



<b>Subject:</b>	Response from the Minister for Communities re: draft Departmental Budget for 2021-22 in relation to the future funding for advice services.
<b>Date:</b>	13th April, 2021
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Sara Steele, Democratic Services Officer
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Sara Steele, Democratic Services Officer

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<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/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	To consider a response from the Minister for Communities in relation to the draft Departmental Budget for 2021-22.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Note the response.</li></ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<b>Key Issues</b> The Committee will recall that at its meeting on 9th February, it was agreed that the Council write to the Communities Minister to highlight the Committees concern in relation to the future funding for advice services. A response has now been received on behalf of Minister Hargey, a copy of which is attached.

3.2	The response advises that the Department allocates more than £6.4m annually to support Advice Services, including debt advice and help with benefit appeals. Most of this funding is allocated to Councils through the Community Support Fund.
3.3	It advises that the draft 2021/22 budget presents very significant challenges for the Executive and across departments. However, outlines that the Members should take comfort from the Minister's very clear public commitment to the work of the independent advice sector and the need to continue these services, particularly for those who are going through welfare changes.
3.4	It concludes by stating that the Minister has advised the Assembly that she will find the required funding in the budget as we come into the new financial year.
	<p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>3.5 None associated with this report.</p> <p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></b></p> <p>3.6 None associated with this report.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices - Documents Attached</b>
	Appendix 1 - Copy of response from the Minister for Communities.