Glasgow City Council

Wellbeing, Equalities, Communities, Culture and Engagement City Policy Committee

Report by Kevin Rush, Director of Regional Economic Growth

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Glasgow Communities Fund (2026-2029)

Purpose of Report:

To provide information on the Glasgow Communities Fund (2026-2029) framework and set out progress to date on the assessment process.

Recommendations:

Committee is asked to note:

- The Glasgow Communities Fund (2026-2029) framework and progress to date on the implementation of the assessment process.

Ward No(s):   Citywide: ✓

Local member(s) advised: Yes ☐ No ☐   consulted: Yes ☐ No ☐

1.   Introduction

1.1   The Glasgow Communities Fund (GCF) was introduced by the Council in October 2020. The Fund provides a 3-year programme of grant funding support to third sector organisations to deliver on the aims of the Fund, being:

- Building the skills, capacity and resilience of individuals and communities

- Supporting activities and services that enable and empower communities to become involved in the social, economic, and cultural life of the city

- Removing or minimising disadvantages experienced by people with protected characteristics

1.2   The current phase of the Fund (commonly referred to as "GCF2") is in the final year of the 3-year programme. It provides almost £16m annually in grant funding to 217 third sector organisations, supporting the delivery of a diverse programme of service provision at a city-wide and local level.

1.3   GCF2 also provides over £2.1m grant support annually to support Financial Inclusion and Legal Support activity delivered by the Glasgow Advice and Information Network (GAIN) members. At this time, it is assumed that support for the Financial Inclusion and Legal Support activity currently delivered through the GAIN network will remain a separate strategic funding programme, to be managed separately from the GCF core.

1.4   This report sets out the progress to date on the implementation of the next phase of the Fund for 2026-2029, herein referred to as "GCF3".

Background

1.5   The value and impact of the Glasgow Communities Fund was celebrated on 25 September 2024 when the Council welcomed over 250 guests to the City Chambers to celebrate the work delivered across the city by projects funded by GCF2 and Glasgow's Holiday Programme. Key note speeches were made by Susanne Millar, Chief Executive of Glasgow City Council and Councillor Anne McTaggart, City Convener of Communities and Equalities.

1.5.1   The event was designed to encourage synergies and collaboration across beneficiary organisations in their field of operations and across silos. A video of highlights from the GCF2 programme and of projects describing the benefits of the GCF2 in their own words can be viewed here. A photo reel featuring a selection of images from funded projects shows the diverse range of projects currently supported.

1.5.2   The Grants and Monitoring team continues to work through the feedback and comments gathered as part of the event and will use this to shape future interactions with GCF stakeholders.

1.6   On 5 December 2024, the Council's City Administration Committee (CAC) approved the approach to implementation of GCF3. This involved development of an assessment framework in collaboration with Council Family strategic lead officers to deliver on the 4 missions underpinning 'grand challenge one' of the Council's Strategic Plan, as set out below:-

Grand Challenge One: Reduce poverty and inequality in our communities	
Mission 1.1	End child poverty in our city using early intervention to support families
Mission 1.2	Meet the learning and care needs of children and their families before and through school
Mission 1.3	Improve the health and wellbeing of our local communities
Mission 1.4	Support Glasgow to be a city that is active and culturally vibrant

2.   The GCF3 Framework

2.1   The GCF3 framework has been developed by the Grants and Monitoring team (herein referred to as the 'grants team') following a review of the GCF2 process and engagement with stakeholders, including third sector organisations, council family strategic lead officers and Elected Members. The outcome of the engagement with third sector organisations was previously reported to Committee on 30 May 2024.

2.2   Two key insights from the stakeholder engagement process identified (a) strong support for the involvement of council family strategic lead officers in the GCF3 assessment process and (b) the need for GCF3 to demonstrate clear alignment with the Council's Strategic Plan.

