

Report on	Development Report
Date of Meeting	10 th January 2024
Reporting Officer	Philip Clarke, Neighbourhood Development Manager
Contact Officers	Michael McCrory - PCSP Manager, Catherine Fox - Arts & Facilities Development Manager, Brian McCormick - Seamus Heaney Home Place Manager.

Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	X

1	Purpose of Report						
1.1	<p>The purpose of this report is to update members and seek approval for the following;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rolling Community Grants • Community Grants Review and Policy 2023 – 2024 • Pitches Strategy new Grant Programmes • New Foodbank/Hardship Resourcing Process (Social Supermarket Proposal) • Development Department Update 						
2	Key Issues						
2.1	<p>Community Grants - Rolling Grants Programme 2023 – 2024</p> <p>Members are advised that the grants assessment panel are making the following recommendations to award grants under the Good Relations funds.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Grant</th> <th>No. of groups awarded</th> <th>Value of Grant Awards</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Good Relations Grant</td> <td>1</td> <td>£637.00</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Please see attached in Appendix 1 grant award recommendations</p>	Grant	No. of groups awarded	Value of Grant Awards	Good Relations Grant	1	£637.00
Grant	No. of groups awarded	Value of Grant Awards					
Good Relations Grant	1	£637.00					
2.2	<p>Community Grant Aid Policy Review</p> <p>Following an internal review of the current Community Grant Aid Policy there are some proposed change recommendations for consideration as set out below:</p> <p>Registered Charities with a current valid registration number will no longer be required to submit their annual governance documentation with any application submission as assurance is confirmed via annual returns they will have to make to the Charities Commission under regulatory compliance. Checks on this will be carried out by staff to authenticate registration.</p>						

All grant claims must now be claimed within 3mths of the end of the financial year it was awarded (by the 30th June deadline) claims received after this time will not be considered for payment.

Replace the current Rolling Grants (with the exception of the Sports Representative Individual & Team Grant) process to 3 timebound windows with opening and closing deadlines as below (**all subject to available budgets**):

Grant	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3
All Grants	Open 1 st February 2024 Closes 12 Noon, 8 th March 2024		
Good Relations & Local Festivals	Open 1 st February 2024 Closes 12 Noon, 8 th March 2024	Open 6 th June 2024 Closes 12 Noon, 5 th July 2024	Open 3 rd October 2024 Closes 12 Noon, 1 st November 2024

*Grant activity period: 1st April 2024 – 31st March 2025

Virtual Information Sessions will be arranged the week commencing **Monday 5th February** which will be recorded and hosted on the Council website. In addition 3 face to face session in each of the 3 main towns will also be provided to offer in person support for new grant applicants. One to one support for groups will be available on request.

See attached amended Grants Policy 2023 – 2024 in **Appendix 2 (details outline individual grant budget provisions subject to the final rates estimates process)**.

In early 2024 it is proposed to develop a new Community Development Strategy for Council, designed to integrate a range of programme initiatives within one new strategic plan. Development of this plan will be on a co-design basis with key stakeholders, including the Community/Voluntary Sector, and will include a review of our current grants policy.

2.3

Pitches Strategy new Grant Programmes

In February 2023, Council approved its 5-year Pitches Strategy. Included within the costed strategic recommendations was the decision to implement two new grants to support the specific sporting codes that were the focus of the Pitches Strategy (Association Football, Gaelic Games, Rugby, Hockey and Lawn Bowls).

The Pitches & Recreational Strategy Infrastructure Development Grant will offer a **maximum grant award of £50,000** with a match funding requirement of £100,000 to deliver schemes of a minimum £150,000 value. It aims to support clubs in their aspirations for improved facilities that will enhance community outcomes for the 5

identified sporting codes. The annual available budget will be £150,000 per year for the duration of the 5 year Pitches Strategy.

The Pitches & Recreational Strategy Feasibility Development Grant will offer a grant of up to 50% of eligible costs with a *maximum grant award of £10,000*. It aims to support technical assistance costs for clubs in the preparation of future capital funding applications that require Economic Appraisals/Business Cases, Feasibility Studies/Professional Design/Planning Consultant fees that will assist in the delivery of a Clubs Development Plan.

For successful grant applicants, clubs will have up to 18 months from the date of the letter of offer to complete their projects, applicable to both grants.

To ensure a consistent approach for capital grant funding, it is also proposed to bring the Capital Discretionary Grant in line with the Pitches & Recreational Strategy Infrastructure Development Grant in terms of the match funding requirement. This will see the match funding requirement for the Capital Discretionary Grant reduce from a requirement of £250,000 to £100,000 ensuring parity for both grants. Groups will only be eligible for one grant award in any 3 year period from either of the two large capital grants.

2.4 **Foodbanks/Hardship Funds Process (including Social Supermarket Funding)**

Following an internal review of Councils allocations of resources to assist Foodbank/Hardship support organisations it is proposed to have a process that will have an open call for groups to make submissions to Council for financial assistance to support the delivery of their services. At the moment there is no commitment of resourcing from central government on hardship support, however should this become available a new open approach is being recommended as outlined within **Appendix 3**.

