

# People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 6th October, 2020

## MEETING OF PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Baker (In the Chair);  
Alderman Rodgers;  
The High Sheriff, Councillor Verner; and  
Councillors Black, Bunting, Michael Collins, Corr, de Faoite,  
Flynn, Garrett, M. Kelly, Magee, McAteer, McCusker,  
McReynolds, Mulholland, Newton, Pankhurst and Smyth.

In attendance: Mr. R. Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services;  
Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services;  
Miss. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer; and  
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

Also In attendance: Councillor Gormley.

### **Apologies**

An apology for inability to attend was reported on behalf of Councillor Cobain.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 8th September were taken as read and signed as correct.

### **Declarations of Interest**

Councillors Black, Bunting, Mulholland, Newton and Verner declared an interest in agenda item 5a – Support to Community Partners 2020 Update, in so far as they either worked for or were associated with Groups which had previously applied for micro grant funding. As this was only an update and no decision was being taken it regard to funding, there was no requirement for the Members to leave the meeting.

### **Restricted**

**The information contained in the reports associated with the following 2 items is restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.**

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the Members of the Press and public from the Committee meeting during discussion on the following 2 items as, due to their nature, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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**Finance Update**

The Committee was reminded that the Strategic Policy and Resources, at its meeting on 31st July, had received an update on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Council's financial position and a strategy to address the forecast deficit and the mitigation measures, which had and would be taken as the situation evolved. It had agreed to continue to provide Members with a monthly update on the financial position and that the same report would be presented to the subsequent standing Committees for noting and to provide further information on ongoing work.

The Committee noted the September 2020 financial update.

**Fresher's Operations in the Holylands and Wider University Area**

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on Fresher's operations in the Holylands and Wider university area.

The Committee was reminded that over the last number of years the Council had worked in a co-ordinated manner with key partners to try and manage the issues that regularly arose over Fresher, for example, noise/Anti-Social Behavior/criminal damage. This year there was obviously the added pressure within the context of the Covid 19 pandemic.

The Committee was advised that Members of the Holylands Strategic Interagency groups had raised a number of concerns and priorities regarding the return of students to the Holylands and the Council had agreed that Council officers would look at the challenges identified and engage with the partners to collectively address the issues of concern. As a result, an operational brief had been prepared. This detailed services to be delivered over the period 13th September to 1st October. The Council was also facilitating a weekly Holyland tasking group (established on 7th September), this included representation from a number of partner agencies. The aim of the weekly meetings was to bring all frontline officers together to discuss issues and concerns, new and emerging trends as well as resource pressures. The Director explained that the meetings were being used to agree priorities and to pool resources to try and address problem premises and behaviours. This group continued to meet and the partners were working to join up messaging and to consider the most effective way to carry the relevant public health messaging. Partner organisations continued to apply and deploy additional resources to the area. The on the ground operation was due to be completed on Friday 25th September but the Committee was advised that resources would continue to be provided in the area until required, especially whilst the impact of Covid continued to give rise for concern.

The Committee also noted that officers had been engaging with The Executive Office (TEO) since the 8th September to discuss some fundamental concerns raised around:-

- patterns of living within HMO's. / Social distancing /bubbles /Quarantining;

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- patterns of Mobility/ Student traveling to the area and returning to their home town, households and sport clubs;
- behaviours and;/ the need to reinforce direct messaging to students and the implications of their actions should guidelines not be adhered too
- enforcement/ who would enforce and managing expectations.

Further meetings with Junior Ministers had taken place and there was a request of TEO, from the Council via the Chief Executive, to co-ordinate consideration of current legislation to deal with issues attached to students living in HMOS.

With the permission of the Chairperson, Councillor Gormley addressed the Committee. He welcomed the coordinated approach being taken by the various partner agencies and also outlined his concerns in regard to the problems associated with HMOs.

The Committee noted and welcomed the updated position in relation to ongoing work with partner organisations in respect of the Holylands and wider university area.

**Matters referred back from the Council/Motions**

The Committee was reminded that, at the Council meeting on 1st October, the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Flynn and seconded by Councillor Kelly, had, in accordance with Standing Order 13(f), been referred to the Committee for consideration:

**“The Council notes that the decision to grant Belfast City Airport permission to enter Victoria Park and carry out the management of the bird population, such as pricking and oiling of un-hatched eggs, has significantly reduced the greylag goose population in the park.**

**The Council further notes that as the decision to grant permission for this activity was taken a number of years ago, technology and practices pertaining to managing bird populations in the vicinity of an aerodrome may have moved on.**

**As such, this Council requests officers to carry out a review of this decision, engage with relevant environmental and wildlife organisations and produce a report for Councillors to consider options before the next confirmation of the permission is granted to the airport to carry out this activity in Victoria Park.”**

Both the proposer of the motion Councillor Flynn and seconder of the motion Councillor Kelly addressed the Committee and outlined the context of the motion.

