



Title of Report:	DfC Integrated Advice Partnership Fund (Debt Advice)
Committee Report Submitted To:	Leisure & Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	19 May 2026
For Decision or For Information	For Decision
To be discussed In Committee	No

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)	
Strategic Theme	P2 Empowering and supporting our people
Outcome	Strengthened and supported community and voluntary sector to ensure citizens have access to services and support they need
Lead Officer	Head of Community & Culture; Community Development Manager

Estimated Timescale for Completion	
Date to be Completed	

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	£67,091.86 (100% external funding)
Included in Current Year Estimates	YES
Capital/Revenue	Revenue
Code	1053
Staffing Costs	Within business plan

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 seek Council approval to extend the contract for the Integrated Advice Partnership Fund (Debt Advice) project, funded by the Department for Communities (DfC), for a period of one year up to 31st March 2027.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Department for Communities made available one-off funding to Councils through an Integrated Advice Fund (Debt Advice) from the HM Treasury Debt Levy to be delivered in 2025-26. The objective of the Fund was to improve the uptake of free, independent regulated debt advice through a collaborative partnership approach.
- 2.2 At its meeting on 19th November 2024 the Leisure & Development Committee recommended that Council approve the proposal put forward for spend of the funding and that Council proceed to commission the project. Council ratified this recommendation at its meeting on 3rd December 2024.
- 2.3 At its meeting on 18th February 2025 the Committee recommended that Council approve the award of the contract for the project to Community Advice Causeway for a period 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026.
- 2.4 Following a positive interim review of the Integrated Advice Partnership Fund, the Minister has announced his agreement to extend the fund into 2026/27. Council have been allocated £34,481.58 for this financial year. An Account Directive also allows unspent funds to be carried forward into 2026/27, in this case £32,610.28. The total available is therefore 67,091.86 in 2026/27.

3.0 Project details

3.1 Project delivery

The project was delivered through three core elements:

➤ **Referral Partnership Development**

- A dedicated outreach role strengthened engagement with key stakeholders, resulting in the establishment of formal referral pathways across community, voluntary, faith-based and Health & Social Care sectors.

➤ **Enhanced Advice Provision**

- Additional staffing capacity (25 hours per week) enabled the delivery of accessible, face-to-face generalist advice within community settings, including social supermarkets and HSC venues. This supported early intervention and appropriate referral to specialist debt services.

➤ **Service Infrastructure**

- Targeted investment in systems, software and promotion improved service accessibility and operational efficiency.

3.2 Key Outcomes

The project has:

- Increased awareness and uptake of debt advice services.
- Strengthened both new and existing referral partnerships.
- Improved confidence among partner staff in identifying and referring debt-related need.
- Enabled more effective delivery of holistic, wrap-around support

Engagement with social supermarkets proved particularly effective, embedding financial advice as part of longer-term support pathways.

3.3 Performance

- 165 new clients accessed specialist debt advice.
- 29 clients supported via new partnerships.
- 17 additional clients supported through expanded capacity within existing partnerships.
- £108,046 secured in financial gain (income maximisation and debt reduction).
- 24 partner staff trained.

3.4 Client Impact

All clients (100%) reported:

- Improved financial management and budgeting skills.
- Increased confidence and control over finances.
- Improved financial position, including increased disposable income.
- Positive impacts on mental health and wellbeing.
- Financial gains through benefit uptake and entitlements.

4.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that Council considers continuing the contract for the Integrated Advice Partnership Fund (Debt Advice) Project, to Community Advice Causeway to the value of £67,091.86, exclusive of VAT for delivery up to 31st March 2027

