

<b>Title of Report:</b>  <b>COVID 19 Financial Inclusion Partnership Fund</b>	<b>Officer Presenting: Director of Health &amp; Community</b>  <b>Author: Head of Community Development &amp; Leisure</b>
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## **1 Purpose of Report/Recommendations**

- 1.1 To seek Members' approval of the COVID 19 Financial Inclusion Partnership Fund proposal.
- 1.2 To seek Members' approval for the allocation of funding to each of the advice agencies subject to receipt of the Letter of Variance to the Community Support Letter of Offer from DfC (Department for Communities).

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 Members were updated at September's Health & Committee meeting that the Department for Communities (DfC) had allocated additional COVID 19 Community Support Funding which included funding towards a Financial Inclusion Fund and agreed that Officers would work on a co design proposal (HC144/20).
- 2.2 Council was subsequently contacted by the Department on 10<sup>th</sup> September to confirm that Council would receive an allocation of £80,085 from this fund to develop a local Programme which would help build financial resilience and improve overall financial wellbeing.

## **3 Key Issues**

- 3.1 Council Officers have worked closely with the Council funded Advice Providers, Advice North West, Dove House and the Resource Centre Derry together with Williamson Consulting to develop a proposal for submission to Council and to the Department which is attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.2 The proposal seeks to target those most adversely affected by the economic effects of the pandemic including providing advice on Employment Rights and to help build financial resilience and improve overall financial well-being. This will be achieved through a marketing campaign, effective targeting of support, referrals to debt advice, employment advice, access to responsible lenders and targeted benefit advice. Advice agencies will provide additional evening and Saturday opening

hours. Advice North West will provide 15 advisors for these additional hours, Dove House will provide 4 staff and the Resource Centre Derry will have one advisor. Further details are provided in Appendix 1.

- 3.3 The advice agencies have met with the Growth Partnerships and will work through these local structures to ensure an effective referral mechanism. The Growth Partnerships will work in partnership with the advice agencies in order to enhance availability of advice services locally, including setting aside specific time slots for geographical areas, particularly across rural DEA's.
- 3.4 As a result of the current COVID-19 pandemic many people have experienced redundancy, furlough, job insecurity and a reduction in working hours. Many people are not aware of their basic employment rights and know less about enforcing them.
- 3.5 The Financial Inclusion Programme will provide advice and guidance to employees and individuals to ensure that they do not suffer from a lack of knowledge of their rights and entitlements.
- 3.6 Council's Marketing Department has been working with the advice agencies in order to develop a marketing campaign to ensure residents are aware of the support available.

#### **4 Financial, Equality, Legal, HR, Improvement, Rural Needs and other Implications**

- 4.1 As the Covid19 Financial Inclusion Partnership Fund is 100% funded from the Department for Communities and requires no match funding from Council there are no financial implications for Council.
- 4.2 Council has been provided with written confirmation of funding but await the Letter of Variance to the Community Support Letter of Offer.

#### **5 Recommendations**

- 5.1 That Members approve the Covid19 Financial Inclusion Partnership Fund proposal as per attached in Appendix 1.
- 5.2 That Members approve the allocation of funding to each of the advice agencies as follows, subject to receipt of the Letter of Variance to the Community Support Letter of Offer from DfC.

Advice North West                      £57,796

Dove House                      £11,935

Resource Centre Derry        £2,330

The balance of funding (£8,024) from DfC will be utilised to resource the Marketing Campaign including Flyer Distribution by Council in partnership with the Advice Agencies.

### **Background Papers**

Appendix 1: DCSDC Financial Inclusion Proposal

Mins Ref: HC144/20