



Subject:	Community Support Plan (CSP) 25/29 including a Review of Community Support Large Grants
Date:	4 th March 2025
Reporting Officer:	Jim Girvan, Director 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 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
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1.1	<p>To update members that we will continue to implement the business as usual aspects of the draft Community Support Plan, including Council direct delivery and ongoing allocation of funding programmes which are not being reviewed as part of this work.</p> <p>This report will also outline the requirement to start to develop the processes for the new funding programme (replacing the capacity and revenue funding) which is being reviewed as part of this work and the risk that we may not be able to deliver on a new funding programme by April 2026.</p>
2.0	<p>Recommendation</p> <p>Members are asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Note the contents of the report. ii. Note the business as usual and improvement aspects of the draft community support plan (Appendix i) will proceed, this will include funding programmes that are not under review. Note that our continuous improvement actions in the plan have been informed by our engagement processes. iii. Due to the tight timeframe for developing a new funding programme to replace the current Community Development Large Grants (Capacity and Revenue), advise they are content that the proposal for one funding programme as outlined in the draft CSP will replace the current capacity and revenue programme; and agree that officers start to develop the processes for a new programme for 26/27. iv. Consider the options for future budget allocation and maximum limits for the Community Support Large Grants Programme and recommend an option that will be included in the draft Community Support Plan. If this is an option that exceeds the current budget of £3.3 million recommend that this is considered by SP&R, given the implications for 26/27 rate setting. v. Note that the draft CSP plan, including the funding approach, is undergoing an equality and rural needs screening which will form part of our consultation approach. It is expected that once we agree a final Community Support Plan, we may have to undertake a formal consultation in Spring/Summer 2025. In keeping with our policy around screening and consultation, this work has already begun. vi. Agree that following completion of the required screening/consultation exercise, a paper will be brought to committee in summer 2025 outlining feedback and seeking agreement on the final Community Support Plan. Officers will deliver on this plan in 25/26 but the plan is subject to change based on any feedback that may be received from formal consultation. vii. Agree that a final detailed update on the Funding Programme is brought back to members in advance of going to open call in late Summer 2025.
3.0	<p>Main Report</p>
3.1	<p><u>Background</u></p> <p>In January 2024, the People and Communities committee agreed to the following – “That officers produce a Council Community Support Plan (25/29) and at the same time, undertake a review of current community support large grants schemes”. Members will know that the community support large grants schemes form part of our overall funding package that is included in the Community Support Plan.</p>
3.2	<p>Further updates have been brought to members at P&C Committee which detailed progress to develop the CSP. At December committee, officers brought in a draft Community Support Plan (Appendix i) seeking members approval to proceed with implementing the plan. This included</p>

priorities for Council Delivery and options on a new funding model. At the December meeting, committee agreed to defer consideration of the Community Support Plan to enable further examination and discussion to be undertaken between political parties and officers, particularly in respect of the viability of the funding model with a view that the matter be considered also within the wider rate-setting process for 2025/26. For all of this, members should be aware that while we will deliver on what is contained within the draft plan including areas of improvement, this is subject to change following any formal consultation that we have to undertake.

3.3

Ongoing Community Support Provision

While the above action is being progressed, officers are seeking approval from members to start to progress work that is contained within the new draft Community Support Plan on the basis that it is business as usual (and improvement) work that is already being delivered by our staff and within our community centres and independent community centres. The new plan outlines work on 2 areas:

- **How the Council will directly support the local community/voluntary sector and the communities that it serves** through our community support, assets, people and programming.
- **How our funding will support community activity**

3.4

Council Direct Delivery

The related work that we wish to continue and improve on includes the following;

- Leading networking / co-ordination & partnership development in local communities to create active, engaged and resilient communities.
- Supporting volunteering by creating new and better opportunities for people to give their time and make a difference to their communities and the issues they care about.
- Providing access to mentoring / training and ongoing support for community organisations
- Improving current systems and processes - eg developing an electronic booking system for Community Centres
- Delivery and co-ordination of activity programmes including reviewing the current programmes within council facilities across the city to ensure that they meet identified need.
- Ensuring all BCC facilities meet quality standards
- Supporting organisations that receive funding and facilitating networking amongst groups

3.5

CSP Funding

While we are undertaking a review of the large community development grants (Capacity & Revenue), members should note that there are three funding programmes that are not currently being reviewed (see table below). To continue to provide funding support we will continue to deliver these funding programmes and bring updates to members. Members will note that there is a separate paper for this committee meeting in relation to the 25/26 CSP Letter of Offer from DfC and programmes funded through that resource.

