



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Development Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>DSD Community Support Programme Grant Income: additional in-year allocation proposal 2012/13</b>
<b>Date:</b>	20 November 2012
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Cate Taggart, Community Services, ext 3525

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	<p>BCC have an annual grant contract with DSD for £1.57m under their regional Community Support Programme. The contract is conditional on our making contribution to the CSP overall aim defined as:</p> <p><i>"To strengthen local communities, increase community participation and promote social inclusion through the stimulation and support of community groups, community activity and local advice services".</i></p>
1.2	<p>The Voluntary and Community Unit (DSD) has secured an additional £1 million for the Community Support Programme (CSP) in 2012/13 over and above the current allocations and this is to be allocated across local government in the region on the same basis as the original award which uses a combined index of population and deprivation.</p>
1.3	<p>DSD has issued a Letter of Variance to the Belfast City Council CSP contract to include an additional in year allocation of £362,599.55 towards general expenditure and subject to the same conditions of grant offer.</p>
1.4	<p>It should be noted that the additional allocation is conditional on the utilisation of full funds by 31 March 2013. There is no requirement on BCC to provide match funding. Any additional grant allocation will be subject to the normal DSD monitoring and compliance requirements.</p>
1.5	<p>The purpose of this late report is to seek committee approval to accept the offer of additional in year CSP grant and to agree expenditure options.</p>

2.0	Key Issues
2.1	The limited timeframe attached to the additional funding will not allow for monies to be administered competitively so it is crucial to find a speedy but robust way in which to allocate the funds to service providers and for community benefit.
2.2	<p>Given this requirement to allocate and fully expend the additional monies within the current financial year, officers have identified a number of potential in-year funding opportunities. In doing so, we have also considered the following</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DSD Community Support Programme funding criteria and target outcomes</li> <li>• BCC Investment Programme priorities and opportunity for alignment</li> <li>• Priority needs related to current financial climate</li> <li>• Feasibility of proposal to support compliant assessment, committal and expenditure of funds by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013</li> <li>• Efficiency considerations to ensure related officer resources</li> </ul>
2.3	Four initiatives have been identified which support a number of the priorities outlined above:
2.4	<p><b>i. Generalist Advice Grant: Support to extend the volunteer training</b></p> <p>Belfast City Council is a major funder of Advice &amp; Information Services via a consortium model based on geographical providers. This approach to funding and advice delivery was established in 2005/06 and involves over 20 organisations which include both Citizens' Advice Bureau and Independent Advice providers. Essential criteria for receiving BCC Advice funding are that organisations need to give generalist advice and be associated to Citizens Advice or Advice N.I. Any requests for BCC funding from specialist advice providers are signposted to the relevant Government Department.</p>
2.5	The current ongoing economic downturn and resultant uncertainty facing many households has resulted in an increase in the numbers of people accessing the services of advice agencies particularly, but not exclusively, in relation to debt and money advice services. The advice sector is experiencing difficulties in responding to this increased demand.
2.6	The BCC administered total financial support for Advice Services in Belfast last year was £825,619. This allowed the sector to process 191,085 enquiries of which over 26,569 were debt related. Monitoring returns demonstrate the funds levered an additional £41,947,284 in claimed benefits.
2.7	In December 2009 the Development committee approved a proposal from CAB to increase the capacity of the Belfast Advice consortia by providing debt relief training. As a result, 30 advice volunteers from across the 5 consortia received the training. This helped the Advice organisations to both clear the previous backlog of debt enquiries and help grow the capacity of the organisations to cope with the ongoing level of debt enquiries that have resulted from the latest economic downturn.
2.8	Given the continued demand for generalist advice support, committee are asked to support the allocation of £31,050 in additional resources to build the capacity of advice services at both a strategic and operational level. The proposal represents a high-level overview of the key activities necessary to assist advice