The Committee agreed that Council officers would carry out a review of the decision which had previously been granted to Belfast City Airport for it to enter Victoria Park to carry out the management of the bird population and agreed that officers would liaise with the relevant organisations and submit a report to a future meeting of the Committee which would enable the Committee to consider if alternative options were available.

**Committee/Strategic Issues**

**Update on Environmental Health Services during Covid**

The Committee considered the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report**

**1.1 This report provides an update on the operational recovery of City Protection Services following national lock down as a result of the ongoing pandemic. It provides a snapshot of the current status and information on second wave planning.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to**

- note the current position regarding service recovery within City Protection

**3.0 Main report**

**3.1 Background:**

**3.2 During the national lockdown which resulted from the Covid 19 Pandemic, there were a number of City Protection services that were able to make agile changes to their processes to allow some services to continue to function. The work to provide critical services during that time was based on City Protection’s Business Continuity Plan and the following services remained operational to some extent to provide emergency response services:**

- **Emergency Planning – the Council’s Emergency Plan was activated and resources put in place.**
- **Houses in Multiple Occupation – emergency response arrangements put in place and agreed with Department for Communities. Licensing applications continued to be received and processed. From 23rd March 2020 to 1st July 2020, approximately 238 HMO licenses were issued.**
- **Planning Consultation – work continued to support the Council’s Planning Service**
- **Port Health – certain mandatory checks were still required and the office was staffed on a rota basis under strict controls.**
- **Sewer Baiting – a service using available members of staff was established early on to endeavour to keep the**

rat population under control and to provide advice and support on pest control where possible.

- **Scientific Services** – an emergency service in relation to the gas extraction systems were maintained.
- **Animal Welfare and Dog Control** - services continued in response to stray dogs, dangerous dogs and animal cruelty.
- **Air Quality** – air quality monitoring services were established in the early stages of lockdown under direction from DAERA
- **Public Health and Housing, Environmental Protection, Workplace Health and Safety, Food and Consumer Safety** services were reconfigured during lockdown to deliver the critical aspects of those services identified in the Business Continuity Plan.

**3.3** Because of the restrictions that were put in place during lockdown a number of less critical services or higher risk were temporarily suspended. These included postal Dog Licensing applications, Radiation Monitoring, Industrial Pollution Control, Off Street Car Parking, Night time Noise Services, Home Safety, Customer Advice, Tobacco Control, Enforcement in relation to dumping/littering and the Pest Control home treatment service.

**3.4** While there were many services within City Protection that were able to continue providing certain functions, the restoration of these services and those suspended has presented significant challenges and required considerable modifications of service processes to allow all functions to be carried out in a new controlled operational model that takes into account the risks associated with Covid-19.

**3.5** These controls are likely to be with us for a considerable time and will be continuously monitored to ensure that we operate in a safe way that protects both our staff and the public. Like other services, there are challenging resource management issues associated with the new operating model for City Protection and much work was done during recovery to minimise the impact on the Council's deficit.

**3.6** **Recovery Process:**

The easing of lockdown restrictions through the NI Executive 5 Stage Roadmap has been one of main drivers in enabling the Council to restore services. City Protection has followed the corporate approach to recovery and has sought input from a number of support services across the council such as corporate health and safety, local trade unions, financial services, digital services and property maintenance. Although

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time consuming, given the number of services in City Protection, this has been essential in ensuring the new arrangements are both safe and efficient.

**3.7 City Protection Service Status:**

Outlined below in column B is the current operational status of City Protection service. Where the service is still partially operating or has been suspended column c provides an estimated date for full recovery within a controlled operating model. As you will see from the table below the majority of City Protection services are now operational.

<b>A. Service/ Function</b>	<b>B. Operational Status</b>	<b>C. Estimated Date for Full Recovery</b>
Air Quality	<b>Operational (controlled operating model)</b>	
Planning Consultations	<b>Operational (controlled operating model)</b>	
Emergency Planning	<b>Operational (controlled operating model)</b>	
Scientific Services	<b>Operational (controlled operating model)</b>	
Animal Welfare	<b>Operational (controlled operating model)</b>	
Dog Control and Licensing	<b>Operational (controlled operating model)</b>	
Housing of Multiple Occupant	<b>Operational (controlled operating model)</b>	

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Port Health	<b>Operational (controlled operating model)</b>	
Public Health and Housing	<b>Operational (controlled operating model)</b>	
Cleansing Enforcement	<b>Partially Operational</b>	Phased step up in place from 21st September 2020 pending release of staff from Crematorium
Workplace Health and Safety (including H&S Reopening a business/Covid regulations)	<b>Operational (controlled operating model)</b>	
Food Safety	<b>Operational (controlled operating model)</b>	
Sewer Baiting	<b>Operational (controlled operating model)</b>	
Night (daytime & night time)	<b>Operational (controlled operating model)</b>	
Private water supplies Risk assessments/sampling (Drinking Water Inspectorate)	<b>Operational (controlled operating model)</b>	
Pest Control - Home Treatments	<b>Partially Operational</b>	Service recovery is dependent on recent restrictions related to BCC area.