2.3   Working collaboratively with strategic lead officers from across the council family, five GCF3 themes were developed to exclusively support the missions of Grand Challenge One, and to align with wider council family strategic priorities, they are:-

- **Supporting Children, Young People and Families**
- **Promoting Culture and Creativity**
- **Developing Community Infrastructure**
- **Improving Health and Wellbeing**
- **Challenging Violence Against Women and Girls**

Each of the five themes is accompanied by **explanatory** detail on the theme, covering the theme aims, focus and expectations; **examples of activities** that would align with the theme; and theme specific **outcomes**.

2.4   Information on GCF3 together with detailed information on the themes can be found on the GCF webpage here.

The application process

2.5   The GCF3 application process was open from 13 February until 12 midday on the 7 April 2025. It was promoted widely through various council family, third sector partner and social media channels. Applicants were able to access a link to the "application pack" which included:-

-   Fund Overview
-   Link to the on-line application form
-   Microsoft Excel Budget Template
-   Step-by-Step Guide to the application form
-   Microsoft Word version of Application form (intended to help applicants prepare their application prior to submission on-line)
-   Mock example of a completed application form
-   Mock example of a completed budget template

2.6   A package of support was made available to applicants, as outlined below:-

-   **On-line Information Sessions -** provided in partnership with Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector (GCVS) to support organisations interested in applying to the GCF. Over **450 people** joined the sessions held on 19, 21, 24, 25 and 26 February;

-   Live **Frequently Asked Questions** (FAQs) – published on the GCF webpage and updated after each of the 5 information sessions above;

-   **GCVS** provided direct support to applicants, delivering "Making Better Applications" workshops. GCVS also provided the opportunity of pre-submission 'application reviews', involving 1- to-1 surgeries aimed primarily at lower capacity organisations and/or new applicants to GCF; and

-   **Assistance from the grants team** was available throughout the application window to help with application and technical related queries.

2.7   The GCF3 application form was devised around the assessment criteria approved by the CAC, including:
-   Evidence of directly delivering on the missions supporting Grand Challenge One
-   Evidence of project need and impact in terms of SIMD/ward/local data and demographics (including 'poverty programme' booster wards)
-   Equality impacts
-   Capacity of applicants
-   Governance and Finance
-   Partnership working and local connectedness
-   Local accountability
-   Impact
-   Sustainability

2.8   Prior to going live with the application process, the grants team consulted with GCVS's Third Sector Human Rights and Equalities (THRE) team on the application form and corresponding guidance documents. The THRE team reviewed the documentation, provided feedback and suggested changes, all of which were incorporated. The THRE team also developed and delivered GCF bespoke training for the grants team in March 2025, aimed at raising awareness of human rights and equalities and why they matter.

Applying to GCF

2.9   Applicants were invited to apply on-line and to upload supporting documents as part of their application, as below:-

- Copy of the current Governing document
- A copy of the most recent approved annual accounts or income and expenditure statement
- A copy of the last Managing Board/Committee minute
- A copy of the latest bank statement
- A completed budget template (provided as part of the application pack)

2.10   Applicants were required to select **one 'Primary Theme'** which aligned closest to their proposed project and to then select corresponding theme outcomes. Organisations had the **option to select a 'Secondary Theme'** and related outcomes.

2.11   The applications were logged and validated by the grants team. As part of the validation process, 5 applications were deemed ineligible for consideration. Where applicants had submitted incorrect or incomplete supporting documentation, they were contacted and given 3 working days to resolve any anomalies, flexibility was applied on a case-by-case basis.

2.12   ***465** eligible applications with a total value of **£150,254,914** were received against the Primary Funding themes as set out below:-

GCF3 Themes	Applications received
Supporting Children, Young People and Families	**139**
Promoting Culture and Creativity	**71**
Developing Community Infrastructure	**120**
Improving Health and Wellbeing	**123**
Challenging Violence Against Women and Girls	**12**
Total	***465**

*one application was subsequently withdrawn due to liquidation of the applicant organisation

3. The GCF3 assessment framework

3.1 The 3 key participants in the development and implementation of the assessment framework, together with their corresponding roles are set out in paragraphs 3.1.1 – 3.1.6 below:-