Current Funding included in the Community Support Plan

Grant	No. Groups Currently Funded
Under Review	
Capacity Building (up to £50k)	43
Revenue for Community Buildings (up to £20k)	87
Not Under Review	
Summer Schemes	98

Advice Services	14
Social Supermarkets	21

Funding Under Review

3.6 We are reviewing a significant part of our funding offering, our large, multi-annual capacity and revenue grants which currently provide £3.3million to 130 groups across the city. Feedback received from our engagement on funding priorities suggested a need to include the following when developing the new funding approach;

- Funding levels for revenue related costs should increase
- Funding should be available for both core revenue/running costs and activity/programmes
- Applications should be assessed against the impact that they make to overall outcomes
- Application requirements should be proportionate & timely
- Funding levels to include small grants

Members should note that there are significant tight timeframes around the development of a new scheme and application process. Members are asked to;

- Agree that from April 2026 the capacity and revenue programme will be replaced by one Community Support large Grant that will support delivery on outcomes as outlined in the draft CSP.
- Agree that officers start to draft the application, assessment, monitoring, training and other relevant processes that will be required to put in place a new funding programme and which will allow Council to be ready to go to open call as early as possible.

Members will recall that consideration of the draft CSP was deferred at December 24 committee to allow further consideration of the available finance for community support grants. Members will also know that as part of growth bids an additional non recurrent budget of £1.5 million has been agreed for 25/26 to enhance Revenue grants.

3.7 Options in Appendix 1 are provided for the current budget of £3.3million and for an additional £1.5million which would create a budget of £4.8million. If this funding was made recurrent from 26/27, it would require agreement through the 26/27 rate setting exercise. Given the financial implications and the additional impact on the rates for 26/27, this would necessitate consideration at SP&R.

The timeline outlined below is based on final approval dates by council following committee consideration the previous month. Members should note that there is no scope for delay in the current timescale.

Action	Completion Date
Final approval to proceed with the Funding model in the Community Support Plan	March 25
Equality & Rural Needs Screening and Consultation	April to July 25
Final CSP agreed including new funding programme which incorporates Equality screening & feedback from consultation	August 25
Final systems and processes agreed by members for funding programme	October 25

	New funding programme open – 8 weeks application period	November 25
	Deadline for applications	December 25
	Assessment	Mid Feb 26
	Committee approval of awards	March 26
	Notification to applicants of funding allocation	May 26
3.8	<p><u>Further Engagement with Stakeholders</u> Members will be aware that there is significant interest in this work, particularly the funding element and it is important that we continue to engage with stakeholders on the development and implementation of the CSP. If members agree to the recommendations in this paper officers will consider the best way to engage with stakeholders, which may include information sessions with stakeholders in March/April, further details will be provided when available.</p> <p>Given the potential impacts on existing grant holders of any change to the funding programme, officers will also engage with those organisations to provide information. Officers will continue to engage with organisations to provide support in preparing project ideas and will offer support to potential applicants when the new programme opens. Further detail on the programme of support will be provided in the paper to committee prior to the Scheme opening.</p>	
4.0	Financial & Resource Implications	
4.1	<p>Staff and financial resources to complete this work will be taken from existing budgets. The council element is included in existing budgets and the DfC contribution comes from the Community Support Programme LoO.</p> <p>The CSP LoO provides a one-year commitment from DfC for funding on an annual basis, although the CSP has been in place across all councils for a number of years Members may wish to note that in 24/25 DfC is providing £831,192 toward the Capacity and Revenue grants. Council increased its financial allocation in March 2023 by almost £1.4 million per annum providing an annual commitment of £2,446,918. In 2025/26 financial year, members agreed a non-recurrent budget of £1.5 million for Revenue grants. This combined amount provides the overall budget of £4,778,110 for the 2025/26 year.</p>	
5.0	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment	
5.1	<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 exercise and rural impact assessment are being undertaken on any resulting change in policy/programme. Any potential additional equality considerations have been factored into the timeline.</p>	
6.0	Appendices	
6.1	<p>Appendix i – Community Support Grants Options</p> <p>Appendix II - Draft Community Support Plan</p>	