



Subject:	People and Communities Committee – funding requests
Date:	22 March 2024
Reporting Officers:	David Sales, Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officers:	David Sales, Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services

Restricted Reports	
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	
Sometime in the future	
Never	

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

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on two proposals for funding which were agreed at the People and Communities Committee meeting held on 6 th February 2024 relating to a request from the Belfast Advice Group and for summer schemes with children with additional needs.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the request to fund the Citywide Tribunal Service as detailed below; and • Consider the request to provide funding for summer schemes for children with additional needs
3.0	Main Report
3.1	At the People and Communities Committee held on 6 th February 2024, it was agreed that two requests for funding would be brought forward to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for approval. The requests are outlined below.
3.2	<u>Belfast Advice Group</u> Following a presentation from the Belfast Advice Group and the noting of a report outlining a range of information attached at Appendix 1, it was agreed that the Group's request to fund the Citywide Tribunal Service to the sum of £269,063 for 2024/25 and to build in a recurring additional annual cost of living uplift of 3% to the award for generalist advice provision including 23/24 would be brought forward to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for its consideration. Given the balance in existing reserves the request for BCTS equals £78,410 for 24/25 and the uplift requires £30,000. This means a total request of £108,410 in 24/25.
3.3	<u>Summer schemes for children with additional needs</u> Members also noted a report outlining a proposal for additional funding to procure specialist providers to facilitate four additional summer schemes for children with additional needs, with a view to delivering the schemes in summer 2024, one in each area of the city, with discussion to take place with the relevant Area Working Groups and the Belfast City Youth Council in advance of any locations being agreed. The proposed cost to facilitate the four schemes is £80,000.
3.4	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> As detailed above, the request to Belfast Advice Group's request to fund the Citywide Tribunal Service to the sum of £269,063, and the request to fund summer schemes for children with additional needs is £80,000.

3.5	<p>Members should note that for the 24/25 year there is no additional budget to enhance generalist advice service provision beyond the agreed level of £999,657. Therefore an additional £30,000 is required for 24/25.</p>
3.6	<p>The anticipated available budget for BCTS in 24/25 is £70,400 from DfC, but council is not yet in receipt of a Letter of Offer for 24/25. There is £120,253 in the Tribunal Service reserve, assuming that the £70,400 from DfC is allocated, an additional £78,410 is required from Council for 24/25 to fund the BCTS to the requested level.</p>
3.7	<p>The request for funding for the BCTS has been received annually since the service was established in 2012. The recently completed Review of Advice Services in Belfast presented to Members in December 2023, highlighted that a recurring award for the BCTS should be built into the budget. Officers will include a growth request as part of the 25/26 estimates process in relation to advice services to include a dedicated budget for BCTS and build in a recurring additional annual cost of living uplift to the award for generalist advice provision.</p>
3.8	<p>In relation to the request for generalist advice services, Members should also note that Council does not apply cost of living increases to other annual funding awards. The initial cost of living increase that was applied to generalist advice services by DfC in 21/22 was 7% and a 2% uplift was applied by DfC thereafter. DfC provided funding to enable maintenance of this uplifted salary payment in 22/23 and 23/24 and these awards have been/are being passed on to advice organisations. DfC have indicated that it is likely that this uplift will be maintained in the 24/25 CSP LoO, although there is no confirmation of this. However, members should note that no additional uplifts have been provided by DfC since 2021, funds are only available to maintain salaries at the 21/22 level.</p>
3.9	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Implications</u></p> <p>Belfast City Council’s agreement for the provision of this service will seek to ensure that the service is provided on an equal basis to all communities across the city, including section 75 groups and areas of rural need.</p> <p>The Review of Advice Services identified the need to develop a new funding model that more effectively targets need. This model will be developed in 24/26 and will be screened for equality and rural needs implications.</p> <p>Council does not have a policy on implementing annual inflationary increases to funding agreements. A decision to introduce an increase for one funding agreement is likely to set a precedent and have an impact on other funding programmes.</p>

4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Belfast Advice Group – February 24 report to People and Communities Committee Appendix 2 – Summer schemes for children with additional needs – February 24 report to People and Communities Committee