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Off street car parking	<b>Operational (controlled operating model)</b>	
Radiation Monitoring	<b>Partially Operational</b>	31/10/2020
Home Safety	<b>Partially Operational</b>	31/10/2020
Industrial Pollution Control	<b>Partially Operational</b>	31/10/2020
Consumer Advice	<b>Temporarily Suspended</b>	Staff redeployed to the Crematorium and Public Office.
Tobacco Control	<b>Temporarily Suspended</b>	Staff redeployed to Crematorium and Covid Restrictions Enforcement Work

**3.8 Second Wave Planning:**

There is a risk of a second wave and the potential for new restrictions to be imposed. City Protection has learned a lot from the first wave and as a result of recovery planning all services have, or will have, a Covid risk assessment. This will mean should a second wave happen we will have the potential to keep the majority of services operational dependent, of course, on the restrictions imposed. We are currently planning for the second wave to ensure that we can be as prepared as possible to keep services operational.

**3.9 Financial and resource Implications**

The impact on the Councils financial deficit of recovering City Protection Services has been considered and agreed through the corporate recovery process.

**3.10 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment**

There is no identified equality impact, this will be continuously reviewed through the service recovery process.”

The Committee noted the current position regarding service recovery within City Protection and agreed that the Director of City Services would liaise directly with those

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Members who had highlighted that they were unable to attend the Waste Workshop being held on 7th October.

**Potential Restructure of Intermediate Football**

The Committee considered a detailed report in relation to the planned restructure of Intermediate Football and noted that correspondence had recently been received from the Irish Football Association (IFA) advising that the proposed restructure was to be discontinued at this time. The correspondence highlighted the financial impact that the ongoing Covid -19 pandemic was having on both local clubs and local Councils and advised that the IFA had taken the decision to act responsibly in an attempt to safeguard the immediate financial viability and sustainability of current intermediate clubs. It stated that it remained the intention of the IFA Board to proceed with the proposed restructure of the football pyramid in due course to provide a clear and equitable pathway for ambitious clubs.

A number of Members welcomed the delay in the proposed restructure given its potential impact for the Council and clubs but noted that it was the IFA's intention to proceed with the proposals in due course.

It was also noted that it was unclear if the proposed changes to the ground criteria, as part of the restructure plans, were to be discontinued indefinitely and the impact that this might have on current or new pitch developments.

The Committee:

- welcomed the delay as it still had a number of concerns in relation to the proposals, including the lack of consultation with football clubs; and
- agreed to invite the IFA's Chief Executive and Chairman to a future meeting to discuss how the Association planned to proceed with the re-structure of the football pyramid and to consider the potential impact of any restructure for the Council and clubs.

**Residents' Parking Scheme Update**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting held on 8th September, it had agreed that the Council would write to the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) inviting representatives to attend a future meeting of the People and Communities Committee to discuss the advancement of residents' parking schemes in urban affected communities.

The Director of Neighbourhood Services advised that the DfI had been contacted and they had advised that they were scheduled to attend a special meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee in the near future to provide their bi-annual update on DfI Roads reports and to discuss any associated highways and transportation issues. Subject the Committee's approval, it had been agreed that the update in respect of residents' parking schemes would be considered at this meeting and that Members of the People and Communities Committee be invited to attend, rather than DfI officials attending two separate meetings.

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The Committee agreed that Members of the People and Communities Committee be invited to attend a special meeting of City Growth and Regeneration Committee, where representatives from the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) would be presenting the department's bi-annual update, which would include consideration of residents' parking schemes.

