



Subject:	Community Provision Funding Update
Date:	7 September 2021
Reporting Officer:	Ryan Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Alison Allen, Neighbourhood Services Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time 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 or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to seek Members views on the funding approach in respect of the Councils Revenue, Capacity and Advice grants for 2022/2023.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Members of the Committee are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agree to extend the existing Community Development Grants' funding agreements for Capacity Building, Revenue for Community Buildings and Advice to the 31 March 2023 (at the current funding allocation, subject to confirmation of the 22/23 funding allocation from DfC), including extending the previously agreed bridging funding for St. Simon's Hall.• Note the reprofile of the agreed annual BCC contribution of £90,000 to Active Belfast. Funding will be used to extend funding agreements with current Active Belfast grant holders in order to complete their original programmes in 2021-22 and provide a budget for developmental projects and the re-profile of £23,133 from the BCC budget to Jog Belfast.

3.0	Main report
3.1	<u>Community Provision Capacity, Buildings Revenue and Advice Grants 22/23</u>
3.2	<p><u>Background</u></p> <p>Council's capacity, buildings revenue and advice grants aim to promote and invest in a resilient and effective independent community sector across the city by offering a number of different funding streams that any eligible group operating in Belfast can apply for:</p> <p><u>Capacity Building</u></p> <p>Aimed at Lead community development organisations that advocate the interests of their local groups, area and residents; and support local groups to ensure good practice in governance, committee procedures, appropriate policies and financial management.</p> <p><u>Revenue for Community Buildings</u></p> <p>Aimed at community organisations which address the needs of their community by delivering a broad-based programme from their building. The building may be used by the local neighbourhood, or the community may be from across the whole city for a thematic/special interest group.</p> <p><u>Advice Funding</u></p> <p>Council provides funding for generalist advice services to five area-based Consortia, consisting of 20 Advice Organisations throughout the city. The level of funding is based on an allocation formula (weighted for population size and level of deprivation) agreed by Council in 2015. There is a stipulation by the DfC that all groups must be registered with the regional body, Advice NI, and adhere to a range of policies and quality standards.</p> <p>Funding for the grants programme comes from two main sources, Council and DfC via the Community Support Programme (CSP). At August Committee members agreed to accept the CSP Letter of Offer (LoO) from DfC, which also included 2 additional allocations for Welfare Mitigations Extensions.</p>
3.3	<p><u>Key Considerations</u></p> <p>In normal circumstances, applications under the capacity and revenue grant schemes are normally facilitated through an open call in October of each year, for activity in the</p>

upcoming financial year. Application calls are required to take place in October to allow application development, assessment and award of grants.

Members are aware that as a result of COVID, contracts associated with our revenue and capacity grants had been extended from 2020/2021 at the same allocation level into 2021/2022. This extension allowed communities to sustain current services and continue to focus on delivery and recovery during the pandemic.

Members will also be aware that our Community / Voluntary sector partners continue to support communities to recover from the pandemic and many have had to adjust how they approach their service delivery to comply with our 'new normal'.

In recognition of the current focus of the Community / Voluntary sector, Officers are seeking member approval to extend the current contracts until March 2023 rather than proceed with an open call in October 2021.

This extension would be on the basis that officers undertake a review of the Capacity and Buildings Revenue Grants, aligning with DfC revised outcomes and our Community Provision priorities in readiness for an open call in October 2022 for delivery from April 2023 – March 2026.

In addition, Officers will conduct research to understand the changing needs and priorities of communities and organisations as we move to phased recovery and consider how we fully utilise resources to support the development of neighbourhoods and organisations.

Given the importance of ensuring there is support for communities where there may be low or no community capacity, it is proposed the following programmes of activity would be delivered to ensure those communities were in a position to apply for the recommended open call for 22/23 grants:

- **Enhanced Capacity building support** – members will recall that officers have committed to the development of a Capacity Pilot Programme that will provide an additional resource for organisations who are not successful in accessing sufficient funding because of capacity limitations. Officers are developing a Capacity Programme which will provide support for organisations in 22/23. Further detail will be brought back to committee and Area Working Groups in November/December.

