



Subject:	Community Support Plan 2025-29 including a Review of Community Support Grants
Date:	8 th October 2024
Reporting Officer:	Jim Girvan, Director of Neighbourhood 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 individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. 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 matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. 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 After Council Decision Sometime in the future Never	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

No

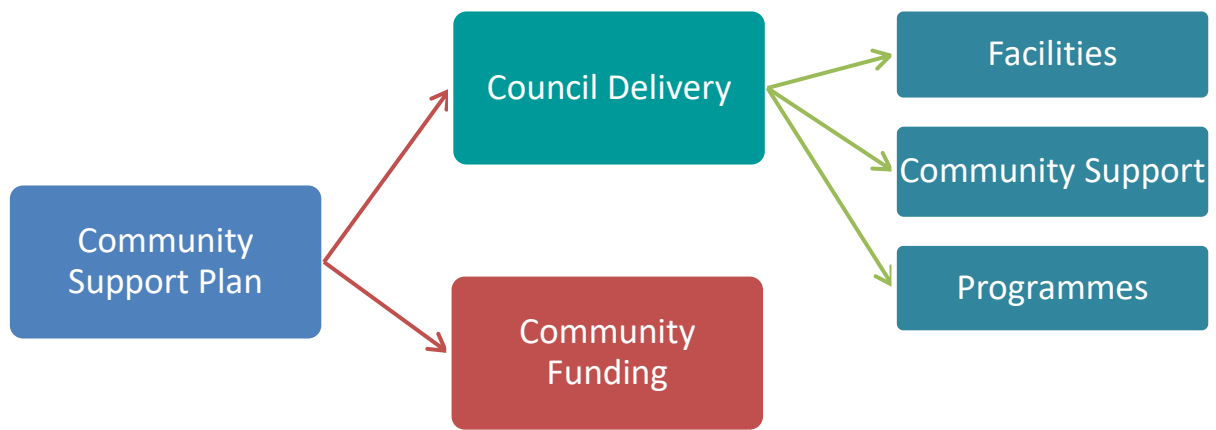
1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	<p>The main purpose of this report is;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">To update members on ongoing work to produce a Council Community Support Plan (25/29) and review of Community Support large grants (26-29) which will form part of the overall Community Support Plan which are included in our current departmental resources. This will include emerging priorities that have been collated following the recent facilitation of public engagement sessions and an online public survey.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>Members are asked to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Note the contents of the reportNote and agree the detail of the proposed priorities to be included in the Community Support PlanAgree that a draft overall framework (including outcomes) and further detail on the development of a new funding programme will be brought back to members in November with all proposals based on existing resources.Note that officers will hold 2 further public sessions after this committee meeting to update those who engaged previously on emerging priorities.
3.0	Main Report
	Background information
3.1	<p><u>Community Support Plan</u> Members will recall that on the 24th of January 2024, committee agreed to the following;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">That officers produce a Council Community Support Plan (25/29).at the same time undertake a review of current Community Support large grants schemes andCommission necessary external support to complete this work.
3.2	<p>This decision was on the basis that the Council needs to review and articulate its position in terms of its community support priorities and service provision as these will inform resources required, including funding priorities and approaches. As members will know, Council provides a range of community support grants to the community/voluntary sector across the city, coming directly from Council and the Department for Communities (DfC) via their Community Support Programme.</p>
3.3	<p>As part of this offer, Council has to provide DfC with a Community Support Plan which sets out how, via our Community Services Unit, we provide community support and service provision within communities. The Council's last Community Support Plan was completed in 2014.</p>
3.4	<p><u>What's included in the Community Support Plan</u> Members may wish to note that the Community Support Plan does not include everything we deliver and fund in local communities. This plan will outline how Council will direct the funding, assets, people and programming that we deliver through our Community Support &</p>

Neighbourhood Integration and Assets & Programming portfolios. Proposals are based on the current resources that we have available within the department both human and financial.

Once completed the Community Support Plan will

- Outline outcomes and priorities for Community Support that will drive the delivery of activity from 25/29.
- Provide detail on how priorities will be supported through Council delivery and outline the resources required to deliver on these priorities.
- Provide detail on how priorities will be supported through a funding / investment programme.

3.5 By way of illustration the diagram below outlines what is included in the Community Support Plan



3.6 Council Delivery

Members should note that the offering within the Community Support Plan is significant, it is important that we develop a plan that is fit for purpose and meets the expectations of our local community. It includes the current facilities that we maintain, programmes that we deliver and support that our Community Services staff provide. (currently over 50 staff directly supporting communities and delivering programmes).

3.7 Community Support Funding

As well as developing a new Community Support Plan, we are also reviewing how we provide funding to support the community/voluntary sector in Belfast. Our funding allocation forms part of the overall plan. The two large multi annual grants which support this activity are capacity grants and revenue grants; the objectives/outcomes and operation of these grants have not been reviewed since 2012.

3.8 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 from DFC and £2,496,252 from Council. A review will enable council to consider the outcomes which it wants to achieve through the level of investment it makes.

3.9 Members may wish to note that there are other grants that are delivered through the CSP (Advice and Social Supermarkets). These are not being reviewed through this exercise as a review of

advice services was completed in December 2023 and the first open call for Social Supermarket Funding was in 24/25.