**Finance, Procurement and Performance**

**Support to Community Partners 2020 Update**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

**1.1 To update Members on the progress of the funding allocated to support community needs over the summer months and to ask Members for consideration as to how that support can be extended to meet ongoing needs up to end March 2021.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to approve the following;**

- Note the update on financial investment in communities as part of the summer funding 2020 and the lessons learned
- Note the additional external funding secured from DfC, Shared City Partnership and Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (in progress) to further support communities
- Agree the continuing grant funding approach for financial investment in communities for the remainder of 20/21
- Delegate authority to the Director (Operational) City & Neighbourhood Services to make operational decisions relating to the running of the remainder of the 20/21 grant funding approach to include making awards, assessing demand for each strand of the overall fund, allocating additional funding should it become available and temporarily pausing a strand/s should demand exceed available budget
- Delegate authority to the Director (Operational) City & Neighbourhood Services to accept new offers of funding in support of communities from external funders e.g. DfC Access to Food and Financial Inclusion Funds with retrospective reporting to Committee
- Agree to extend the existing 20/21 Community Capacity and Revenue Buildings Grant Programmes for a further year until end March 2022 with final funding allocations

subject to Committee consideration when final budget allocation is known from DfC

- To authorise Officers to develop the 21/22 Community Provision Grant Programme as detailed at point 3.21

### **3.0 Main report**

#### **Community Provision Summer Funding Update**

3.1 Members will recall in July 2020 a further financial investment of £636,057 (comprised of funding from BCC, DfC, TEO/SCP and DoJ/NIPB/PCSP's) was agreed to support recovery at a community level, which was in addition to the £939K financial investment in communities as part of the COVID-19 emergency response.

3.2 This investment took into account the lessons learned from the COVID-19 emergency response, in particular feedback from community partners and the revised grant process replaced the previous individual grant programmes delivered by the Council.

3.3 The new approach was comprised of two strands (detailed below) and an update is provided on the progress to date on each of these elements:

#### **3.4 Strand 1 – Strategic Funding of Key Area Based Organisations**

##### **Proposed Budget: £486,000**

Of the 9 lead partners across the city for this fund the position is as follows:

- Proposals received, due diligence completed and delivery commenced – 6 lead partners
- Proposals received, due diligence in progress – 2 lead partners
- Proposal not received – 1 lead partner

The development of proposals and due diligence process has been supported throughout the summer by staff from within our Area Support Teams working closely with lead partners.

#### **3.5 Strand 2 - Micro Grants**

Initial Budget: £150,000 (but with delegated authority given to Director (Operational) City and Neighbourhood Services to enhance this subject to demand and should further funding become available.

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**Maximum allocation per organisation: £1,000 per organisation**

- 3.6 In August 2020, Committee agreed that given the significant demand, should further funding be received central government, it could be used to support the extension of the Micro Grant programme under the delegated authority of the Director (Operational) City and Neighbourhood Services.**
- 3.7 As indicated at point 3.6 demand for the micro grant has far exceeded expectation and under delegated authority granted to the Director (Operational) City and Neighbourhood Services, further funds had to be added to this grant programme (from additional central government grant funding received, see point 3.12 for further detail).**
- 3.8 For Members information, the average turnaround time for the micro grants programme from receipt of application to payment of funds is 17 days. This is enabled by the commitment of our staff in our Area Support Teams, a streamlined process and reductions in unnecessary bureaucracy (in keeping with the Department of Finance Reducing Bureaucracy for the Voluntary and Community Sector Code of Practice 2015).**
- 3.9 As updated at Committee in August 2020, Council was expecting further financial support from the Department for Communities through the Community Support Programme, although detail on the exact amount at that stage was not known. Confirmation of the exact amount has now been received and DfC are providing an additional £486,000 to support communities through the Community Support Programme up to end March 2021.**
- 3.10 £135,000 of this funding was required to meet the significant demand for micro grants resulting in a total financial investment in communities as detailed below up to end September 2020:**
- Micro Grant applications received, assessed and grant paid to 15/9/20 – 269**  
**Micro Grant financial investment in community to 15/09/20 - £250,079**  
**Micro Grant anticipated total demand up to end September 2020 - £ 285,079 (304 applications)**
- This leaves a remaining £351,000 from the additional funding secured from DfC to support further grant funding.**
- 3.11 Additionally, given the positive feedback about this way of grant funding and the uncertain delivery environment going forward as a result of COVID-19, both the Shared City Partnership and**

Policing and Community Safety Partnership are in the process of committing more funding to support the wider Council approach. This will add a further £180,000 approximately to compliment the DfC investment up to end March 2021.

This gives a total further flexible financial investment available for communities up to end March 2021 of £531,000 at this time.

**3.12 Additional restricted funds from DfC**

DfC are in the process of making further restricted monies available in the following areas, with DfC setting the terms of reference for each fund as detailed below. Given the time pressures involved, delegated authority is requested for the Director (Operational) City and Neighbourhood Services to progress the delivery of the Access to Food and Financial Inclusion Fund in a co-design manner with the partners detailed below.

**3.13 Access to Food – £176,365 (up to end March 2021)**

This fund is designed to facilitate strategic consideration of how access to food is addressed in a more strategic and considered manner taking in to account all of the learning from the COVID-19 emergency response, with all relevant community/voluntary and statutory partners involved in the discussion and co-designing the solutions on a council by council basis.

