

Title of Report:	DfC Covid-19 Community Support Fund
Committee Report Submitted To:	Leisure and Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	15 th September 2020
For Decision or For Information	For Information

Linkage to Council Strategy (2019-23)	
Strategic Theme	Resilient, Healthy & Engaged Communities
Outcome	Council will work to develop and promote stable and cohesive communities across the Borough
Lead Officer	Head of Community & Culture Community Development Manager

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	£0
Included in Current Year Estimates	YES/NO
Capital/Revenue	
Code	
Staffing Costs	n/a

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with information about additional funding from Department for Communities (DfC) to support the voluntary and community sector as it continues to recover and help citizens to get through the COVID-19 crisis.

2.0 Background

The Department for Communities is making 3 additional funds available to Councils to help respond to the Covid 19 pandemic. The funds are as follows:

- i. Covid 19 Community Support Fund (2nd tranche)
- ii. Covid 19 Access to Food Fund; and
- iii. Covid 19 Financial Inclusion Partnership Fund.

2.1 Covid 19 Community Support Fund

The Department, through its COVID-19 Community Support Fund, initially allocated £80,700 to Council in April 2020. When this budget was allocated, Council subsequently opened second and third strands of this grant programme with Good Relations and PCSP funding contributions.

An offer of an additional £126,226.54 has been received for a continuation of the Covid-19 Community Support Fund to continue to support the vital role that grassroots voluntary and community sector groups play in supporting individuals and communities as we begin to emerge from the pandemic. There is no requirement for Councils to match fund this provision.

Council are being asked by the Department to continue to allocate the funding in line with the three broad DfC criteria:

- Financial - to those on low income and at risk due to financial stress.
- Food - access to food (whether due to cost or availability) for those most in need.
- Connectivity - to those living alone or in rural and border areas that are likely to experience greater challenges in accessing services.

2.2 COVID-19 Access to Food Fund

The Access to Food Fund (£750K total to 11 Councils; CCG award amount not yet known) will help to deliver a more strategic response that will shape any future emergency response and ongoing / future policy development, reflecting how we work in partnership to co-design and co-deliver support. In the context of support to citizens on the challenges of food poverty/food insecurity. The proposed support will:

- Recognise and maximise the local infrastructure – building capacity, capability and collaboration with stakeholders:
- Build on partnerships established, including the Voluntary and Community Sector:
- Broker strategic/programme links within and between actions to deliver outcomes for citizens.

2.3 COVID-19 Financial Inclusion Fund

The Financial Inclusion Fund (£700k total to 11 Councils; CCG award amount not yet known) has been enabled by an additional allocation from HM Treasury to target those adversely impacted by the economic fallout during the pandemic, to help build financial resilience and improve the overall financial wellbeing through access to money management, low cost/affordable borrowing, promoting savings and linking into holistic debt and income maximisation advice.

When the current economic and social protections are phased out, increased levels of debt are expected because of the cessation of payment holidays, reduced household incomes due to unemployment and reduced working hours. 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

The Department has advised that they wish to use a co-design approach to enable the design of local proposals to be delivered under the later 2 of these strands, the Covid 19 Food Partnership Fund and the Financial Inclusion Partnership Fund.

3.0 Next Steps

- The Covid 19 Community Support Fund will reopen for applications with this second DfC funding tranche during week commencing 7th September 2020 and applications will be accepted on a rolling basis until the budget is exhausted.
- An introductory meeting will be held early September between DfC officials and council officers to discuss approaches on how to co-design the local strategy for both the Financial Inclusion Fund and the Access to Food Fund.
- In advance of this a small focus group has been arranged to consider the issues in Causeway Coast and Glens. Initially the invitations to this focus group are being extended to food banks and frontline advice organisations in the Borough. Tackling Poverty is a key action within the Community Plan for Causeway Coast and Glens and consideration will be given to other partners and how best in the context of Community Planning to involve all stakeholders that are addressing poverty in Causeway Coast and Glens.