



Subject:	Correspondence Received – Hardship Fund
Date:	24th April, 2026
Reporting Officer:	John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy
Contact Officer:	Eilish McGoldrick, Democratic Services and Governance Coordinator

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	<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/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To consider the correspondence received in response to the Council's concerns in relation to Hardship Funding and School Meals for children as agreed by the Council at its meeting on 8th January, 2026.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to note the correspondence as set out in the report.
3.0	Main Report
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	At its meeting in January, the Council agreed to the following request: <i>"The Council agreed that the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th December, 2025, under the heading "Hardship Programme 2025/26 - Response from the Department for Communities Minister" be amended to provide that the Council writes to:</i>
3.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>the Minister for Communities to express its objection to the confirmation that the Department for Communities hardship funding, provided in 2023/24, would not be available in future years, and to encourage the Minister to look at more equitable ways to tax the profits of energy companies to help fund the service going forward; and</i>
3.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>the Minister of Education to express its concern in relation to the Education Authority's decision to increase the price of school meals, and to state its support of the campaign by trade unions for the delivery of free school meals for all children."</i>
3.4	Accordingly, Democratic Services wrote to both the Minister for Communities and the Minister for Education and responses have been received (Appendix 1 and 2).
3.5	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> None associated with this report.
3.6	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> None associated with this report.
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Letter from Gordon Lyons MLA, Minister for Communities Appendix 2 – Letter from Department of Education