	<p>services and which would not happen without the help of additional resources. A draft outline proposal with indicative participant numbers is attached as Appendix 1.</p>
2.9	<p>Any offer of additional funds will be conditional on the related training and support programme including participants and volunteers from across all 5 Advice consortiums, offered initially on an equal basis per consortia with any places not realized being offered to other consortia.</p>
2.10	<p><b>ii. Belfast Tribunal Representation Service: Stage 1 Set up costs</b>  Representatives from the 5 Advice consortia are also seeking BCC support in identifying an additional funding source to support their proposal to deliver a Tribunal/Appeals Service across the city that clients can avail of at any BCC funded advice service.</p>
2.11	<p>This Belfast Tribunal Representation Service would represent clients who wish to appeal SSA decisions on benefits including Employment Support Allowance, Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independent Payment, Universal Credit and any other SSA benefit. This service would enable clients to challenge decisions, assisting them through the process and representing them at hearings.</p>
2.12	<p>Since the introduction of Employment Support Allowance (ESA) in 2011, the need for tribunal representation has steadily increased, as the number of claimants being disallowed benefit has grown, due to continuous changes to benefit criteria and constant periodic reviews of ESA claimants by ATOS, a commercial medical support service.</p>
2.13	<p>The advice consortia network indicate that this trend is likely to accelerate with the introduction of Welfare Reform, which represents the most significant change to the benefit system since the foundation of the Welfare State.</p>
2.14	<p>At present, advice services across the city are stretched, with advisors not only having to accommodate increasing numbers of clients, but also dealing with more complex cases, which are more time consuming because of the need to more actively monitor and progress claims on behalf of clients, and secure supporting evidence to submit with those claims.</p>
2.15	<p>The 5 consortia have therefore developed an outline programme for a citywide response which is attached at Appendix 2. While this proposal outlines a 2 year service plan with an anticipated start date of April 2013 and a total cost of £426,209.60, the consortia have also identified associated set up costs of £11,250.</p>
2.16	<p>They suggest these costs would cover Stage 1 of the service and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of the Belfast Advice Group, lead partner identified, initial set up and recruitment, all taking place between January/March 2013, with staff recruited, agreement around referral processes, and familiarisation of staff with workload, protocols and generalist services.</li> <li>• Meet with the Appeal Service, SSA and other agencies that would positively contribute to delivering a citywide tribunal service.</li> <li>• Promotion and launch of service across Belfast.</li> </ul>
2.17	<p>The proposed programme to establish a city wide Tribunal Representative service will therefore see the five area consortia come together to establish a</p>

	<p>Belfast Advice Group, comprising of a representative from each consortium. This group will be the mechanism to develop this service; it will nominate a lead partner as employer to oversee the administration of finances. Phase I would see the constitution of the group, establishing a terms of reference with clear objectives, decision making processes and roles/responsibilities.</p>
2.18	<p>Stage 2 of the proposal has an overall estimated cost of £426,209.60 and seeks to employ 5 Tribunal Representatives inclusive of 2 existing posts as both posts do not have funding beyond March 2013. One of the posts would be a Senior Tribunal Representative, overseeing the daily operational side of the service, providing a support and mentoring service to the tribunal representatives.</p>
2.19	<p>In line with the Welfare Reform – Notion of Motion passed by Council on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2012, officers are working with the advice providers to identify potential funding sources for Phase 2 costs.</p>
2.20	<p>Committee are therefore asked to agree in principle to seek to resource the programme from a reallocation of funds as part of any identified under spend in the BCC Quarter 3 finance report forecast. Committee are further asked to support a parallel bid for the city wide programme to the Social Investment Fund.</p>
2.21	<p><b>iii. Super Connected Belfast: Community Centre Public Access</b>  Through a variety of historical initiatives, a number of BCC community centres have identified external funding to install ICT suites for public access. While located at six centres, all the suites were funded by the efforts of Community Centre Committees and therefore are not BBC owned. Without a related revenue tail, the suites have not been maintained on an ongoing basis and most are now dated and experiencing technical difficulties which are compromising citizen access and our ability to deliver meaningful support programmes.</p>
2.22	<p>Members will be aware that Belfast City Council, with the support of a number of organisations, has successfully bid for funding to become a Super-connected City by March 2015. £13.7 million will come from the Urban Broadband Fund to provide a major boost to the city’s infrastructure. In addition to this, the Council also intends to contribute an additional £3 million, as part of its Investment Programme, and the private sector will contribute £8 million towards the Project.</p>
2.23	<p>The total investment of nearly £25 million means this is one of most significant announcements for Belfast for some time as it will provide a world class digital infrastructure that will attract major foreign investment, create jobs and provide a platform for local business start ups. It also brings major benefits and major improvements in quality of life for citizens of Belfast, for communities, tourists and public sector organisations.</p>
2.24	<p>There are two key strands to the Programme: investment in infrastructure; and capability development and community outreach which will maximize the benefits of the programme. The UBF funding secured will help provide city wide access to ultrafast digital infrastructure, both fixed and wireless. However if it we are to ensure maximum uptake and maximum economic, community and social benefits, we must identify and secure additional funding to support a demand stimulation and digital inclusion programme which will target both consumers and local businesses.</p>
2.25	<p>The department is currently finalising a funding application to resource a programme for business sector.</p>

