



Subject:	Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service
Date:	4 th March 2025
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 No

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

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	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Never	<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 advise members of correspondence received from the Belfast Advice Group on 24th January 2025. A copy of the correspondence is provided in Appendix 1. • To update on the recent successful growth bid for the Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service and generalist advice. • To seek approval to issue funding of up to £242,000 to Ligoniel Improvement Association to deliver the Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service in 25/26. • To seek approval to prepare a report with options for future delivery of the Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service. • To seek approval to allocate the additional £20,000 provided to generalist advice funding as part of 25/26 growth bids using the agreed allocation model across all advice organisations.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>Members are asked;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To note the correspondence received from the Belfast Advice Group. • To update on the recent successful growth bid for the Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service and generalist advice. • To approve that funding of up to £242,000 is made available to Ligoniel Improvement Association to deliver the Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service in 25/26. • To approve that officers prepare a report with options for future delivery of the Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service. • To approve that officers allocate the additional £20,000 provided to generalist advice funding as part of 25/26 growth bids using the agreed allocation model across all advice organisations.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>Background information</p> <p>Members will be aware that Council provides significant funding for advice services through the Community Support Programme (funded by Department for Communities - DfC) and through direct council funding.</p>
3.2	<p>Support is currently provided through funding agreements to five area consortiums to deliver generalist advice services across all geographies within the city. In November 2012, these groupings came together to establish the Belfast Advice Group (BAG) to develop specialist advice services. BAG submitted a proposal to Belfast City Council to support the Citywide Tribunal Service (BCTS) and that service has been delivered by Ligoniel Improvement Association and supported primarily through Belfast City Council funding on an annual basis since 2012.</p>
3.3	<p>As previously reported, this funding has been provided through in year awards drawn from underspends. A growth bid to provide £270,000 for the service was successful and a recurring budget to that value is now available on an annual basis.</p>

3.4	<p>Council received correspondence from the Belfast Advice Group on 24th January 2025 which requests funding for the Citywide Tribunal Service of £242,000 for 25/26. A copy of the letter is provided in Appendix 1. Members should note that this is a reduction in the requested funding for 23/24 and 24/25. Members are asked to approve that officers will complete required due diligence and issue funding up to £242,000 to the BCTS for 25/26.</p> <p>Until now, the Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service has been funded through annual funding agreements with Ligoniel Improvemnet Association. Given that an ongoing resource has now been made available, members are asked to approve that officers explore potential options for the future delivery of the service, which would be put in place for delivery from April 26 and provide a report on these later in the year.</p>
3.5	<p>Members will be aware that council completed a Review of Belfast City Council funded Advice Services in December 2023. This review made recommendations in relation to the delivery of advice services which included the recommendation that financial support for the BCTS should be included as part of an overall advice funding budget. Members are asked to approve that officers consider this recommendation in the report on future delivery options. Members also approved a £20,000 uplift to generalist advice funding as part of the growth bid. This increase will be applied using the agreed allocation model across all advice organisations.</p>
3.6	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>DfC usually provides an element of funding for appeals through the Community Support Programme funding that is received by council on an annual basis. Historically, this has been directed to BCTS. Officers anticipate that this funding will be in the region of £73,000, although no Letter of Offer has yet been received by BCC to confirm this. Any allocation from DfC will be used before council budgets.</p>
3.7	<p>Members should note that although correspondence relating to BCTS was received from the Belfast Advice Group Belfast City Council's funding agreement is with Ligoniel Improvement Association and the governance of the service is through that organisation.</p>
3.8	<p>When a financial award is made to BCTS, Ligoniel Improvement Association completes a project document that outlines the costs required and outputs that will be delivered by the project on an annual basis. Performance and financial monitoring is then completed to ensure that activity was delivered in line with the funding agreement.</p>
3.9	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>Belfast City Council's agreement for the provision of this service will seek to ensure that the service is provided on an equal basis to all communities across the city, including section 75 groups and areas of rural need.</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices - Documents Attached</p>
4.1	<p>Appendix 1 - Correspondence from G Tubritt on behalf of Belfast Advice Group</p>