- Within the economically vulnerable group, is it a poverty issue or food poverty issue?
- For the short term, how do we build in more robust assurance mechanisms in terms of impacts of support and who is the most appropriate delivery agent?
- What are the characteristics of those seeking help with food (those in receipt of benefits, those in work etc?)
- To what extent did the issues precede the emergency; are due to the emergency; or will emerge due to the overall economic impact of the emergency?
- How do we move from an emergency response towards a longer term food poverty approach, in the context of the Anti-poverty Strategy?

**3.14** Members will also be aware that as Council and community partners transitioned out of the provision of emergency food parcels as part of the DfC scheme, we retained existing contractual capacity with the Red Cross for the following types of community support:

- Provision of essential supplies including emergency food
- Pickup of prescriptions and grocery deliveries
- Emergency financial hardship

**3.15** However, demand for access to the Red Cross food parcels is low and there is significant value left should the need arise again for any of these services in the coming months.

**3.16** Officers will be engaging with relevant voluntary and community sector partners in the coming weeks for their input to proposals on how the Access to Food funding is used (within the stated objectives from DfC)

**3.17** Financial Inclusion - £175,148

The aim of the Covid-19 Financial Inclusion Partnership Fund will be to target those most likely to be adversely impacted by the economic fallout of the pandemic, help build financial resilience and improve overall financial wellbeing through access to money management, low cost/affordable credit, promoting savings and linking into holistic debt and income maximisation advice.

It is intended that the Fund will be allocated through Councils to enable 'debt preventative measures' through partnership working by community level organisations, best placed to support individuals as they seek to improve their financial wellbeing and build resilience in the Covid-19 recovery phase.

**3.18** Through early targeted support, the Fund aims to:

- Identify those people who would benefit from direct, targeted advice and support;
- Provide access to money management/budgeting advice;
- Ensure early referrals to formal, regulated debt advice services;
- Improve awareness of, and increasing access to, affordable credit from responsible lenders;
- Improve awareness and increase access to income and benefits maximisation;
- Promote a savings culture (for those that can save) to help build resilience to future financial shocks.

Officers will be engaging with the Belfast Advice Group and the participating consortia in the coming weeks for their input to proposals on how this funding is used (within the stated objectives from DfC).

This financial investment at a micro grant level has enabled a significant and extensive programme of activities to take place across the city.

**3.19 Examples of programmes/activities for both Strategic Funding and Micro Grants**

An extensive programme of activities and service delivery has taken place across the city to include:

- Activity Programmes for young people and youth diversionary/outreach
- Community Arts and video/photography programmes
- Physical activity and community sports programmes
- Literacy/Numeracy workshops and back to school support
- Mental health, wellbeing, mindfulness and resilience programmes
- Capacity Building and Group Support
- Counselling and Talking Therapy
- Environmental Programmes, Community Clean-ups and upcycling from waste
- Digital inclusion programmes
- Family Activities e.g. outdoor cinema
- Good Morning and social contact programmes
- Homeless Outreach
- Men's Sheds
- Silent Discos
- Train the Trainer Health and Well-being
- Volunteer support and development

**3.20 Lessons Learned from Summer Community Grant Fund 2020**

As has been the case throughout, our approach to supporting communities has been informed by their feedback and the most recent lessons learned about the summer grant fund 2020 are detailed below.

- Communities are trying their best to resume services/activities but the constantly changing operating context makes this very challenging. Having one grant programme with a range of high level outcomes provides a common focus but with sufficient flexibility for unexpected changes.
- Community partners are asking for a more sustained financial investment to take them up to March 2021 to

allow them to properly plan and deliver against the needs of their residents.

- Demand has been much higher than expected for the micro grant indicating an appetite for smaller amounts of money and reduced bureaucracy that can be mobilised quickly for one off/short term events/activities.
- However, there remains a gap for a grant of a higher value to allow community partners to deliver larger programmes/activities over a longer period up to March 2021.
- There also remains a gap in providing financial support to community partners for unexpected premises costs (e.g. screens/signage) or for increased consumables due to COVID-19 (e.g. sanitiser, masks, cleaning products).
- Demand for the micro grant with reduced levels of bureaucracy as resulted in a large number of organisations operating at a community level applying for funding but who had no previous relationship with Council. This now provides a strong platform for us to provide further support for them either in their organisational development and/or access to further funding.
- The administration associated with grants needs to be transitioned to the online grants management software to enable easier access for community partners.

### 3.21 Continuing Grant Funding Approach 20/21

Taking all of the above in to account, the following is recommended as the continuing grant funding approach up to end March 2021 (using the flexible funding from DfC, Shared City Partnership and Policing and Community Safety Partnerships).

