



Subject:	Community Support Plan and Review of Grants
Date:	9 th January 2024
Reporting Officer:	David Sales, Strategic Director of City Services
Contact Officer:	Nicola Lane, Neighbourhood Services Manager Margaret Higgins, Lead Officer, Community Provision

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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 <input type="checkbox"/>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Information relating to any individual2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual3. 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 matter5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction7. 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	<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/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	<p>The main purpose of this report is;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To seek approval for officers to produce a Council Community Support Plan (25/28) and commission external support to complete this. To seek approval for a review of the current community development large grants schemes and commission external support to complete this.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>Members are asked to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approve that officers produce a Council Community Support Plan (25/28) and commission necessary external support to complete this. Approve that officers undertake a review of current community development large grants schemes and commission necessary external support to complete this.
3.0	Main Report
	<p>Background information <u>Community Support Plan</u></p>
3.1	<p>Members will recall that Council provides a range of community development grants and funding to support the community/voluntary sector across the city. This funding comes directly from Council and Department for Communities (DfC) via the Community Support Programme (CSP) which is provided to all council areas. This year, the CSP is contributing over £2.2m towards Advice Funding, Capacity Building, Revenue for Community Buildings, Social Supermarket and Summer Scheme funding programmes.</p>
3.2	<p>The CSP Letter of Offer includes a requirement for Council to provide DfC with a 3-Year Community Support Plan. This plan sets out how we promote community development and support service provision within communities. The plan must be aligned with the CSP outcomes and our Community Plan, the Belfast Agenda.</p>
3.3	<p>Council's last Community Support Plan was completed in 2014. Since the introduction of community planning, Council has used the Belfast Agenda to articulate its priorities and commitments in terms of community support and this approach has been followed by most other council areas. However, there are a number of factors which provide the rationale for developing a current Community Support Plan which further articulates detail on Council's priorities in terms of community support.</p>
3.4	<p>These factors include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publication of refreshed Belfast Agenda which contains a number of high level commitments in relation Community & Neighbourhood Regeneration, Health Inequalities, Children & Young People and Older People. Impacts of both Covid and Cost of Living pressures which need to be considered and reflected in a detailed Community Support Plan. Need to review and articulate Council's position in terms of its community support priorities as these will inform resources required, including funding priorities and approaches. Ongoing DfC reviews of People and Place (Neighbourhood Renewal), Support for Community/Voluntary sector and Advice Services which are scheduled for

	<p>implementation in 2025. It is likely that these will have a significant impact on the funding environment within Belfast and Council needs to consider its priorities in advance, so that it can respond to these changes and any requests for support that may emerge.</p>
3.5	<p>Review of Capacity Building and Revenue Grants</p> <p>Council provides funding to support the development of the community/voluntary sector in Belfast. The two large multi annual grants which support this activity are capacity and revenue (for community buildings).The objectives/outcomes and operation of these grants have not been reviewed since 2012 but recent analysis of grant applications shows a change in the types of organisations and activity which are seeking support. For example, applications would historically have come from neighbourhood/area-based community organisations but in 2023, more applications were received from organisations supporting specific ‘communities of interest’ and there was an increase in the level of support requested for running costs within capacity applications. In addition, as outlined in 3.4, DfC are undertaking a number of reviews on relevant funding programmes that will have an impact for the VCSE sector in Belfast. It is therefore timely that council undertake a review of our programmes to ensure that we are funding activity that meets priorities and outcomes that we want to support.</p>
3.6	<p>The current large grant programmes are supporting activity from April 23 – March 26. Council provided a significant increase in funding for these programmes in 2023. The total level of funding for both grants is £3,230,609 per annum, with £734,357 coming from the CSP and £2,496,252 from Council. A review would enable council to consider the outcomes which Council want to achieve through the level of investment it makes .</p>
3.7	<p>The next round of applications to the large grant programme will open in June 2025 and an extensive review needs to be completed in advance of this date to ensure adequate time is scheduled for the extensive consultation/engagement process and equality screening that will be required.</p>
3.8	<p>Officers are seeking approval to undertake both pieces of work as soon as possible so that final reports and associated actions can be agreed through Council before March 2025.</p>
3.9	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Staff and financial resource to complete this work will be taken from existing budgets. In order to ensure an objective, independent exercise is undertaken, external consultant/s will be appointed to work with council officers to produce the reports.</p>
3.10	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>Given the significant impact which any changes to the large grant funding programme will have on the VCSE sector and communities across the city, an equality screening and rural impact assessment will be undertaken on any resulting change in policy/programme.</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices - Documents Attached</p>
4.1	<p>N/A</p>