



<b>Subject:</b>	Social Supermarket Fund 26/27 and Update 24/25
<b>Date:</b>	19 September 2025
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Jim Girvan , Director Neighbourhood Services
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Nicola Lane, Neighbourhood Services Manager, CNS Margaret Higgins, Lead Officer, CNS

### Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

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No

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Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

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1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

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### Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

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No

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<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to seek members approval on the operation of the 26/27 scheme and provide an update on the operation of projects supported through the 24/25 Social Supermarket Fund (SSF).

<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider the recommended approach and assessment criteria for open call funding for the Social Supermarket Fund in 26/27 and grant approval to operate an open call for grant applications to the SSF in 26/27 as outlined in the report. Members are also asked to note the update on delivery of the Social Supermarket Fund in 24/25.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
	<u>Background</u>
3.1	In response to recommendations in the Welfare Reform Mitigations report, the Department for Communities (DfC) has operated a Social Supermarket Pilot programme since October 2017. Funding was made available through the Community Support Programme (CSP) in 20/21 to expand the concept to all council areas. This fund is 100% funded by DfC and is based on a MOU with the department and council.
3.2	The aim of a social supermarket is to offer a sustainable response to food insecurity by seeking to help address the root causes of poverty rather than simply provide food. This is achieved by providing, in addition to food support, a referral network for wraparound support. Food supply should ideally come from donations, surplus, or purchased at a discount, however, funding can also be used towards the purchase of food vouchers.
3.3	In the years 21-24, Council worked with identified partners to develop models for delivery. For 24/25 and 25/26 schemes council granted approval for officers to seek applications through an open call process.
3.4	<p>Following consideration at April and May meetings of SP&amp;R, members agreed to roll over awards to organisations funded in 24/25 into 25/26 and asked officers to complete the following;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to review the criteria beforehand and ensure that there was weighting added for organisations within areas of multiple deprivation;</li> <li>to add into the criteria that those organisations applying must be able to demonstrate that they have experience of managing a scheme of this nature providing support to those struggling financially as a result of the cost-of-living crisis;</li> <li>as best we can, will seek to ensure there is not proliferation of services close together; and that the scoring criteria be presented to party group leaders in advance of the applications opening or a special meeting of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee if needed.</li> </ul>

3.5	Officers have amended the criteria for assessment based on this direction from members. Members may wish to consider the following points when reviewing the proposed scoring approach;
3.6	<p>Each social supermarket project operates in a slightly different way. There are three main models of operation which are listed below;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large, well-established community organisations operating a social supermarket as well as wraparound services within their own facility as well as signposting people to other services.</li> <li>• Food banks that have evolved into social supermarkets and offer wraparound services as well as signposting to other services.</li> <li>• Community organisations providing food vouchers and wraparound services as well as signposting to other services.</li> </ul>
3.7	Officers have sought to ensure that the proposed criteria provide an opportunity for projects that operate any of these models to access funding. Officers have also sought to ensure that the proposed criteria will provide an opportunity for new projects to apply by demonstrating experience in delivering community based interventions and support for individuals.
3.8	Members may also wish to consider that the location of an organisation does not always reflect the geographical area that it covers and that while a weighting for organisations which are based in areas of deprivation is included, as directed by members, there is also an additional question where applicants have to demonstrate what need their project will meet.
3.9	Members asked that officers seek to ensure that there is not a proliferation of services in particular areas, there is no mechanism to prevent projects from the same geographic area applying for support through an open call process. Decisions on whether to award funding to particular services in certain areas have to be taken once the assessment process has completed and an outcome is available. However, in an effort to support collaboration and reduce duplication, the need section of the criteria includes a question in relation to other services providing support for individuals and how gaps/duplication have been identified.
3.10	<p><b>Key elements for 26/27 application</b></p> <p>It is recommended that the 25/26 Social Supermarket fund would operate on the following parameters, which are in line with previous schemes. These are;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applications would be open to any constituted group delivering eligible projects.</li> <li>• Maximum level of award will be £50,000</li> <li>• Only one application per organisation</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allocation of funding to projects will be based on a quality score</li> <li>• Applicants can apply for costs of up to 10% for management and delivery of the project – these must be fully costed and explained</li> </ul>
3.11	<p><b>Multi annual funding</b></p> <p>Members will be aware that this fund is 100% funded by DfC through an annual Letter of Offer which is normally issued in the summer months. In an effort to provide additional stability for services and reduce the need to make applications on an annual basis. Members are asked to approve that the 26/27 application process would cover a 2 year period. Letters of offer would be issued on an annual basis and would include a caveat that they are subject to receipt of DfC funding.</p>
3.12	<p><b>Criteria for 26/27 programme</b></p> <p>Members will be aware that Council recently agreed the terms for a new large Community Support grant. The new Community Support Plan large grant uses a 2 stage process, it is recommended that this is also applied to the Social Supermarket Fund. Further detail on the proposed criteria is contained in Appendix 1.</p> <p>Members are asked to consider the criteria and if content approve that this assessment model is used for open call applications in 26/27. Following council approval it is expected that calls for applications will open in mid October and close in December. Updates on the outcome of assessments will be brought to elected members in February 2026.</p>
3.13	<p><b>Update on 24/25 Social Supermarket Fund Projects</b></p> <p>Members may wish to note that Belfast City Council supported 21 social supermarkets during the financial year 24/25. Most projects which received support were existing projects supported in 23/24 but a portion of funds was directed to support new projects and these included; Compass Counselling, Donegall Pass Community Forum, Footprints Women's Centre, Glencolin Community Association, Grace Women's Development, Street Soccer NI, West Belfast Partnership Board.</p>
3.14	<p>Further detail on the operation of the projects is provided in the attached appendices which also includes some feedback from those who benefited directly from support in 24/25. A total of 14,294 individuals were supported through projects in 24/25. Officers also facilitate quarterly networking meetings between social supermarkets to share best practice, provide information on areas of common interest and provide an opportunity to discuss and address emerging issues.</p>

3.15	<p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>All activity outlined in this report can be delivered through existing staff resources. Funding for 26/27 is conditional on receipt of DfC funding. If the DfC Letter of Offer is not received by April 26, officers will advise members that no budget is available to support successful projects.</p> <p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p>
3.16	<p>None identified at present, delivery of previous schemes has been screened . Equality Screening of the 26/27 grant application process will be completed when the assessment criteria have been agreed.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices - Documents Attached</b>
	<p>Appendix 1 – Draft assessment criteria for 26/27 Social Supermarket Fund and 24/25 criteria</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Overview of 24/25 Social Supermarket Projects</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Information providing an overview of funding administered and support provided through 24/25 delivery.</p>