



<b>Subject:</b>	Update on Hardship Programme 2025/26
<b>Date:</b>	19th December 2025
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy Kevin Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Chris Tubridy, Hardship Programme Coordinator Brian Carr, Portfolio Manager Nicola Lane, Neighbourhood Services Manager Margaret Higgins, Lead Officer, Community Services

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</b>	
Insert number <input type="checkbox"/>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Information relating to any individual</li><li>2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual</li><li>3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)</li><li>4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter</li><li>5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained</li><li>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</li><li>7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime</li></ol>	
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on recent correspondence received from the Minister for Communities in response to the Council's request for the Department for Communities to make funding available to support the continued delivery of a Hardship Support Programme in the 2025/26 financial year.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report including the recent correspondence received from the Minister for Communities, dated 10 December 2025, confirming that funding would not be made available in future years to support a hardship programme.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
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 and supported in excess of 50,000 individuals. Members will be aware that while the Council had 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, correspondence was issued on behalf of the Council to the Minister for Communities requesting that urgent consideration be given by the Department for Communities (DfC) to the allocation of funding to support the implementation of a much-needed Hardship Programme in 2025/2026. This request recognised the statutory responsibility of DfC to bring forward an Anti-Poverty Strategy to help alleviate the impacts of poverty and hardship on our most vulnerable residents.
3.4	Attached at <b>Appendix 1</b> is the response received from the Minister for Communities dated 10 <sup>th</sup> December 2025 advising that the DfC Hardship Grant Funding provided in 2023/24 would not be available in future years. The response did state that the Minister remains committed to providing services that help people who have fallen on hard times through initiatives such as the Social Supermarket Scheme, Discretionary Support Scheme, Affordable Warmth Scheme as well as the Winter Fuel Payments to those who are eligible.
3.5	<p><b>Hardship Programme Support 2025-26</b></p> <p>Members were advised in October that there is a <b>current budget of £75,000</b> from previous years underspends available to support a Hardship programme for 2025-26. Members previously agreed that this funding would be made available to the 11 Family Support Hubs located across the city to help children and families in emergency need.</p>

	<b>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</b>
3.6	The current available budget for a 2025-26 Hardship Programme is £75,000
	<b>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</b>
3.7	None.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>
	<b>Appendix 1:</b> Correspondence from Department for Communities to Council issued on 10 Dec 2025