



Subject:	Department for Communities' Access and Inclusion Programme 2023-24
Date:	14 th June 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Chris McCreery, Manager, Culture Development Unit

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"/>
Sometime 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	Belfast City Council is expected to be invited to apply for and administer the Department for Communities' Access and Inclusion Programme 2023-24 on behalf of Belfast based arts, culture (including leisure) or heritage organisations.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that the Chief Executive exercise his delegated authority to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grant permission for Council to apply for, promote, assess and manage the Access and Inclusion Programme 2023-24
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>The Department for Communities is inviting local Councils to administer the Access and Inclusion Programme 2023-24 within their respective local Council areas and to apply for funding to the Department in early July 2023. The Department expects to formally launch the programme as a competitive process in late June 2023. We have been advised that a total fund of £624,000 is available for this programme.</p>
3.2	<p>The Department for Communities' Access and Inclusion Programme aims to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Improve access to arts, culture and active recreation venues across NI for people with disabilities. ii. Make arts, cultural and active recreation venues more inclusive across society; and iii. Increase participation in arts, culture and active recreation activities by people with disabilities.
3.3	<p>The Council oversees the assessment and recommendation of projects via a competitive open call internally and externally and is responsible for delivery of all projects in receipt of funding.</p>
3.4	<p>The Culture Development Unit (previously Tourism, Culture Heritage & Arts Unit) managed the 2018/19 and 2019/20 Access and Inclusion Programme within Belfast and received support for 24 projects with total value of £412,554, of which five were Council projects. In 2020/21, they administered 11 Access and Inclusion grants with a total value of £185,443 and 9 Programme grants in 2021/22 with a total value of £143,667. The total fund available in 2022/23 reduced by almost 50%, they administered 3 external projects and one Council project with a total value of £99,701.00. Examples of projects supported include improved access to City Hall and the Tropical Ravine; easier access for audience and participants to not for profit cultural venues across the city; installation of new specialised playground facilities and changing spaces; and provision of equipment to provide immersive theatrical experiences for children with complex needs.</p>

3.5	Capital works and equipment costs are eligible under this programme. The maximum grant available is £30,000, (the maximum project cost cannot exceed £80,000), and applicants are required to contribute at least 10% of the total project costs. To receive a £30,000 grant therefore, applicants must provide a contribution of at least £3,000.
3.6	This year, Department for Communities is particularly keen to welcome applications for Changing Places facilities, accessible equipment for play parks and projects that will impact positively on sustainability and climate change.
3.7	Projects must complete on or before 31 March 2024. Department for Communities has advised that no extensions will be considered to the project completion date.
3.8	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Contribution of at least 10% of project cost is an eligibility condition. This resource will need to be sourced by the applicant. Council has staff resources to oversee the administration of this Programme.</p>
3.9	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>The Culture Development Unit will work closely with the Council's Equality Unit and the Department for Communities to ensure positive equality implications which is the central component of the Programme. Officers will discuss the Programme with the Council's Disability Advisory Panel. There are no rural needs or good relations implications.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents attached
	There are no appendices for this report.