

Title of Report:	DfC Social Supermarket Support Fund
Committee Report Submitted To:	Leisure and Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	20 May 2025
For Decision or For Information	For Decision
To be discussed In Committee	NO

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)	
Strategic Theme	Healthy, Active & 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

Estimated Timescale for Completion	
Date to be Completed	31 st March 2026

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	n/a 100% external funding
Included in Current Year Estimates	YES/NO
Capital/Revenue	
Code	
Staffing Costs	

Legal Considerations	
Input of Legal Services Required	NO
Legal Opinion Obtained	NO

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	<u>Yes</u> /No	Date:06/11/23
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/ <u>No</u>	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	<u>Yes</u> /No	Date: 10/11/23
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/ <u>No</u>	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes /No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/ <u>No</u>	Date:

1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to present the outcomes of the recent Expression of Interest (EOI) process undertaken to support the establishment and trial of social supermarkets within selected District Electoral Areas (DEAs).

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Council receives annual funding from the Department for Communities through the Social Supermarket Support Fund. The aim of this fund is to provide a sustainable and long-term response to food insecurity by addressing the underlying causes of poverty, rather than offering short-term crisis interventions.
- 2.2 Social supermarkets operate on a membership model, where eligible individuals—those facing financial hardship—pay a weekly subscription to access a reduced-cost food shop for a specified period (typically 3–6 months). In parallel, members are supported through wraparound services, including debt and budgeting advice, benefits guidance, healthy eating education, training, and employability support. Each member receives a tailored support plan developed following an initial needs assessment.

3.0 Expression of Interest Process

- 3.1 In November 2023, an initial EOI process was conducted to assess interest in delivering social supermarket services in areas of the Borough where provision was lacking—specifically, The Glens and Ballymoney DEAs.
- 3.2 Progress in The Glens DEA
Following a developmental support phase for organisations that expressed interest in The Glens DEA, the Council progressed to the delivery stage and reissued an invitation for EOIs to deliver the service in this area.
- 3.3 Renewed EOI in Ballymoney DEA
As the initial EOI process for Ballymoney DEA did not receive any submissions, the process was repeated to gauge current interest from organisations potentially prepared to trial a social supermarket.

4.0 Outcome of the Expression of Interest Process

- 4.1 EOI Process and Communication Channels
The renewed EOI process was conducted in April and promoted through various communication channels to ensure broad community engagement. These included publication on the Council's website, use of corporate communication platforms, and direct outreach via the Community & Voluntary Organisations Register.
- 4.2 Submissions Received – The Glens DEA
Two EOIs were received for delivering social supermarkets in The Glens DEA:
 - **The Glens Social Supermarket Ltd**, based in Cushendall
 - **Ballycastle Community Group CIC**, based in Ballycastle
- 4.3 Both proposals target distinct geographical areas within The Glens DEA, offering complementary coverage across the area. Each organisation satisfies governance requirements and has demonstrated experience in delivering community-based food services. Both have previously piloted social supermarket models, showing strong operational understanding and capacity, including logistical management and delivery of holistic member support. Each also identified potential delivery partners for wraparound services.

4.4 Based on the approved funding model and assuming a comparable allocation from the Department for Communities for 2025–26, the proposed funding allocation for The Glens DEA is **£22,000**. It is recommended that this funding be distributed equally between the two organisations, with each receiving **£11,000**, contingent upon final funding confirmation from the Department.

4.5 Submission Received – Ballymoney DEA

One EOI was received for trialling a social supermarket in the Ballymoney DEA:

- **The Salvation Army Ballymoney and Causeway Coast Church and Community Centre**

The organisation meets governance criteria and brings relevant experience in delivering community support services such as befriending, emergency fuel assistance, and holiday-based support programmes.

4.6 Council officers will provide developmental support using Department for Communities funding. This assistance will guide the organisation through all necessary stages of establishing a social supermarket, including policy development, logistics, governance structures, needs assessments, and the creation of individualised support plans. Support will also be drawn from experienced social supermarket providers.

Following the completion of this preparatory work, the Council will issue a further EOI call for the delivery phase in Ballymoney DEA.

5.0 Recommendations

Council approval is sought for the following actions:

- a) **Award contracts** for the delivery of social supermarkets in The Glens DEA to the following organisations, each to receive up to **£11,000**, subject to confirmation of funding from the Department for Communities:
 - Ballycastle Community Group CIC
 - Glens Social Supermarket Ltd
- b) **Collaborate with The Salvation Army Ballymoney and Causeway Coast Church and Community Centre** to support the development and trial of a social supermarket in Ballymoney DEA.