

Causeway Community Rescue Service	10th January 2017
To: The Leisure and Development Committee For Decision	

Linkage to Council Strategy (2015-19)	
Strategic Theme	Innovation and Transformation
Outcome	Providing services in more efficient ways
Lead Officer	Director of Leisure & Development
Cost: (If applicable)	£28.10 per volunteer

The purpose of this report is to set out the needs, reimbursement principles and future relationship between Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council (CC&GBC) and Community Rescue Service (CRS) NI.

Introduction

CRS provides a range of services across NI that include event safety, crisis intervention, search & rescue response and emergency management. CC&GBC makes significant use of these services in support of its extensive events programme.

On 14th September 2016 the Community Rescue Service gave a presentation to CC&GBC on the range of support that it provides in the area and as a result a Notice of Motion was passed to explore opportunities to offer some financial support to the charity.

CC&GBC has regularly used CRS in an event safety role on a voluntary basis and at no cost. This level of deployment, while staffed by volunteers, has many associated costs for CRS such as transport, equipment, communications, subsistence for volunteers, fuel and first aid consumables. All this is currently funded by volunteer donations but CRS proposes that the level of input required in the CC&GBC area is causing financial hardship.

Background

a) Community Rescue Service (CRS)

CRS is a full member of the Association of Lowland Search and Rescue (ALSR) and carry the level of authority and recognition of a 'blue light service'. This means that CRS can be tasked by the statutory services to undertake official search, rescue, emergency management and recovery services in response to or for the avoidance of an emergency situation. As a registered charity CRS is funded mostly by voluntary donations with additional small amounts of grant support from councils, DoJ and others. Reflective of the fact that CRS is regularly tasked to undertake duties by the PSNI, it benefits from PSNI insurance and vetting of its volunteers. CRS is the subject of a MOU with the PSNI for the services it provides.

The CRS volunteers are trained in and undertake functions relating to:

- Event safety.
- Emergency management.
- Search and rescue on low land and water.
- Flood response.

- Crisis intervention.
- De-escalation and conflict management.
- First aid response.
- Suicide response.
- Evacuation and exclusion zone management.

CRS is not a provider of stewarding or marshalling services which are provided commercially by a range of specialist private sector organisations. The commissioning of such stewarding or marshalling services by the Council should continue to be undertaken within normal procurement protocols.

b) Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council (CC&GBC)

CC&GBC is one of NI's leading councils in relation to the delivery and support of high profile and in cases international events. To deliver such events safely it is apparent that CC&GBC needs access to many of the skills that CRS's volunteers are trained in. Previously many of these skills would have been delivered by the RUC/PSNI but with reducing budgets and manpower this service is no longer available, and the PSNI frequently recommend the CRS for tasking to this type of event. CC&GBC regularly deploys CRS to provide an event safety function and would find it difficult or almost impossible to deliver its events programme safely if this service was not available from CRS.

c) The Statutory Responsibility for Missing Persons and Rescue

CC&GBC has no statutory role, authority or responsibility for missing persons or rescue services, these responsibilities rest with the DoJ and the PSNI (and in some cases the other statutory 'blue light' services such as the Coastguard, NIF&RS & NIAS). While CC&GBC may choose to deploy CRS for event safety support for the events which it delivers, the Council has no responsibility for events run by third party organisations or in search, rescue or recovery operations for missing persons in the Council's area.

Future Options

Having been tasked by members to explore a more formal relationship between CC&GBC and CRS that would offer some financial support, officers have looked at a series of factors and options.

a) Grant in Aid

Allowing CRS to apply for Council grant programmes may provide intermittent opportunities for funding but the outcomes from a competitive grants programme can't be predicted and the opportunities to apply are likely to be infrequent. Clearly this may continue to provide opportunities for one off funding for the likes of equipment purchases but it could not be relied upon as a means to fairly support CRS to perform the duties it undertakes on behalf of CC&GBC.

b) Charity Gift

CC&GBC has no policy that would support using ratepayer's money to give to charities.

c) Tender for Services

CC&GBC could tender for the services of an event safety organisation to support them in their events delivery programme. However, the requirements would include:

- ALSR full member.
- Blue light recognised.
- Effective communications with the statutory emergency services.
- Fully trained in a range of low land and water rescue related skills.

To the best of CC&GBC's knowledge no such organisation exists outside of CRS.

Tendering/quotation is the normal course of action for the procurement of commercial services but these services are clearly not commercial. There are significant barriers to entry, such as blue light recognition, which would prevent a commercial provider entering the market in the unlikely event of one being interested. In addition, the constitution of CRS prevents it from invoicing for its services which are fully voluntary in nature and therefore CRS could not respond to a tender opportunity or charge for its event support under its current constitution.

Conclusions

CC&GBC needs to retain the input of CRS to deliver on its events programme. CRS has no desire to recover all of its costs, make a profit from or even charge for any of its activities. CRS does however incur significant costs as a result of the event safety support it delivers for CC&GBC and the Council has a moral duty to not take advantage of the charitable giving of individuals in society in order to deliver its events programme.

While grant programmes may provide an intermittent opportunity for one off equipment or training costs it will not contribute to the ongoing costs of deploying volunteers. Equally, neither charitable giving by the Council nor tendering for services will provide a suitable solution. Council must therefore consider a one-off solution to a unique problem.

The eventual solution should recognise that the CRS incurs direct costs from the deployment of its volunteers and seek to find a simple and accountable method of reimbursing these costs while avoiding any suggestion that it is paying for services that could or should be commercially tendered. Commercial services required by the Council (such as stewarding, security checking and marshalling) should continue to be procured from the private sector through open competition. CC&GBC should take care not to deploy CRS to any such activities that could be interpreted as displacing commercial activity.

CC&GBC/NICS has established rates for reimbursing staff for the costs associated with daily subsistence as follows:

Meal	Subsistence Rate
Breakfast	£8.20
Lunch	£9.70
Tea	£3.05
Evening Meal	£15.35
Total per full day:	£36.30

These rates could form the basis of covering the costs of deploying CRS 'volunteer days'. Event safety seldom requires volunteers to be in place over the breakfast period but by the time events finish and members of the public disperse it is most likely the case that the volunteers would still be on duty after the normal evening meal period. This would mean that the subsistence required would be to cover lunch, tea break and an evening meal i.e. £28.10 per volunteer per day.

To reflect the unusual and unique nature of the relationship between CCGBC and CRS and having considered these facts, the following is concluded:

- Discount the options of charitable donations and tendering for services.

- Agree in advance the number of Volunteer Days CC&GBC will require from CRS over the next 12 month period i.e. list all the events on the programme and estimate the number of CRS volunteers required for each.
- Allow CRS to retrospectively make subsistence claims (based on Council approved rates of £28.10) for each volunteer day deployed at a Council run event.
- Factor these costs into every events budget and make an appropriate budget provision.
- Only apply this policy to Council run events and not to cover any volunteer deployment costs for non-Council run events in the area or any other search, rescue, safety or event duties commissioned by organisations other than Council.
- Develop, agree and annually review a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with CRS which sets out:
 - The events where safety support is required over the next 12 months.
 - The agreed number of volunteers to be deployed at each event.
 - The volunteer subsistence rate to be applied.
 - The agreed budget for the year.
 - The range of safety roles to be provided at each event.
 - The relationship, roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders at these events to include inter alia:
 - CRS
 - PSNI
 - NIFRS
 - RNLI
 - Coastguard
 - NIAS
 - Council staff
 - Others

Recommendation

To reimburse subsistence costs, for the number of CRS volunteers agreed in advance, on an event by event basis, upon receipt of the appropriate retrospective claim.