The total budget available at present would be £531,000 but with the potential for additional funds in the future. The approach would have three strands:

1. Micro Grants - continuation with next tranche opening in November 2020 for delivery up to end March 2021, with increase in maximum award available to groups to £1,500 (Estimated Fund Value – £150,000)
2. Small Grants – introduction of new category of grant with larger maximum value of £5,000 (Estimated Fund Value - £250,000)
3. Strategic Funding of Key Area Based Organisations – ongoing support for 9 key area based organisations based on their spend to date of existing allocations, anticipated future need up to end March 2021 and with a

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focus on alignment with Belfast: Our Recovery, identification of area strategic priorities and enabling collaboration and partnership working in support of those priorities. As proposals are developed in each area, they will be brought forward to Committee for consideration (Estimated Fund Value - £131,000)

- 3.22 The above fund values are estimated as demand is difficult to predict in this uncertain operating environment, however, delegated authority is being requested to the Director (Operational) City & Neighbourhood Services to make operational decisions relating to the running of the remainder of the 20/21 grant funding approach to include making awards, assessing demand for each strand of the overall fund, allocating additional funding should it become available, reallocating unspent funding and temporarily pausing a strand/s should demand exceed available budget, with retrospective reporting to Committee on a regular basis.
- 3.23 On the basis of the learning to date and the ongoing feedback received from communities it is recommended that the existing priorities for funding remain the same as:
- Children and Young People: Summer activities and programmes, negative educational and wellbeing impacts of COVID-19 and digital connectivity
  - Civic Pride: Communities are rightly proud of the huge volunteering effort and sense of neighbourliness and community spirit and want to develop that
  - Preventing Isolation: the impact of COVID-19 on those shielding has been significant and a huge community effort is needed to support those individuals, with digital connectivity an element
  - Emotional Wellbeing: There is widespread concern about then emotional wellbeing concerns of vulnerable individuals, families and communities
  - Anti-Social Behaviour: Levels of anti-social behaviour, particularly in parks/open spaces has increased due to people not being at school/work and periods of good weather
- 3.24 With the addition of the following priorities given the importance of supporting community partners to recover their services and facilities for the benefit of their communities in what is a very uncertain operating environment:
- Unexpected Premises and PPE Costs: In recovering services and opening premises, community partners will have to make small scale physical changes to their

premises and purchase PPE to ensure social distancing. These are unplanned for costs placing an additional financial burden on them. Groups in receipt of an existing revenue buildings grant from Council or other central government funder will not be eligible unless they can provide evidence their existing grants will not cover expected costs up to end March 2021.

- **Connectivity and Inclusion:** Programmes and activities that promote connectivity and inclusion within communities, between communities and between communities and statutory partners as we all navigate the uncertainty of the coming months. This will also support programmes and activities which will enhance and develop grass roots community capacity.

### **3.25 Thematic Funding**

The organisations funded under thematic funding from the initial COVID-19 emergency response as all either continuing with delivery within their allocated budget or in the process of securing additional resources if needed from the Shared City Partnership and/or Policing and Community Safety Partnership/s. No additional requests have been made to Council to date, but Officers continue to work closely with these groups and will connect them with other funders as needed.

### **3.26 Maximising Participation**

As well as promoting the continuing financial investment in communities on Council website and social media to maximise accessibility, Officers will liaise directly with every organisation that had previously made grant applications under the pre-COVID-19 grant processes to update them on what financial support is available for the 20/21 financial year, this will include those organisations who made an application under our small grants programme Tranche 1.

### **3.27 Capacity and Revenue Buildings Grant 21/22**

In March 2020, Council authorised the release of the planned 2020 Capacity and Buildings Revenue grants to applicants. This was a planned grant process and all organisations who made an application, received an award as detailed below:

- **Building Revenue grants - 74 grants totalling £985,405**  
These grants are aimed at community development organisations which address the needs of their community by delivering a broad based programme from their building. The building may be used by the local

neighbourhood, or the community may be from across the whole city for a thematic/special interest group.

- **Capacity Building Grants - 34 grants totalling £1,021,336**  
These grants are aimed at lead community development organisations that advocate the interests of their local groups, area and residents; and support local community groups to ensure good practice in governance, committee procedures, appropriate policies and financial management.

3.28 Many grant recipients continue to be engaged in COVID-19 response and community partners remain under significant pressure. Taking this in to account and the increasing concern about further pressure at a community level as we move forward in to the winter months with additional COVID-19 impacts, it is recommended that the existing Capacity and Buildings Revenue grants are extended for a further year (up to end March 2022) without further open call. Additionally, other staffing resource pressures at present and with more expected in the coming months, the significant workload operating an open call of this size requires 6 months advance notice which is not possible to facilitate at present.