3.1.1 **An Oversight Group (OG)** was established during March-April 2025 to lead the development of the GCF3 assessment process. The OG has met monthly from May to September 2025. Composition of the OG involves senior officers from across the council family, as detailed in the table below:-

Service	Team / Responsibility
Glasgow Life	Communities – including CLD, Youth and Facilities
	Sport, Physical Activity and Wellbeing
	Arts and Culture
HSCP	Children and Families Services
	Health Improvement and Equalities
	Older People
	Homelessness
GCC – Chief Execs	CED – Financial Inclusion and Transformation
	CED – Grants Team
	CED – Communities Team
	CED – Economic Development
	CED – Digital Services
GCC - Education	Education Services - Early Years
GCC - NRS	Glasgow Violence Against Women and Girls Partnership

3.1.2 The role of the **OG** is to:-

- lead on strategic planning, design and delivery of a framework that will provide an agreed programme of funding recommendations to the CAC;
- oversee resource commitment and officer engagement within respective service areas;

- consider how local/community impact can be effectively included in the framework;
- to agree a mechanism which supports the most effective consideration of: -
  - the outcome of the assessments against available budget;
  - all options for maximising impact across the city; and
  - potential funding methodology/formulae to support funding recommendations that will achieve maximum impact city-wide

3.1.3 **The grants team** within the Chief Executive's Economic Development Division, is responsible for delivery of the GCF. The role of the team is to –

- support the OG and council family colleagues on all aspects of the GCF, including provision of guidance material, management information and analysis, support data sharing and to facilitate and support the funding recommendation process;
- brief, advise and support council family colleagues throughout the process;
- log, verify and validate applications;
- provide an initial assessment and score of the application;
- conduct Peer Review of applications; and
- provide training for identified assessors, including the facilitation of training on Human Rights and Equalities from GCVS's THRE team.

3.1.4 Officers within the grants team have been identified as interim 'theme leads' to support communication and collaboration with council family officers throughout the assessment process. The role of the 'theme lead' in the GCF3 programme will be developed in collaboration with the OG.

3.1.5 The OG members identified **council family strategic lead officers** from their respective services to participate in the assessment process. Officers were identified as part of the process set out in paragraph 3.2 below. The role of council family strategic lead officers is to –

- review the summary application data template and determine if they identify as 'assessors' or as 'having an interest' in relevant applications;
- attend training/briefing sessions on GCF;
- review the initial assessment of applications, either individually or in conjunction with council family colleagues;
- complete or participate in the completion of one assessment template for each application reviewed and indicate a priority ranking; and
- participate in further discussion, where appropriate/requested by the OG

**Steps in the assessment process**

3.2 A GCF Assessment Framework document was approved by the OG. It

provides comprehensive guidance to participants in the assessment process steps, as set out in paragraphs 3.3 to 3.6 below.

3.3 **Step 1** – summary information on applicant data ("GCF Template for use by Council Family Officers") was shared with council family strategic lead officers to determine whether they would like to be 'involved in the assessment' of an application or if they 'have an interest' in the assessment outcome.

Strategic Lead officers review summary applicant data	Identify as "assessors" OR	as "having an interest" in the assessment outcome

- Completed "GCF Templates" were returned to the grants team, in most cases, by the **30 May 2025** deadline.

- The grants team then collated individual returns into one document and moved this on to SharePoint, a secure data sharing platform, which can be accessed by all participants in the process.

- Where applications hadn't been identified by strategic lead officers, the grants team looked at the activities being delivered by the applicant and linked in with relevant OG members for signposting advice.

- Where more than one strategic lead officer had identified as an "assessor" the OG agreed that the grants team consider the activities being delivered by the applicant and identify the most appropriate assessor. Remaining 'assessors' were re-identified as 'having an interest' in the outcome of the assessment.