- **Community Provision grants** – these grants which have been successfully delivered as micro and medium grants will be made available for project activity in 22/23. Feedback on this approach, which combines a range of community provision funding, has been very positive, particularly because of the reduced levels of bureaucracy enabling new organisations to participate

The recommendation to extend current contracts and undertake a review of the current process is based on the following considerations:

- Community and voluntary partners report that Covid has had a significant impact on service delivery, governance, staff and volunteer availability. An open call in October 21 would not provide sufficient time for organisations to accurately capture and reflect emerging needs and will add pressure to an already stretched sector.
- DfC has conducted a review of the Community Support Programme which provides the majority of the finance for council capacity and revenue funding. A key recommendation from the review is that the department adopts an Outcomes Based Approach for its future funding programmes; this review is currently with the minister for consideration. Postponing the open call will provide council with an opportunity to revisit our Community Development Grants and ensure alignment with revised future DfC outcomes.
- Delivering an open call now does not give sufficient time to give communities with low or no capacity to be effectively supported by Council to enable their participation and inclusion in future Council grant programmes.
- Carrying out an open call for this funding now will put pressure on existing council community services and create an order of competing priorities in already under-resourced service teams. Each stage of the process requires significant staff time, from support to develop applications through to assessment and verification of funding to date. Officers recommend that given the pressures in the CVS they need to prioritise support and a reassessment of the current approach to ensure that it meets the current and emerging needs of the sector.

3.4	<p><u>St. Simon's Hall</u></p> <p>At February's Committee meeting members agreed the provision of a one off 'Bridging Support' to Southcity Resource and Development Centre for revenue costs associated with St Simons Hall. Should members agree to extend the current grant contracts to March 2023. St. Simon's will not have the opportunity of applying for a Revenue Grant. Thus based on the previous decision rationale, it is recommended the St. Simon's contract is extended in keeping with any extension to the capacity and buildings revenue grant programme at a cost of £18,000.</p>
3.5	<p><u>Active Belfast</u></p> <p>Active Belfast (AB) is a multi-agency partnership supporting physical activity and healthy eating in Belfast, the partnership is currently undertaking a review of its operation and a report with further information will be provided at a later date. Two of the main initiatives supported by Active Belfast include the Active Belfast grant scheme (supports participation in physical activity) and Jog Belfast (couch to 5k programme), these initiatives are administered by staff in the Belfast Health Development Unit (BHDU).</p> <p>In 2019 Active Belfast agreed to a two year funding programme from 2019/21 to increase capacity and foster sustainability at community level. In April 2021, in order to respond to the impacts of the Covid 19 pandemic, partners agreed that Active Belfast would contribute a proportion of its grant funds towards the Belfast City Council Micro and Medium Grants Scheme for 21/22. This approach is intended to enhance access to funding for physical activity and nutrition focussed work in Belfast. BHDU staff will provide advice on the physical activity & healthy eating elements of successful BCC Micro/Medium grant projects.</p> <p>Given the impact of Covid 19 on delivery of 2019/21 projects, officers have adopted the following approach for 21/22 which members are asked to note that;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • current Active Belfast grant holders will be offered continuation funding in order to complete their original programmes/initiatives in 2021-22. This will be subject to meeting key performance indicators. • a developmental budget will be used for Active Belfast Partnership supported projects and initiatives, again this will be subject to meeting key indicators. <p>In addition, members are advised that the additional in year re-profile to Jog Belfast of £23,133 is provided from the existing BCC 90k contribution to Active Belfast.</p>

	Members should note that this request will be met within existing budgets as outlined below:	
	BCC	£39,970
	PHA	£39,970
	PHA	£73,163
	BCC	£26,897
	PHA	£32,867
	BCC	£23,133
3.6	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The financial and resource implications detailed within this report and their implementation will ensure a more effective use of staff and financial resources in a context with continuing pressures on community and voluntary partners.</p>	
3.7	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications and Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>This will be considered throughout and any appropriate issues highlighted to Members. Any amendments to existing scheme or new scheme will be considered in the context of any equality/Good Relations and rural needs considerations.</p>	
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached	
	None	