



Subject:	Department for Communities Response - Motion Calling for the NI Executive to Introduce a Basic Income for Artists Scheme
Date:	21st August 2026
Reporting Officer:	Lesley-Ann O'Donnell - Senior Manager Culture, Tourism and Events Rachael Campbell-Palmer - Culture Development Manager
Contact Officer:	Craig Mealey – Committee Services Officer

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes ☐ No ☒
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	
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	☐

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes ☒ No ☐

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To update the Committee on correspondence received from the Department for Communities in response to a motion passed by the Council in March, 2026, calling for the Northern Ireland Executive to introduce a basic income for artists scheme.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to note the response received from the Department for Communities.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	At its meeting on 2nd March, 2026, the Council passed the following motion which had been proposed by Councillor Doherty, seconded by Councillor de Faoite and amended by Councillor Groogan: “This Council notes that: The arts, culture and creative sectors are central to Belfast’s social fabric, wellbeing, identity, and local economy. Many artists, performers and creative workers in Belfast and across the North continue to experience insecure, low and irregular incomes, worsened by the long-term impacts of COVID-19 and the ongoing cost of living crisis. The Irish Government introduced a Basic Income for Artists pilot in 2022, providing an unconditional weekly payment to artists and creative workers, which has been independently evaluated as improving financial stability, wellbeing, and time spent on creative practice. The Irish Government has now committed to making this scheme permanent, recognising the structural precarity faced by those working in the creative industries. This Council believes that: • The arts and culture are for everyone and government policy should ensure the widest possible participation, inclusion and engagement with the sector; • Artists and creative workers should not be forced out of their professions due to financial insecurity or have to rely on other employment, detracting from their time and ability to create, in order to survive; • Belfast’s creative sector is a vital public good, contributing to community cohesion, regeneration, tourism, public health including mental health and wellbeing, youth engagement and cultural life; • A Basic Income for Artists scheme in the north would help protect creative livelihoods, retain local talent, and strengthen the city’s cultural

	ecosystem. Evidence from the Irish scheme has proven that a Basic Income for Artists is an investment that pays back to the economy and society more than it costs, through increased expenditure, increased productivity and less reliance on other welfare payments. This scheme will help to reduce barriers to people who are from working class, global majority and/or those who are working at a disadvantage, ensuring diversity and inclusion within the creative industries. This Council resolves to: • Call on the Executive to legislate for and fund a Basic Income for Artists scheme, providing regular, unconditional income support to eligible artists and creative workers. This scheme should be permanent, include all eligible artists and creative workers and be provided indefinitely while they remain eligible for the scheme. • Request that the Minister for Communities lead on the development of this scheme, in partnership with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, the Department for the Economy and the Department of Finance. The Minister should work directly with artists, arts organisations and those working in the creative industries to design and set the terms of the scheme and eligibility based on local needs and experience; and • Write to the First Minister and deputy First Minister urging that this proposal be treated as a priority within the Executive's Programme for Government and budget-setting process."
3.2	Accordingly, Democratic Services wrote to the First Minister and deputy First Minister, and the Minister for Communities.
3.3	A response has now been received from the Department for Communities and is set out within Appendix A of this report.
4.0	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> There are no financial or resource implications associated with this paper.
5.0	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> There are no Equality, Good Relations Implications or Rural Needs Assessment for Council associated with this paper.
6.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	Appendix A – Department for Communities Response – Motion Calling for the NI Executive to Introduce a Basic Income for Artists Scheme