3.4 **Step 2 –** the initial assessment of applications was undertaken by the grants team with assistance enlisted from other staff members within the Economic Development Division, in order to meet the assessment timescales. Comprehensive training on the completion of assessment templates was provided to all assessors in advance of the assessment process.

| Grants / Economic Development officers | Assess and score applications | Complete an assessment template |
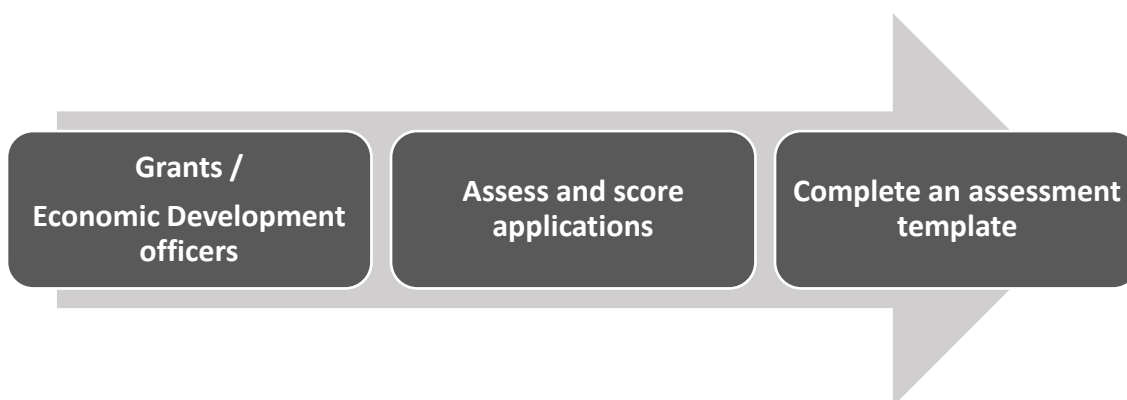
- Applications and supporting documents were assessed during the period 14 April to 13 June 2025
- The outcome of the assessment was captured on an "Assessment Template" (ref. paragraph 3.4.1 below)
- Peer reviews of assessed applications were undertaken by the grants team

3.4.1 Some developments were introduced to the assessment template, including:-

SIMD score	A formula was applied to ward beneficiary data provided by applicants, resulting in an auto generated score by calculating the average SIMD score for each Ward and ranking them 1 to 5. For example, Wards with most deprivation will be given a score of 5 (e.g. Southside Central) down to 1 (e.g. Hillhead)
Child poverty booster ward score	Similar to the SIMD above, a formula and auto generated score was developed for the 10 identified child poverty booster wards.
Organisation Capacity Indicator	Indication of the applicant's capacity was achieved by considering factors such as geographical reach, resource constraints, minimal or no staffing and reliance on volunteers and annual turnover.
Equalities Indicator	Drawn from a question in the application form where the applicant was asked to identify if at least 75% of anticipated beneficiaries share protected characteristics. This data will be considered alongside data on the specific characteristics provided by applicants.
Sub scoring criteria	Sub scores were introduced to the assessment criteria detailed in paragraph 3.4.2 which aligned directly with relevant questions in the application form.

3.4.2 The tables below set out the assessment criteria and associated weightings and scoring guide, both of which are embedded within the assessment template:-

Assessment criteria – a weighted score is automatically populated in the template for each criterion, providing an overall score for each application. There is also a comments column against each criterion for assessing officers to give reasons for their score and to highlight any strengths or reservations.

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Criterion	Weighting %
Organisation Governance	10
Project Finance	10
Project Delivery	25
Project Impact	25
Project Outcomes	25
Sustainability	5

**Scoring guide** - scores ranging from 0-5 were allocated to each sub criterion:-

Score	Score Key Assessment	Interpretation
5	Excellent	Satisfies and demonstrates exceptional understanding of criteria required. Response identifies factors that will offer potential added value
4	Good	Satisfies the requirement with some additional benefits
3	Acceptable	Satisfies the requirement with no reservations
2	Minor reservations	Satisfies the requirement with minor reservations and limited evidence to support the response
1	Serious reservations	Some attempt has been made to provide information but lacks detail
0	Unacceptable	Does not meet the requirement, insufficient information provided

3.4.3 Data quality checks on the application data and on the initial assessments were undertaken by the grants team with the outcome and actions logged.

