

Title of Report:	DfC Covid Funding for Foodbanks
Committee Report Submitted To:	The Leisure & Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	13 April 2022
For Decision or For Information	For Decision

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)	
Strategic Theme	Healthy, Active and Engaged Communities
Outcome	The Borough comprises cohesive and stable communities which work collaboratively with a range of stakeholders to address issues and deliver on opportunities.
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	33201
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 seek approval from the Leisure & Development Committee to reprofile uncommitted DfC Covid food poverty related funding to registered foodbanks to allow them to cope with increasing demand on their services.

2.0 Background

During 2021-21 Council received a series of strands of Covid emergency response funding in relation to access to food, connectivity and support for people who were adversely affected financially by the pandemic. A total amount of £904,841 was received through 9 different strands in 2020-21.

- i. Covid-19 Community Support Fund (1st Tranche)
- ii. Covid-19 Community Support Fund (2nd Tranche)
- iii. Covid-19 Financial Inclusion Fund
- iv. Covid-19 Food Partnership Fund
- v. Food & Essential Supplies Fund
- vi. Volunteering Support Fund
- vii. Warm Well and Connected Fund
- viii. Covid-19 Community Support Fund (3rd Tranche)
- ix. Covid-19 Food & Essential Supplies Transition Fund

DfC encouraged Councils to build sectoral partnerships and facilitate a collaborative approach to deliver support to citizens in relation to access to food and financial inclusion and as a result Council set up an Anti-Poverty Stakeholder Steering Group.

The Steering Group brought together those organisations that were delivering services to people experiencing financial instability along with relevant statutory bodies. The Steering Group produced an Anti-Poverty Action Plan which was approved by Council in September 2021.

Council delivered a series of small grant programmes for community and voluntary sector organisations with several of the strands of DfC funding. In addition, a number of programmes were delivered with partners in the Anti-Poverty Stakeholder Steering Group including a Wraparound Support Service and an awareness campaign of the intervention and support services available; as well as increased advice centre helpline hours.

DfC advised that “Any amounts not expended during 20/21 should be transferred to a usable reserve and ring-fenced for the purposes allocated.” There was no date stipulated for expenditure of any of the 2020/21 unspent grants.

3.0 Current Situation

The monies committed through the small grant programmes were initially all committed in a series of grant awards to community and voluntary organisations, however some of these organisations did not claim their grants in full or in several instances they later returned the funding offer as the needs in their communities or their capability to deliver the projects changed. In addition, some of the Food and Essential Supplies Transition Fund had not yet been committed.

As a result, there is an amount of £61,946 underspend/ uncommitted from 2020-21 Covid funding specifically related to access to food, which is broken down as follows:

Food & Essential Supplies	£10,744
Food Partnership Fund	£3,036
Food & Essential Supplies Transition Fund	£48,166

The purpose of these strands of funding from DfC was to improve access to food for those who were adversely affected by the pandemic as well as developing capacity and capability in the community food infrastructure.

There are 4 established foodbanks in the Borough, registered with The Trussell Trust (a nationwide network of food banks) and covering distinct geographic areas (based on the legacy Council areas of Coleraine, Limavady, Ballymoney and Moyle) which operate with an established referral process and assessment of need. Care professionals such as health visitors and social workers, advice organisations and churches can provide food bank vouchers to those in need of emergency food.

These foodbanks are members of the Anti-Poverty Stakeholder Steering Group and recent engagement indicates that they are experiencing increasing pressure as the cost of living continues to soar. One local foodbank reports a 30% increase in the numbers of people supported in February 2022 compared to February 2021. They report a particular need for hygiene essentials and baby products and also the need to provide fresh food such as fruit and vegetables to their foodbank users to try to ensure that nutritionally balanced food support is provided.

Many of the foodbanks have extended their reach over the past year and have developed outreach locations with local churches and community organisations.

In order to support the foodbanks to meet the increasing need, in line with the objectives of the DfC funding, and the Causeway Coast and Glens Anti-Poverty Action Plan, it proposed that the amount of £61,946 is split between the 4 foodbanks:

- i. LCDI (Roe Valley Foodbank and Social Supermarket)
- ii. Vineyard Compassion (Causeway Foodbank and Reset Social Supermarket)
- iii. Ballycastle Foodbank
- iv. Ballymoney Foodbank

With an amount of £15,486 awarded to each through a direct award contract as the sole registered providers operating with an established referral process in their respective geographical areas.

There is a further amount of uncommitted funding through the DfC Warm Well and Connected Fund and the 2nd and 3rd strand of the Covid Community Support Fund in the region of £24,000 and Council officers are currently liaising with DfC as to how this could be utilised in relation to addressing fuel poverty.

The budget for the Fuel Support Scheme which was approved by Council in January 2022 with 2021-22 DfC Covid funding has now been spent in full. 230 households were supported through the scheme which provided immediate fuel relief as well as wraparound advice, benefits checks, debt advice, budgeting support etc to support vulnerable households who have suffered financial hardship as a result of Covid.

Council officers will liaise with the Department and the Anti-Poverty Stakeholder Steering Group partners to develop proposals for a follow on fuel poverty support initiative which will be brought to the next Leisure & Development Committee meeting.

4.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that the Leisure & Development Committee recommend to Council that an amount of £15,486 each is awarded through a direct award contract to Ballycastle Foodbank, Ballymoney Foodbank, LCDI (Roe Valley Foodbank and Social Supermarket) and Vineyard Compassion (Causeway Foodbank and Reset Social Supermarket) to support the foodbanks in meeting the increasing need, in line with the objectives of the DfC funding, and the Anti-Poverty Action Plan.