3.29 Members should note that DfC have changed their financial allocation model regionally to the Community Support Fund, but we do not have exact detail on how or if this will affect Belfast. Taking this in to account, further engagement will be needed with Committee on specific financial allocations to the Capacity and Building Revenue Grant Programmes as further detail becomes available.

3.30 **Wider Community Provision Grant Approach 21/22**

Ongoing engagement with Committee in recent months has demonstrated significant learning from the COVID-19 experience in how we provide financial support to communities in a way that is agile, flexible, accessible and with proportionate levels of bureaucracy. The feedback from community partners is that this approach is working more effectively for them than our previous grant processes to date and they would welcome improvements to our grant programme.

3.31 Taking that in to account, Officers will engage with funders and partnerships to secure participation in reviewing community provision grant programmes as well as seeking the necessary approvals in due course:

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- **PCSP Small Grants/Policing Committee (DoJ/NIPB/BCC/PCSP)**
- **Good Relations Grants/Bonfire and Cultural Expression Programme Grants - (TEO/BCC/SCP)**
- **Community Development Summer Scheme Grants (DfC/BCC)**
- **Community Development Small Project Grants (DfC/BCC)**
- **Ur City 2 Grants (Children/Young People in N'hood Renewal Areas) (BCC)**
- **Parks Events Small Grants (BCC)**

The estimated total value of these grants is approximately £900,000.

**3.32** Officers are additionally requesting authority to use this opportunity to embed the learning from COVID-19 in to a new approach for 21/22 and beyond. This is a significant piece of work which will require further political and community engagement in the coming months but would be based on the following:

- **Improved strategic alignment (including Belfast: Our Recovery) both within Council and with external partners utilising the Community Planning Partnership and associated Boards;**
- **Focus on outcomes and impact rather than activities and functional areas;**
- **Encourage co-design and community participation;**
- **Effective delivery mechanisms to include a streamlined programme, streamlined and consistent processes, innovative community financial investment methods as well as traditional grant funding;**
- **Reducing bureaucracy and administration to a proportionate level;**
- **Consideration of citywide as well as area priorities;**
- **Maximising accessibility and eligibility, particularly for those groups who would have accessed previous schemes.**

**3.33 Financial Implications**

As detailed in the report

**3.34 Equality or Good Relations Implications and Rural Needs Assessment**

This will be considered throughout and any appropriate issues highlighted to Members. Any amendments to existing scheme

or new scheme will be considered in the context of any equality/Good Relations and rural needs considerations.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

### Operational Issues

#### Partner Agreement - Ulidia Playing Fields

The Committee considered the following report:

#### **“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

1.1 To advise committee of delays in progressing discussions on an alternative management model in the form of a long-term lease at the site and a request from the Agreement holder for additional support until a decision is made on the management model.

#### **2.0 Recommendations**

2.1 Committee is asked to consider the requested additional support by Rosario YC and:

- to agree to provide a maximum financial payment of up to £2,000 per month for staff costs, subject to vouching of fully evidenced expenditure from November 2020 to March 2021

#### **3.0 Main report**

3.1 Ulidia Playing Fields is subject to a Partner Agreement with Rosario YC. The Agreement is for a term of five years to the last day of August 2020 with an option to extend for a further two years. The Partner Agreement requires the Club to deliver sports development outcomes based on the Club’s annual plan and to assume responsibility for day to day operation of the site including key holding, cleaning, security, health and safety duties etc. Council supports the Club in the form of four quarterly payments of £5,000 based on satisfactory delivery of the sports development plan and compliance with operational requirements.

3.2 During the term of the Agreement Council developed the site and installed a floodlit synthetic pitch.

3.3 A meeting was held at the beginning of December 2018, attended by political representatives, club representatives and officers. Rosario YC made a presentation highlighting the scale

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and scope of the Club's activities, how their activities support the Belfast Agenda and other relevant strategies, their vision for further development of the site in the future and their ambition to assume full responsibility for running the site.