Officers have been in discussion with DfC to seek additional resources for the provision of a Coordinator to underpin the Social Supermarket model. Approval is sought to begin a process to identify and secure a lead partner, should monies become available from DfC. A key component of this work would include inter connection with organisations who avail of the Foodbank/Hardship resource fund, requiring them to refer all service users to the Social Supermarket programme as condition of support. This would provide a greater joined up approach to deliver a progressive support wrap around service from crisis intervention (immediate help with food/fuel) to referral programme of support (help for support with budgeting, addiction, housing, debt, employment training & skills etc). The proposed approach is detailed at **Appendix 4**

2.5 **Forest Schools Project 2023 -2025**

The Forest Schools programme is an environmental awareness initiative, facilitated by personnel from the Northern Ireland Forest School Association (NIFSA), which encourages pupils in Mid Ulster schools to visit and take on an ownership of a Council Park. It has been operating successfully at Hill of The O'Neill Heritage Park since April 2017 as part of the facilities education programme.

As part of the NIFSA programme, pupils and teachers identify an area within the local Council Park (Hill of The O'Neill Heritage Park) that they can develop as their own Forest School site. Here they undertake exciting and innovative activities to help them understand the importance of our natural environment and local heritage. Activities can include making a map of the Council Park using only natural resources, den building, as well as the use of trees to help children better understand maths.

The teachers involved undertake a Forest School Leader qualification (OCN Level 3). This gives them the confidence to continue visiting the Council Park year after year and developing more outdoor activities and these will complement classroom-led lessons. This qualification also ensures sustainability as Forest School activities will continue within the school, and environmental learning will become embedded within the school curriculum.

Interest has been shown in NIFSA by a large number of schools and community groups in the Mid Ulster District Council area: these have all registered expressions of interest on the Mid Ulster District Council section of the NIFSA website. The Parks & Countryside Development Officer and the Education Officer (Hill of The O'Neill & Ranfurly House) have examined ways in which this demand for environmental activities across the Mid Ulster District Council area can be met.

The programme costs £6,000 per annum, subject to available funding being approved in 2023/24 and 2024/25 Parks and Arts & Culture budget. Programme costs are shared equally between Parks and Arts & Culture Services.

2.6

Development Update

Community Development

Council officers are currently supporting groups with projects and events and seeking to maximise funding for their community.

Strategic Development

The delivery of the Test and Learn model for Community Wealth Building is continuing. The next meeting of the working group is scheduled for January 2024.

The engagement on social housing for Mid Ulster is continuing, alongside the delivery of the poverty plan.

Good Relations & Peace

The Good Relations Plan continues to be delivered across the District.

TEO has issued correspondence to Council to commence the development of the Councils Good Relations Action Plan for the 2024-25 year. Staff will be working on this for competition to return to them and presentation to the February committee.

Council have received feedback from SEUPB on the recently submitted Peace Plus Action Plan requiring some additional information on the co-design process, more

detail about the development of thematic areas and community buy-in. These will be worked up over the coming weeks with a revised updated Action Plan re-submitted for further consideration.

Connecting Pomeroy

The project is nearing completion with the public realm, Church of Ireland Hall, GAC building and MUGA all complete before the LOO end date of 31/12/2023.

There has been a construction delay on the Forest building with a current estimated completion date of the end of March 24. Once the buildings are operational, the remaining targets associated with Community Engagement plan will be progressed via a new Development Officer post.

Burnavon Arts Centre

The Winter/Spring programme has been launched covering performances and activities from November 2023 to March 2024. Tickets sales are selling well for the upcoming season.

Seamus Heaney Homeplace

The Winter/Spring programme has been released and sales are positive. In December there has been school visits from across NI and also from Donegal, Monaghan and Louth.

Hill of The O'Neill and Ranfurly House

The new action plan continues to be delivered with a range of new events, craft activities and educational programmes are currently being rolled out.

Regional and Minority Language

The programme is continuing to roll out across the District.

PCSP

The Partnership signed of minutes for September are attached at **Appendix 5**.

4.1

Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications

Financial:

Good Relations Grants £637.00

Community Grants Policy 2024 – 2025, (subject to the final rates estimates process).

Human:
NA

Risk Management:
NA

<p>4.2</p>	<p>Screening & Impact Assessments</p> <p>Equality & Good Relations Implications: NA</p> <p>Rural Needs Implications: NA</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>Recommendations</p>
<p>5.1</p>	<p>Members are recommended to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Approve the assessment panel recommendations under the Good Relations grants. (ii) Approve the Community Grant Aid Policy 2024 - 2025. (iii) Approve the approach for the 2 new grant programmes under the Pitches & Recreational Strategy (iv) Approved the revised approaches for the <i>Foodbanks/Hardship Funds Process</i> (including Social Supermarket Funding) – Subject to funding (v) Approve the Council participation in the Forest Schools Programme 2023-2025 (vi) Note the update from the Development Update.
<p>6</p>	<p>List of Documents Attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 Community Rolling Grant Awards Appendix 2 Grants Policy 2024 – 2025 Appendix 3 Foodbank/Hardship Resource Allocation Process 2024 Appendix 4 Social Supermarket Support Process Appendix 5 Policing & Community Safety Partnership September Minutes</p>