

## **AGENDA ITEM 12**

### **FALKIRK COUNCIL**

**Subject: DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS RAISED FOR SRI LANKA**  
**Meeting: FALKIRK COUNCIL**  
**Date: 7<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2009**  
**Author: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Members will recall the devastation caused by the Tsunami in Asia at the end of 2004 and in particular the impact on Sri Lanka. A report (a copy of which is attached as Appendix 1) was presented to Members in April 2005 setting out some options on how the Council might support local people to raise funds to assist the Sri Lankan people affected by the loss of their homes and property. It was intended that the funds raised would assist longer term rebuilding rather than contribute to the immediate emergency aid that was provided by international aid organisations in the immediate aftermath.
- 1.2 A fund raising effort was arranged and as at September 2009 a fund of £15,536 is held by the Council. This report makes recommendations on how the Council might arrange to determine a mechanism to agree how the fund be disbursed appropriately.

#### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The original report envisaged a significant level of engagement between the people of Falkirk and the rebuilding of a community in the Jaffna region in Sri Lanka. However, the ongoing political unrest in the area and the advice from key agencies and personnel meant that groups tended to direct their funds to the international recovery organisations rather than to a specific more localised project.

#### **3. OPTIONS FOR DISTRIBUTION**

- 3.1 Given that the funds were raised to support long term redevelopment and recovery in Sri Lanka it is appropriate to identify charities whose work will be in keeping with the original intent.
- 3.2 Clearly the recognised international aid charities each have programmes in Sri Lanka. In addition a number of Scottish based organisations have projects there. A number of those have come forward following the recent press article to offer assistance and to present their work as potential areas for the funds.

- 3.3 Given the diversity of good causes that would benefit and that the Council is only the custodian of the funds it is suggested that a group be established to decide which project should receive the funds. It is proposed that the group be made up of 3 young people from Schools and 3 Councillors. It is suggested that the group is supported by an officer from the external funding unit in their deliberations.

#### **4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The funds that have been gathered are held by the Council as custodian only and are not Council funds. The proposal set out in 3.3 allows Council to reflect the original aspiration of community engagement whilst having an appropriate mechanism for disbursement, and does not offend against s.83 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973..

#### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The funds raised total £15,536 and are held with the Council and are available for distribution when an agreed use has been identified

#### **6. CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 A significant amount of energy and enthusiasm has gone into raising funds to help create a better environment after the Tsunami. It is now appropriate to disburse the fund and allow it to make a tangible difference in a community in Sri Lanka. It is proposed that the best way to decide on which charity to proceed with is through the formation of the group outlined in 3.3 above.

#### **7. RECOMMENDATION**

- 7.1 Members are asked to agree to form the group as outlined in 3.3 and identify 3 Councillors to assist in the determination of the appropriate charity/charities.

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**Director of Community Services**

**Date: 21 September 2009**

**Contact: Maureen Campbell, Director. Ext. 0902**

#### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**Nil**

**FALKIRK COUNCIL**

**Subject :           SUPPORTING RECONSTRUCTION WORK  
                          FOLLOWING THE INDIAN OCEAN DISASTER**  
**Meeting :         FALKIRK COUNCIL**  
**Date:             27 APRIL 2005**  
**Author :          DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**1.     INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1   Members will recall the devastating images of the countries affected by the Tsunami and of the tremendous community response for financial assistance, raising £300m in the UK to the Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC) and a further £40m directly to other agencies.
- 1.2   In addition, the Provost's fund for Tsunami was established and £17,300 was raised which went directly to DEC.
- 1.3   This paper provides Members with details of an opportunity available that might enable additional support to be provided in the reconstruction of an area.
- 1.4   It recommends that the Council explore in more detail how it might give longer term support to the rebuilding of the area in partnership with the wider community.