- 3.4 The club has since presented a sports development plan which details their ambition to extend their programming by developing the site further, this would be based on them holding a long term lease.
- 3.5 Departmental Officers have been working with the club to further progress discussions around their plans and aspiration for a potential Community Asset Transfer, with the club looking at providing detail information demonstrating clear community benefit from their plans. Due to difficulties arising from the Covid19 outbreak progress has been stalled. Officers intend to make contact Rosario in the near future to ascertain how this is progressing.
- 3.6 At the December 2018 meeting the Club highlighted their concerns that the development of the site to include the synthetic floodlit pitch will now require them to operate well beyond their original commitment due to the intensified hourly use, extended opening hours and the move from seasonal to yearlong programming. They further identified additional risks to site users in particular control of parking due to higher volumes of traffic with concurrent bookings at evenings, weekends and outside daylight hours. They requested that Council provide an additional monthly amount of £2,000 to support them in creating part-time posts to operate the site to Council's standards for the term of the Partner Agreement. This request was approved by People and Communities committee in January 2019 to be effective until the end of March 2020. This end date was in anticipation that a new management model would be in place in January 2020.
- 3.7 Following the Covid19 outbreak the staff were furloughed, as activities have resumed at the site staff have now returned to full duties. The Club vice-chair wrote to the Director of Neighbourhood Services on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020 (see appendix 1) requesting that the £2,000 additional payment be resumed until discussions on the management model are completed.

3.8 **Financial Implications**

An amount of £10,000 will be required to support this request from November 2020 to March 2021, there is allowance for this within existing estimates.

**3.9 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment**

**There are no additional impacts related to this report.”**

The Committee agreed to provide a maximum financial payment of up to £2,000 per month for staff costs, subject to vouching of fully evidenced expenditure from November 2020 to March 2021.

**Fixed Penalty Charges**

The Director of City Services drew the Members' attention to correspondence which had been received from Newry, Mourne and Down District Council (NMDDC) seeking Belfast City Council's support in respect of a proposal that it had submitted to the DAERA Minister. The Director detailed that NMDDC had requested that the maximum amount payable under a fixed penalty notice in respect of littering and dog fouling offences be increased from the current limit of £80.00 to £250.00, it had also asked the Minister to consider the possibility of devolving powers for the setting of fixed penalty rates to local councils.

A number of the Members stated that they felt that the proposal to raise the maximum fine payable from £80 to £250 was excessive, although there was general agreement from the Committee in respect of the request and also in respect of the suggestion that the powers for the setting of fixed penalty rates be devolved to local councils.

During discussion, several of the Members advised that it would be helpful to receive a report at a future meeting detailing the current enforcement measures in place, to include detail in respect of the actual number of fixed penalty fines issued in respect of dog fouling and littering, staff resources and education prevention measures.

The Committee:

- noted the correspondence from Newry Mourne and Down District Council and agreed that, whilst it felt that the proposal to raise the maximum fine payable for Fixed Penalty Notices in regard to littering and dog fouling offences from £80 to £250 was an excessive rise, it did support, in principle, the devolution of powers for setting Fixed Penalty rates to local councils; and
- agreed that a letter be forwarded to the DAERA Minister outlining support for this proposal with a caveat that the proposed increase in fee might be excessive; and
- agreed that an update report be submitted to a future meeting in respect of dog fouling and littering.

**Request from Waste Industry Safety and Health Forum NI**

The Committee was advised that a request had been received from the Chair of the Waste Industry Safety and Health Forum NI (WISHNI) seeking to appoint Belfast City

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Council's Waste Officer, Ms. Jennifer Stephens, to the role of Deputy Chair of WISHNI for the foreseeable future.

The Director of City Services advised that the role of the Deputy Chair was to continue to support the work of WISHNI, to help deliver on its strategy and to deputise for the Chair in their absence.

The time commitment involved in carrying out this role was estimated at approximately a half day per month. Any additional time commitments would be made in the officer's own time. Fulfilment of the role had been requested for the foreseeable future, with no set timeframe or end date stated. However, should the request be granted, the officer would seek to review the position after two years from the date of appointment.

The Committee approved the request from WISHNI for Jennifer Stephens, Waste Officer, to accept the role as Deputy Chair for WISHNI.

**Issues Raised in Advance by Members**

**Roselawn Crematorium - Alderman Rodgers**

Alderman Rodgers commended and thanked the Council's cemetery and crematorium staff for their hard work and dedication in maintaining the service during the ongoing pandemic and sought clarity as to whether any of the current health and safety measures could be relaxed. The Member also highlighted that the gates at the entrance to the facility were in need of being repainted.

In response, the Director of City Service acknowledged that, whilst the current restrictions on the numbers attending funerals at the crematorium was an extremely sensitive matter, it was necessary to ensure that Covid secure measures were in place for the safety of all staff and users of the facility and to ensure that the service remained operational, given that it was the only facility in Northern Ireland. She provided an assurance that this would continue to be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis in line with government guidelines.

The Director advised that Roselawn Crematorium was a listed building, therefore, permission was required from the Historic Environment Division (HED) to undertake maintenance to the gates. This had been applied for and once received the necessary works would be undertaken.

In addition, the Member also suggested that the Council should look at implementing a rolling maintenance programme throughout the city's cemeteries as many of them were falling into a state of disrepair.

The Committee noted the suggestion and the comments of the Director.

Chairperson