



Subject:	Update on Hardship Programme 2025/26
Date:	21 st Nov 2025
Reporting Officer:	John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy Kevin Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty
Contact Officer:	Chris Tubridy, Hardship Programme Coordinator Brian Carr, Portfolio Manager Nicola Lane, Neighbourhood Services Manager Margaret Higgins, Lead Officer, Community Services

Is this report restricted?		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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 <input type="checkbox"/>			
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Information relating to any individual2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual3. 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 matter5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction7. 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		<input type="checkbox"/>	
After Council Decision		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sometime in the future		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Never		<input type="checkbox"/>	

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members following the direction provided at the October SP&R meeting to write to the Minister for Communities seeking funding support for the continuation of the Hardship Programme in the 2025/26 financial year.
1.2	The report also provides a reminder on the current budget position for delivery of a Hardship Programme in 2025/26. Members should note that the impact of this will be significantly less than previous years without further allocation of funding.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Note the contents of this report including the recent correspondence issued to the Minister for Communities on 10 November. ii. Note the vastly reduced budget position of £75,000 for the development and delivery of a Hardship Programme in 2025/26, which members have agreed should be allocated to Family Support Hubs to help support families and children.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Members will recall the update provided to members in October 2025 on the positive impact of the £1.1m Hardship Programme, which was implemented between December 2024 and June 2025. Members will be aware that while the Council fully funded this year's programme, it had previously been funded by DFC in 2023/24.
3.2	At the meeting in October, Members had been informed that whilst some underspend from previous years was available to support a Hardship Programme in 2025/26, the amount available was £75,000 which is significantly lower than previous years.
3.3	As agreed by Members, the Council issued correspondence to the Department for Communities requesting them to consider providing funding support for the continuation of the Hardship Programme in 2025/26. Additionally, the letter advised the department that we would welcome exploration of a recurrent multi-year funding model to enable more strategic long-term efforts in tackling poverty and hardship at the local level. A copy of the letter is attached at Appendix 1 . Officers will update members again once feedback from DFC has been received.
3.4	<p>Hardship Programme Support 2025-26</p> <p>Members were advised in October that there is a current budget of £75,000 from previous years underspends available to support a Hardship programme for 2025-26. This is significantly lower than previous years and unless any additional funding is secured the impact will be greatly reduced.</p>

3.5	Whilst highlighting the need for and absence of any significant funding, Members agreed to utilise the available budget of £75,000 for 2025/26 to support 11 Family Support Hubs. This proposal had been discussed with the Members Cost-of-Living Working Group who felt this was a pragmatic approach given the limited budget and to ensure a good geographical spread through the 11 Family Support Hubs to help support children and families in immediate emergency need.
	Financial & Resource Implications
3.6	The current available budget for a 2025-26 Hardship Programme is £75,000
	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
3.7	None.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1: Correspondence from Council to Department for Communities issued on 10 Nov 2025