**2.     BACKGROUND**

- 2.1   Members will have noted the various media articles and programmes identifying the challenges that lie ahead in rebuilding the various communities. In particular the enormous challenges in developing new infrastructure, homes, schools and hospitals have been identified as a priority. The various international relief agencies are gearing up to respond to the medium term work programmes to be tackled following the immediate emergency phase.
- 2.2   The various national and international relief and/or aid agencies stress the importance of responding to the needs identified by local communities in the affected areas rather than trying to anticipate what is required because of the resource limitations in the region.
- 2.3   Local authorities might consider involving other local community organisations in providing a local co-ordinated response to the medium and long term requirements of the affected areas. In this regard it has been suggested that Falkirk might want to link with a designated area in one of the affected countries. This approach could provide a sustainable contribution to recovery and encourage a higher level of participation from community groups in the Falkirk area.

### **3. PROPOSALS**

- 3.1 Within Falkirk an opportunity has arisen following an approach from the Bairns Trust, the Falkirk FC fans, shareholder and supporters group. The Trust has already raised a considerable amount from collections, both in terms of cash relief and required goods such as toiletries. The Trust has also established a fund raising programme specifically designed to involve the wider community and the council may wish to assist the Trust with the promotion of these ideas given the assurance that all proceeds will be allocated to the project listed below.
- 3.2 The Bairns Trust wish to establish a new charity, possibly known as Bairns Aid, that would drive local fundraising to be used toward the replacement of houses in the Jaffna region for local fishermen. Well established links exist and have grown with a Glasgow based businessman and the Sri Lankan government as well as links with the Jaffna District Fishermans Association. There may be spin off opportunities for kit building in Falkirk and for Sri Lankan people to come to Falkirk for training in construction of the kits. Economic Development officers are in discussion with the company on this matter. It is proposed that the new village be known as 'Falkirk' and appropriate twinning links be developed in the coming years.

### **4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/CONSTRAINTS**

- 4.1 In considering the best way to support any request for assistance, Members should be aware of the scope of the authority within its powers.
- 4.2 As regards supporting a charity to be set up in Falkirk to support overseas work, it may be permissible for the Council to incur the expenditure necessary to set this up if, in its opinion, it is likely to improve the well-being of its area/inhabitants. However, there may be an issue with the Council contributing directly to such a charity given that its work will not be carried out in the UK.
- 4.3 Setting up a charity is likely to be straightforward. There is no formal registration process. It is for the Inland Revenue to decide whether a body may be regarded as a charity for tax purposes and, if so, accounts have to be submitted on an annual basis.

### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications from this particular report, however, the points below will be important considerations in the future.
- 5.2 If the Council were to support the formation of a charity, the costs associated with setting it up would need to be established and considered for support.
- 5.3 It should be noted that the charity would not be eligible to "twin" with any of the organisations financially supported by the DEC funds as they require any twinning partners to have been established for at least 3 years. This will have significant impact on raising additional UK level funds for anything that it might want to do in Sri Lanka.

### **6. CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 The rebuilding of Sri Lanka will take a long and consistent approach to development. There are various agencies involved including the key international aid agencies as well as opportunities being co-ordinated through local government associations and the UK government departments.
- 6.2 The opportunity to create a local charity with an immediate focus on Sri Lanka is of significant interest. It provides a co-ordinated programme for local people to make a direct response to the issues in the world and to enhance local civic pride as a result.
- 6.3 There are a range of legal issues affecting the Council support for a charity and this needs to be examined in more detail before any commitments are made.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 Council is asked to:

- a) Note the interest in establishing a long term relationship between Sri Lanka and Scotland in the rebuilding of the areas affected by the Tsunami;
- b) Note the specific interest in establishing a village in the Jaffna region to be known as Falkirk;
- c) Instruct officers to explore in more detail how the Council might support the formation of a local charity to enable local people to contribute directly;
- d) Make contact with appropriate UK departmental agencies to assess how best to support the relief effort;
- e) Note that further reports will be provided to an appropriate Committee on a coherent way forward; and
- f) Authorise officers to explore the possibility of establishing a partnership with house builders and local Sri Lankan people to support the reconstruction in the area.

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Director of Community Services

20<sup>th</sup> April 2005

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Nil