

<p>Title of Report:</p> <p>Additional COVID Response Funding</p>	<p>Officer Presenting: Director of Health and Community</p> <p>Author: Head of Community Development and Leisure</p>
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1 Purpose of Report/Recommendations

1.1 To seek Members' approval for the allocation of additional funding provided by the Department for Communities, Voluntary and Communities Division (VCD) to support grass roots Community & Voluntary Sector Organisations in response to the COVID 19 crisis.

2 Background

2.1 Members may be aware of the announcement by the Minister on 24th May 2021 of an additional £3m funding allocation to Councils for Community Led Community Development and Advice. The Minister's office has confirmed that this funding allocation should "continue to directly support grass-roots organisations' response to the pandemic and be reported on separately by Councils as specific COVID support. The type of activity may shift to rebuilding and recovery work, but must still be focused on Community level COVID interventions and not general Community Development renewal work."

2.2 It is proposed that the funding is allocated and prioritised as follows:

- A. **Community Venues Fund** As the Community Venues Fund was advertised for a one-year programme (2021- 2022) specifically to support Venues to recover from the COVID crisis, it is proposed that those Centre Venues that initially scored over the threshold but were not funded in the initial round due to the funding pot being exhausted would be supported from this additional funding allocation. Members will be aware of the importance of supporting these venues at this difficult time. The funding would assist these Centre Venues to recover from the Covid crisis and continue to operate and provide much needed services and support to their local communities. A list of the successful applications who met the threshold but did not get funded in the initial open call is attached in Appendix A. The amount required to fund these groups is £92,400.

- B. **Community Support Fund** The Community Support Fund 2021-22 programme provides funding directly to small grass roots organisations across the Council area. Members will recall from the report presented at July's Health and Community Committee that the Open Call for the 2021-22 Community Support Programme was over-subscribed considerably, resulting in a number of groups not getting funded. This meant that a number of very good applications could not be funded as a result of the funding pot being exhausted, this has had a detrimental impact on the number of services and programme being delivered within our communities and Council area.

All of these small organisations are finding it difficult to survive and source revenue funding to continue to provide much needed Community Development activities as a result of the COVID pandemic, either as a result of increased costs, lack of the ability to fundraise or lack of staff or volunteers as a result of having to isolate due to the virus. It is imperative that these grass roots community groups are supported to deliver services across the area, given the vital part they have played in the COVID response to date and their potential role in any future required response/pandemic.

It is therefore proposed that those groups who applied to the Community Support Fund in April 2021 of which have scored over the threshold, however, did not get funded in the initial round due to there being insufficient funds available would now be provided with assistance through this additional funding allocation from the Voluntary and Community Division (VCD) of the Department for Communities (DfC). A list of the grass roots Community Groups is attached in Appendix A. The funding amount required to fund these groups is £94,258.41.

C. Open Call Grass Roots Community Development Grant Support Programme

It is proposed that the balance of the allocation would be utilised to provide support to local grassroots community organisations across the Council area in the delivery of Community Development or Sports Groups (subject to confirmation on eligibility from DfC) COVID recovery interventions/programmes, providing much needed support to communities as they recover from the effects of the COVID pandemic. It is anticipated that there would be an open call for applications to this fund.

The Open call for Community Support Groups would support grass roots community organisations with either capital or revenue funding to help support the delivery of Community Development COVID recovery interventions/programmes, the outcome of which would ensure the survival of many of these grass roots Community groups who have provided vital services to our Communities throughout the COVID pandemic. The timescale for delivery of an open call grant aid programme will be challenging, an indicative flowchart for delivery of such a programme is provided in Appendix B.

The total funding available will be allocated to the DEAs using the same formula as the Community Support fund with grant aid up to a maximum of £2k to ensure as many groups as possible can avail of this funding. The criteria will remain the same as the CSP programme with the addition of the requirement to outline how the project will impact on COVID recovery. Priority will be given to Community & Voluntary groups who have not received funding to date from the Community Support Programme or Community Venues Fund in this Financial Year (2021/22).