3.4.4 A total of 100 initial assessments were peer reviewed by nominated officers in the grants team. In some cases, assessments had been flagged for a peer review by the assessing officer, seeking a second opinion on their assessment. In other cases, peer reviews were identified as part of the data quality checking process. Each assessing officer had at least one of their assessments peer reviewed. Circumstances of peer reviews are summarised below:-

- Peer review requested by the assessor
- A high assessment score but not recommended for funding
- A low assessment score but recommended for funding
- Where costs were deemed ineligible by the assessor

3.5 **Step 3 –** a SharePoint workspace was created to support the process and mechanism for managing, tracking and sharing the outcome of the assessment steps. The workspace could be accessed by multiple users across the council family simultaneously, providing live data on the journey and outcome of applications referred to council family strategic leads for review.

| Data managed on SharePoint | Officers given access | Officers update on each step of the process |
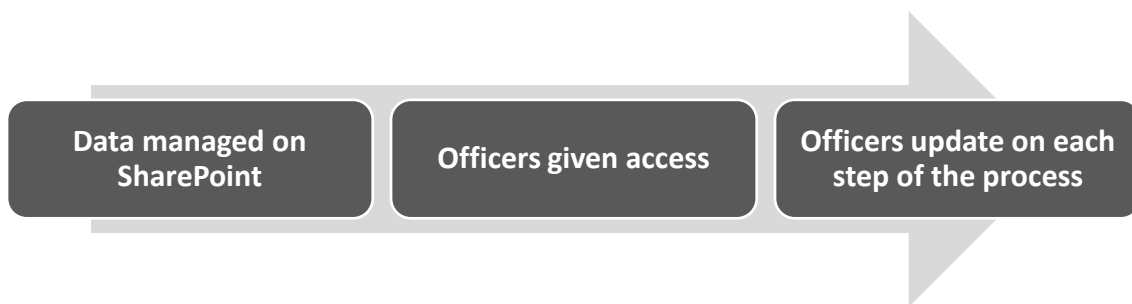
3.5.1 The SharePoint workspace contained key GCF documents for use by officers to aid their review, including a live "GCF tracker" where the assessment progress could be recorded. Access to the workspace was restricted to each service area, accessible only by officers involved in the GCF3 assessment process.

3.6 **Step 4 –** following the completion of the initial application assessment by the grants team, relevant documents were uploaded to the designated SharePoint workspace of the appropriate council family officer, being:-
  ▪ The Application Form and completed Budget Template
  ▪ The Assessment Template completed by the grants team

| Strategic lead officers | Review the initial assesment and score by the grants team | Complete Tab 4 of the Assessment Template |

3.6.1 The assessment template has four tabs where assessment outcome data is recorded, as follows:-

Tab 1 – outcome of the initial assessment by the grants team
Tab 2 – contains ward data – for information only
Tab 3 - outcome of a peer review on the application, where applicable

Comprehensive training on the GCF3 framework was provided to all council family officers in advance of their participation in the assessment process.

3.6.2 Tab 4 of the assessment template was auto populated with the outcome of the initial assessment by the grants team, together with the outcome of any peer review undertaken. Tab 4 was then completed by the council family officer following review of the application form and budget template as set out in the table below –

Steps	Outcome
Review the Scoring Template / application / budget doc	Review the application, considering whether the score and recommendation appear to be fully reflective of the application.
Provide summary comments on the scoring template	Review the criteria/questions indicating whether you agree or disagree with the assessment, providing comments to support the overall conclusion.
Consider the recommendation	Drawing on expertise and knowledge of the themed activity being proposed and the application overall, consider if there is anything to add to the recommendation.
Identify level of priority	Drawing on expertise and knowledge of the proposed activity, consider and comment on the extent to which the project aligns to strategic priorities and indicate the considered level of priority, following the ranking guide provided (see 3.6.3 below).