Current Status

3.10 Work has already commenced on both the Community Support Plan and the review of our Capacity & Revenue Grant funding.

In April 2024, external consultants were appointed to support this work. To develop the plan, we undertook significant engagement with our local community and stakeholders and have also completed a desktop research exercise. This is now complete with the following main areas of work delivered.

1. **Desktop research** – An analysis of the current Community Support Plan, current funding programmes and process, The Belfast Agenda (reviewed) and other relevant policies.
2. **City Wide Engagement Sessions** – 9 public engagement sessions being facilitated throughout June. These are listed in **Appendix 1**. Note that details were circulated to elected members in May.
3. **Public Survey** – A public survey closed on the 8th of July with 94 responses received.

Alignment with Key Strategies

3.11 A key element of the new Community Support plan will be the articulation of the outcomes that the plan will support. These outcomes will be aligned to the Belfast Agenda and will seek to support the achievement of our community planning priorities. The Belfast Agenda ambitions in relation to our People and Communities will be particularly relevant but other priorities will also be supported, where possible.

In order to maximise our support to our residents and local community we also must ensure there is alignment with other key strategies and action plans across the department and wider Council. We must also ensure that, as key funders of the Community Support Plan, we align with the outcomes that are agreed by DfC as part of their Community Support Programme.

3.12 Emerging Priorities

Over the past few weeks detailed feedback from the engagement sessions and survey have been collated as outlined below. If members are in agreement, officers will continue to work on developing the Community Support Plan on the basis of these priorities.

Overall Priorities

The elements below are emerging overall priorities that may be included in the plan, we will bring back further detail on these at the November meeting and align to suggested outcomes.

1. Creating active and engaged communities
2. Ensuring access to quality community facilities
3. Joining up community support through partnership support
4. Improving health and wellbeing
5. Tackling poverty through community support services

Points 4&5 were regarded as “global” issues raised by all groups, which fall across a number of areas of work and different agencies’ remits such as health and wellbeing. The CSP will consider

how these priorities relate to the area of community support and provide options for supporting them.

Priorities for Council Services Delivery / Supporting Community Based Services

There was very positive feedback on the role that council services play in local communities. Going forward, it is proposed that within the new plan the following areas which were identified as priorities for council self delivery should be included;

- Leading networking / co-ordination & partnership development in local communities to create active and engaged communities.
- Modern more accessible community facilities
- Providing access to mentoring / training for community organisations
- Acting as an incubator space for new / growing community organisations
- Delivery and co-ordination of activity programmes – based on needs analysis

Priorities for funding

Feedback on funding priorities suggested a need to include the following when developing the new funding approach;

- Variety of funding levels to include small grants
- Application requirements should be proportionate & timely
- Option for both facilities and core running costs
- Option for collaborative bids
- Funding for activity/programme costs
- Focus on more active and engaged communities
- Simple, effective & proportionate reporting that measure impact/change

Timeline / Next Steps

3.13 The Support of the Community Support Plan (2025-2029) and new funding programme (2026-2029) has challenging deadlines. In order to ensure that funding is made available through the new programmes from April 26, the new plan has to be approved by members in November 2024 and a new funding programme opened by June 2025. Please see below high-level milestones for key aspects of this work to be completed (timelines subject to change).

Action	Completion Date
Research and Engagement Programme (Complete)	July 24
Agree priorities with Members	Oct 24
Re-Engage with Community Stakeholders	Oct 24
Community Support Plan Drafted for members consideration (including options on funding programme)	Nov 24
Funding Programme drafted for members consideration	Jan 25
New funding programme agreed with Equality considerations completed	March 25
Community Support Plan published	April 25

	Detailed funding programme processes completed	May 25
	New funding programme open	June 25
	Funding allocated to groups	April 26
3.14	<p><u>Members Engagement</u> Member engagement will be a core part of this process given the significant level of interest in the funding provided through the CSP and wider council support. Officers will bring back further updates to elected members on the progress of this work.</p>	
3.15	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> Staff and financial resource to complete this work will be taken from existing budgets. DfC makes a significant contribution to support this work through the Community Support Programme LoO. In 24/25, DfC provided £2,575,580 and Council provided £2,935,48. Funding is provided through the CSP from DfC to councils on an annual basis.</p>	
3.16	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> 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. Any potential additional equality considerations have been factored into the timeline.</p>	
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached	
4.1	Appendix 1 – Overview of Engagement Sessions	

Appendix 1

Community Support Plan – Overview of Engagement sessions and Public Survey

Date	Time	Venue	Attendance
Wednesday 5 June	2.00 – 4.00	City Hall	18
Tuesday 11 June	10.00 – 12.00	Girdwood	20
Tuesday 11 June	2.00 – 4.00	Cregagh CC	12
Wednesday 12 June	10.00 – 12.00	Olympia	6
Friday 14 June	10.00 – 12.00	Horn Drive CC	19
Friday 14 June	2.00 – 4.00	Hammer CC	6
Tuesday 18 June (Sec 75)	2.00 – 4.00	City Hall	24
Wednesday 19 June	7.00 – 9.00	Olympia	3
Tuesday 25 June (Staff)	2.00 – 4.00	Markets	20
Wednesday 26 th June	6.30 – 8.00	On-line / virtual	14
Survey (Closed 8 July)			94
Total Participants			236