2.26	To increase levels of community engagement, access and knowledge, officers suggest that an element of the additional CSP funds could be utilised to invest in a network of public access computer suites across our BCC community centres. These quality ICT suites would then facilitate a community focused capacity programme, designed to promote and enable social inclusion amongst our citizens by enhancing access to broadband services and providing training for individuals who lack digital literacy. Working with the community sector and other training providers, these suites could facilitate the development and delivery of knowledge-based skills to help people get online; carry out more transactions online; use the internet to find employment and develop basic skills required for the current market place.
2.27	Working with ISB it is anticipated that the allocation of £162,780 would resource the hardware, software and networking set-up costs of twelve quality ICT suites, that is, the upgrade of the current 6 out of date suites and the identification of a further 6 to ensure equity of access across the centre network
2.28	An outline of the resource investment is attached at Appendix 3. Officers will need to quantify and identify a related budget to cover programme costs, ISB service support costs, insurance costs and replacement liabilities for the 2013/14 financial period.
2.29	These items however are the subject of an application to the Social Investment Fund for a demand stimulation programme for consumers under the Super Connected Belfast umbrella. It is envisaged, if successful, this application would resource the above expenditure items.
2.30	Any subsequent revenue requirements would be identified in the budget revenue estimate process.
2.31	DSD are currently confirming the eligibility of the IT hard ware expenditure items. If this expenditure is deemed ineligible under the CSP contract, officers suggest the funds should be reallocated to the proposal to uplift large grant contracts.
2.32	<p><b>iv. Large Grant Uplift</b></p> <p>Under the Community Support Plan, BCC currently provides revenue grant aid to 86 community organisations across the city and capacity grant to 19 support organisations. The revenue funding is used towards the running costs associated with operating a community building and the capacity grant contributes to the core costs of larger area based community development support agencies. Officers are aware, via the monitoring process, that funding awards do not currently meet full costs. There is also evidence that, within the current funding environment, a significant number of community organisations are struggling to meet these costs.</p>
2.33	Committee are asked to consider an in-year limited offer of additional funds to support programmes in community buildings or those of community development support organisations. The fund could be expended in one of two ways: through either small scale building repairs and maintenance, or programme equipment.
2.34	If we are to meet the requirement to allocate and fully expend the additional monies within the current financial year, it is suggested that any agreed uptake of these funds be administered to those organisations currently in receipt of a revenue or capacity grant from BCC in 2012/13.

2.35	A small number of organisations have not yet completed the monitoring requirements in regard to this grant, and eligibility would be dependent upon compliant submission.												
2.36	If members agree to the proposals as outlined above, the total remaining allocation would be approximately £157,519.55												
2.37	If agreeable, officers will invite organisations to submit proposals on how they propose to utilise the potential funding and to indicate a budget: bands of £1000, £1500 and £2000. After assessment and confirmation of available budget, recommendations for grant uplift would be presented for the Director's approval via delegated authority. Subject to approval, a letter of variation on existing contracts will be issued and, as per current arrangements, all successful groups will submit monitoring returns to report progress against targets.												
2.38	Officers believe the proposals outlined above represent a balanced opportunity to allocate the additional CSP funds, if available.												
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Allocation</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Generalist Advice: Volunteer Training</td> <td>31,050.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Belfast Tribunal Representation Service: Stage 1 Set up Costs</td> <td>11,250.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Super Connected Belfast: Community Centre Public Access</td> <td>162,780.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Large Grant Uplift</td> <td>157,519.55</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Total</b></td> <td><b>£362,599.55</b></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Category	Allocation	Generalist Advice: Volunteer Training	31,050.00	Belfast Tribunal Representation Service: Stage 1 Set up Costs	11,250.00	Super Connected Belfast: Community Centre Public Access	162,780.00	Large Grant Uplift	157,519.55	<b>Total</b>	<b>£362,599.55</b>
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<b>3.0</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	The additional DSD allocation will cover all grant or associated project costs. Related assessment and administration resource requirements will be subsumed into current staff work programmes.
3.2	Officers are supporting the Advice Consortia to identify funding source for the city wide Tribunal / Appeals programme proposal.
3.3	For the Super Connected Belfast: Community Centre Public Access project, officers will need to quantify and identify a related budget to cover programme costs, ISB service support costs, insurance costs and replacement liabilities for the 2013/14 financial period. This is the subject of an application to the Social Investment Fund. Any subsequent revenue requirements would be identified in the budget revenue estimate process.

<b>4.0</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Implications</b>
4.1	None.

<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Agree to accept the additional DSD offer of £362,599.55 Community Support Programme funds for 2012/13;</li> <li>ii. Consider the proposals to utilise the potential additional allocation of CSP funds and prioritise these dependant on the total funds available;</li> <li>iii. Agree that, where uptake within any of the proposed elements are under-utilised, officers can reallocate funding based on the committee agreed priorities in order to maximise the uptake of the additional CSP funding allocation.</li> <li>iv. Agree in principle to seek to resource Stage 2 of the Belfast Tribunal Representation Service from a reallocation of any under spend identified in the BCC Quarter 3 finance report forecast. Committee are further asked to support a parallel bid for the city wide programme to the Social Investment Fund.</li> </ul>

<b>6.0</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
Cate Taggart to implement committee decision.	

<b>7.0</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
CSP	Community Support Programme
DSD	Department for Social Development
UBF	Urban Broadband Fund
ISB	Information Services Belfast
ICT	Information & Communications Technology

<b>8.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
<p>Appendix 1: Draft outline Generalist Advice Volunteer Training proposal  Appendix 2: Draft outline Belfast Tribunal Representation Service  Appendix 3: Super-connected Belfast: Community Centre Public Access</p>	