



Subject:	Notice of Motion – Ensuring Fair Access to Funding for Faith-Based Organisations Tackling Addiction
Date:	18 September 2026
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance Manager Conor Bayne, Solicitor, Legal & Civic Services

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

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No

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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

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Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

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No

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1.0	Purpose of report or summary of main issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on the Notice of Motion received for the meeting of the Council on 2 nd February 2026 in relation to Ensuring Fair Access to Funding for Faith-Based Organisations Tackling Addiction.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	Members are asked to note that, following a review of the Council's current funding arrangements and eligibility criteria, there does not appear to be any unnecessary obstacles that would exclude faith-based organisations from applying for and receiving support.
3.0	Main report
3.1	Members will recall that a Notice of Motion was received for the meeting of the Council on 2nd February 2026 in relation to Ensuring Fair Access to Funding for Faith-Based Organisation Tackling Addictions, the contents of the report are as follows: <u>Ensuring Fair Access to Funding for Faith-Based Organisations Tackling Addiction</u> <i>“Belfast City Council recognises the essential role played by faith-based organisations in serving the most vulnerable members of our city, particularly those battling life-controlling issues such as drug and alcohol addiction.</i> <i>This Council acknowledges the work of Teen Challenge Belfast, a registered charity which provides critical intervention services to individuals struggling with addiction. These include on-street outreach, counselling, crisis intervention, and referrals to an 11-month residential rehabilitation programme – reportedly delivering an estimated 85% success rate.</i> <i>This Council further notes that, despite delivering life-saving services without discrimination, organisations such as Teen Challenge face structural barriers to funding due to their faith-based governance models – barriers which inhibit access to public funding streams otherwise available to comparable service providers.</i> <i>Accordingly, this Council commits to reviewing its current funding arrangements and eligibility criteria, with a view to removing unnecessary obstacles that exclude faith-based organisations from applying for and receiving support – provided their services are offered to all, without discrimination, and meet the pressing social needs of our communities.</i> <i>This Council further calls on officers to bring forward proposals to ensure that funding frameworks are inclusive of organisations with a faith ethos, in recognition of the diverse</i>

contributions required to tackle addiction, homelessness, and social vulnerability across Belfast.”

Proposer: Alderman Dean A. McCullough

Seconder: Councillor Sarah Bunting

The motion calls upon the Council to review funding arrangements and eligibility criteria.

Legal Services have reviewed the Council’s current funding arrangements and the eligibility criteria outlined therein and have concluded that there does not appear to be any unnecessary obstacles that would exclude faith-based organisations from applying for funding. Whilst it is recognised that the eligibility criteria of certain funding streams might differ slightly due to the nature of that particular funding stream, Legal Services have been unable to identify any that would preclude Faith Based Organisations from applying.

Members should note that this conclusion is based on an overarching view of faith-based organisations and their governance structure against the Council’s funding criteria. Legal Services have reviewed the governance structure of Teen Challenge Belfast as highlighted in the original notice of motion, and this review supports the conclusion that they would be eligible to apply.

Members should further note that although Legal Services have concluded that there are no governance barriers to Faith-Based Organisations applying for funding, their proposed project would thereafter be subject to the same assessment against project specific eligibility criteria which are applied to all organisations on a project by project basis before grant funding decisions are made.

3.2

Financial & Resource Implications

None associated with this report.

3.3

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

None associated with this report.

4.0

Documents Attached

None