The total allocation for this programme will be £130,799.59.

2.3 It is also proposed that there would be an open call for constituted, not-for-profit sports groups under a **Sports Club Covid Recovery Support Programme**. Sports clubs played a significant role as a key driver in the COVID response as they assisted and supported their communities throughout pandemic. As we continue on our road to recovery, the role of the sports clubs will change as they start to provide health, physical activity and well-being opportunities as people look to adopt a more active lifestyle and address their health issues that the pandemic has brought to the fore.

2.4 Under the Sports Club Covid Recovery Support Programme, clubs would be able to apply for support under 2 key themes:

- Sports Club Venue and Maintenance Fund - based on eligible costs from Community Venue Fund, running costs and criteria of Council's Club Maintenance grant aid. Council would also be able to provide partnership funding from our existing maintenance grant aid up to approx. £20,000. Any funding secured from DfC under this strand will be for eligible costs to assist with the recovery from COVID.

- Delivery of health and physical activity programmes that are NOT the sole purpose of their sports club (GAA club cannot apply for GAA activities but could deliver a walking initiative, wellbeing programme etc.) that will help address health inequalities and support their communities recover.
- 2.5 The total budget for the Sports Club COVID Recovery Support Programme will be £100,000 with £80,000 allocation from DfC (subject to confirmation on eligibility). If deemed ineligible, the £80,000 will be redistributed to the open call for Community Support Groups
- 2.6 An allocation of £21,225 will also be included as a 5% contribution to Council for administration.
- 2.7 The total funding available will be allocated to the DEAs using the same formula as the Community Support fund with grant aid up to a maximum of £4k. The criteria will remain the same as the CSP programme with the addition of the requirement to outline how the project will impact on COVID recovery.

3 Key Issues

- 3.1 The timescale for delivery of this funding is a significant issue. All funding is in year with a requirement for all spend and monitoring complete by 31st March 2022. An indicative timescale for application, assessment and delivery of Letters of Offer is attached in Appendix B. As outlined the delivery timescales will be such that many grass roots organisations may not be in a position to apply given the specific deadlines within the programme. In addition DfC has not indicated a date for receipt of letters of offer by Councils.
- 3.2 The delivery of new grant aid programmes within the timescales will also put pressure on the existing limited resources within the Community Development section, given the additional work associated with the monitoring of previous programmes and officer(s) time associated with the Internal Audit of COVID response and Advice programmes.

4 Implications

Equality, Rural Needs, Climate Change and Data Protection

- 4.1 None

Financial, Legal, HR, Improvement and Other

- 4.2 The Voluntary and Community Division of the Department for Communities has indicated that the additional financial assistance to Derry City and Strabane District Council will be £424,503.00. There is no requirement for match funding from Council.
- 4.3 The Department for Communities has provided written confirmation of allocations to each of the Council areas. However, all Councils currently await the Letter of Variance to the Community Support Letter of Offer.

5 Recommendations

5.1 That Members approve the following allocations subject to confirmation of funding from DfC;

- Allocations to Community Venues Applications scoring over the threshold as outlined in Appendix A. Total allocation of **£92,400.00**.
- Allocation to Community Support applications scoring over the threshold as outlined in Appendix A. Total Allocation of **£94,258.41**.
- Allocation to a new round grant aid call for applications under the Community Support Fund to specifically support local grassroots community organisations across the Council area in the delivery of Community Development COVID recovery interventions/programmes. A Flowchart outlining the indicative timescales is provided in Appendix B. Total Allocation of **£136,619.59**.
- An allocation to a new round of grant aid to Sports Club COVID Recovery Support Programme. The allocation of this programme would be **£80,000.00**.
- Allocation to Council administration costs of **£21,225.00**.

5.2 In the event that DfC deem the allocation to Sports Groups as ineligible the £80,000 will be included within the Community Support Fund call.

Background Papers

Appendix A: List of Allocations to Community Venues Applicants/Community Support Fund Applicants.

Appendix B: Flowchart for Open Call for Grant Aid