impact positively on Good Relations on an intra-community or cross-community basis.
Political opinion		
Racial group		

Multiple Identity

Generally speaking, people fall into more than one Section 75 category (for example: disabled minority ethnic people; disabled women; young Protestant men; young lesbian, gay and bisexual people). Provide details of data on the impact of the policy on people with multiple identities. Specify relevant s75 categories concerned.

Organisations representing any one or more of the section 75 categories will benefit from a policy which has as one of its overarching principles the need to be inclusive and fair. All sections of the community can apply for financial assistance if they are involved in meeting needs which are the Council's priorities.

Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006

Is there an opportunity for the policy to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?

Yes, for those organisations that represent disabled people and meet the criteria for funding.

Is there an opportunity for the policy to encourage participation by disabled people in public life?

Yes, as above.

Screening Decision

A: NO IMPACT IDENTIFIED ON ANY CATEGORY – EQIA UNNECESSARY

Please identify reasons for this below

B: MINOR IMPACT IDENTIFIED – EQIA NOT CONSIDERED NECESSARY AS IMPACT CAN BE ELIMINATED OR MITIGATED

Where the impact is likely to be minor, you should consider if the policy can be mitigated or an alternative policy introduced. If so, EQIA may not be considered necessary. You must indicate the reasons for this decision below, together with details of measures to mitigate the adverse impact or the alternative policy proposed.

This Financial Assistance policy and the accompanying guidance manuals operated as a pilot project for six months and the policy was reviewed again following this period. The policy was developed as a result of a wide community consultation and comments were received from organisations that represent a broad cross section of section 75 consultees as detailed above. These comments have influenced the final policy. One of the overarching application principles is that the process will be inclusive and fair so that all sections of the community can apply for financial assistance if they are involved in meeting the needs which are the Council's priorities. Steps will be taken to advertise more widely. All organisations will benefit as a result of this new financial assistance policy as changes have been introduced to ensure that the application process is more user friendly and bureaucracy is minimised.

During the consultation, transport needs for older and younger people in rural areas was raised as an issue. The mitigating factor was to introduce a rural linkages grant.

Following the first review of the policy which resulted in a number of amendments, workshops were held with community groups, highlighting the changes.

C: MAJOR IMPACT IDENTIFIED – EQIA REQUIRED

If the decision is to conduct an equality impact assessment, please provide details of the reasons.

Timetabling and Prioritising

If the policy has been screened in for equality impact assessment, please answer the following questions to determine its priority for timetabling the equality impact assessment.

On a scale of 1-3 with 1 being the lowest priority and 3 being the highest, assess the policy in terms of its priority for equality impact assessment.

Priority criterion	Rating (1-3)
Effect on equality of opportunity and good relations	
Social need	
Effect on people's daily lives	

The total rating score should be used to prioritise the policy in rank order with other policies screened in for equality impact assessment. This list of priorities will assist the council in timetabling its EQIAs.

Is the policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities? If yes, please give details.

Monitoring

Effective monitoring will help the authority identify any future adverse impact arising from the policy. It is recommended that where a policy has been amended or an alternative policy introduced to mitigate adverse impact, monitoring be undertaken on a broader basis to identify any impact (positive or adverse).

Further information on monitoring is available in the Equality Commission's guidance on monitoring

Identify how the impact of the policy is to be monitored

This policy will be subject to ongoing monitoring

Approval and Authorisation

A copy of the screening form for each policy screened should be signed off by the senior manager responsible for that policy. The screening recommendation should be reported to the relevant Committee/Council when the policy is submitted for approval.

Screened by	Position/Job title	Date
Godfrey McCartney Pamela Matthews Louise Moore Robert Stockley		November 2014 December 2015
Approved by	Position/Job Title	Date
Mike Reardon	Strategic Director (People)	November 2014 December 2015

Please forward a copy of the completed form with policy attached to either mary.hanna@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk or Stephanie.harte@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk who will ensure that screening forms and policies are available on the Council website.

This officer is also responsible for issuing reports on a quarterly basis on those policies “screened out for EQIA”. This allows stakeholders who disagree with this recommendation to submit their views. In the event of any stakeholder disagreeing with the decision to screen out any policy, the screening exercise will be reviewed.