



Belfast
City Council

Subject:	DfC Community Recovery Funding Update
Date:	9 November 2021
Reporting Officer:	Ryan Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Alison Allen/ Kelly Gilliland, Neighbourhood Services Manager Margaret Higgins, Lead Officer – Community Provision

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input checked="" 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 advise members on additional funding which has been received from the Department for Communities (DfC) and seek approval on recommended approach for its allocation.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Agree to accept the additional funding allocation of £1,243,710 from the DfC under priority areas of General Community Support and Financial Inclusion. (ii) Agree to the following allocation model for the additional funding: <p>Community Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £631,360 (Micro & Medium Grants Programme 21/22) £250,000 (Area strategic partners) £150,000 (City Thematic partners)

	<p>Financial inclusion</p> <p>£212,350 (5 City generalist advice partners)</p> <p>(iii) Grant delegated authority to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to allocate any additional monies which may be received by DfC in-year to relevant delivery partners based on the agreed delivery approaches as outlined within this report.</p>
3.0	Main report
	<u>Background</u>
3.1	Members will recall that in 20/21, the Department for Communities (DfC) provided a significant amount of additional funding to support communities to manage the impacts of COVID-19. This funding was distributed by Council to a range of organisations across the city using both micro and medium grant programmes as well as via funding for area based Strategic partners and for citywide Thematic partners to work with key groups. In 20/21 a total of £4,460,637 was allocated through these funding streams to deliver a range of activity across the city. Given the exceptional circumstances of 20/21, Council gave approval for the delivery timescale of these projects to be extended until 30 September 2021.
3.2	In August 2021, DfC invited Councils to advise on COVID recovery needs specific to their council area and how they would propose to spend an additional allocation under the Community Support Programme to meet these needs. The indicative allocation for this funding in the Belfast area was approximately £1million.
3.3	The need for the provision of accessible funding, to enable service recovery and promote agile and responsive community development approaches within local areas has been demonstrated as one of the key and most successful funding mechanisms that was introduced during the pandemic. Based on this Council officers submitted a high-level proposal which outlined that any additional award would be used to support the provision of Micro and Medium Grants and grant awards to our Strategic and Thematic partners. This approach enables delivery of community development projects which meet a variety of locally identified community needs in line with agreed DfC outcomes.
	<u>Recommended Approach</u>
3.4	In August/September Council administered a round of micro and medium grant aid to support programme delivery from September 2021 – March 2022. This is the normal timeframe for the bi-annual funding which council traditionally provides. Through this funding the following awards were made. Further detail is provided in Appendix 1

	Programme	Value	No of awards	Total Value
	Medium	Up to £5,000	162	£722,866
	Micro	Up to £1,500	188	£267,686
3.5	This round of funding provided support for a total of 350 projects across the city, representing a total investment of £990,552. It is recommended that Council allocates £631,360 from the confirmed £1,031,360 for general Community Support towards the costs of this grant aid.			
3.6	The funding that was allocated through the August/September rounds will support activity until the end of this financial year. The community and voluntary sector have advised that managing programme delivery in the context of Covid recovery is very challenging and groups do not have the capacity to deliver projects within a short time frame. It would not be operationally feasible to deliver another open round of funding for micro/medium grants across the city since all activity has to be delivered by 31 March 2022.			
3.7	In order to provide additional support which can be directed at an area and thematic level towards communities in greatest need, officers are also recommending an allocation of £250,000 to the 9-area based strategic partners across the city. A further award of £150,000 will be made to the Thematic partners who have delivered services to the most vulnerable communities of interest across the city.			
3.8	If organisations require short term financial support, they can contact their local community development officer to get information on available resources to support local programming.			
3.9	Officers are currently developing the grant aid application process for Medium/Micro grants to support programmes running from April – September 2022. It is likely that these will open in early 2022.			
	<u>Financial Inclusion</u>			
3.10	Financial inclusion funding is provided by DfC and is intended to support activity that provides debt, benefit and financial education/support services. DfC have issued a funding award of £212,350 to Belfast City Council for the delivery of agreed outcomes in relation to this area of work.			
3.11	DfC provided a previous award of £175,148 for financial inclusion which was primarily awarded to the 5 generalist advice partners across the city. Officers recommend that given the			

	alignment between DfC outcomes for this fund and the ability of the advice providers to deliver eligible activity by 31 March 2022, the allocation should be made to the 5 generalist advice partners. The recommended allocation will be based on population and deprivation indicators in line with the previous council funding model.
3.12	Members are also asked to grant delegated authority to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to allocate any additional monies which may be received by DfC to relevant delivery partners based on the agreed delivery approaches outlined in this report.
	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u>
3.13	All recommendations relating to finance contained in this report will allow Council to deliver services within budget while maximising the benefits of external funding.
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications and Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.14	The activity outlined in this report will be Equality and Rural Needs screened as part of the screening exercise on the overall Community Provision funding approach.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1: List of Micro and Medium Grant Awards September 2021