3.6.3 The ranking guide used for the GCF2 process was refreshed for ease of reference as follows:-

Ranking Category (1 - 5)	Category Definition
1	**Strong Strategic Fit** ▪ Proposed service comprehensively meets demand (current, new or emerging) ▪ Fills a gap or gaps in service provision ▪ Significant benefit to the community ▪ Could introduce or enhance services ▪ High risk of service loss or reduction if not funded by GCF ▪ Disadvantage to service users (current / new / emerging) if not funded ▪ Detrimental to the community if not funded ▪ Project is a key service provider and/or key partner in the delivery of services to the community.
2	**Good Strategic Fit** ▪ Some elements of the proposed service meet demand (current, new or emerging). ▪ Fills a gap in service provision. ▪ Considerable benefit to the community.

		▪ Some impact to the community if not funded by GCF. ▪ Likely risk of service loss or reduction if not funded by GCF. ▪ Disadvantage to service users (current / new / emerging) if not funded. ▪ Project is a valued service provider and/or valued partner in the delivery of services to the community. ▪ Detrimental to the community if not funded.
	3	**Reasonable Strategic Fit** ▪ Provides a benefit to some sections of the community. ▪ Meets some demand (current, new or emerging). ▪ Fills gaps in service provision. ▪ Possible risk of service loss or reduction if not funded by GCF. ▪ Disadvantage to service users (current / new / emerging) if not funded. ▪ Project is a known service provider and/or partner in the delivery of services to the community. ▪ Detrimental to the community if not funded.
	4	**Some degree of Strategic Fit** ▪ Limited benefit to the community. ▪ May duplicate other services. ▪ Possible impact on service users (current, new or emerging) if not funded by GCF. ▪ Detrimental to the community on some level if not funded.
	5	**Minimal or no Strategic Fit** ▪ Does not meet demand for service provision (current, new or emerging). ▪ Unlikely to have a detrimental impact on the community if not funded by GCF other than potential loss of opportunity to introduce new and/or enhance current service provision if not funded.

3.7   Allocation of the **464** assessments across the council family is detailed below:-

Council family service	No. of Applications
HSCP (HI)	84
HSCP (SWS)	61
GL Communities	154

GL Arts	78
GL Sports	30
Education Services	18
NRS – VAW	17
Economic Development	22

4. Next steps

Engagement with the Communities Team

4.1 Summary information on the applications received at a sector level will be considered at planned sessions on 16 and 23 September with officers from the Chief Executive's Communities Team and from Glasgow Life. The aim of the sessions will be to capture officers' views on the applications as a critical sounding board in terms of local knowledge and available ward data. The outcome of this engagement exercise will be considered as part of data and impact analysis set out in paragraph 4 below.

Engagement with officers who have 'noted an interest'

4.2 Subject to discussion with the OG, it is anticipated that summary information on the applications will be provided to officers who have been identified as 'having an interest' in the outcome of the assessment process. Similar to engagement with the Communities Team above, the aim of this exercise will be to capture any relevant additional information that should be considered as part of the data and impact analysis set out in paragraph 4.3 below.

Data and impact analysis

4.3 GCF3 dashboards are being developed by the Digital Services Team. These dashboards will be used by the OG, alongside data analysis provided by the grants team, to consider the outcome of assessments in terms of impact, including but not limited to:

- Geographical impact
- Theme impact
- Poverty impact
- Equalities impact

4.4 The OG will analyse the data during September and October and consider and agree the most effective mechanism to -
- consider the outcome of the assessments against available budget
- consider all options for maximising impact across the city

- consider and explore funding methodology/formulae to support funding recommendations that will achieve maximum impact city-wide

5. Funding recommendations

5.1 Subject to further consideration by the OG, it is anticipated that a recommendation process will be devised in line with a 'balanced scorecard' approach, taking account of multiple factors from the assessment process, such as:-
- Assessment score and recommendation
- Data and impact analysis – beneficiaries, SIMD data and demographics (including 'poverty programme' booster wards) and equalities indicators
- Minimum score thresholds (possibly tiered to take account of applicants identified as 'low capacity' organisations)
- Engagement with the Communities Team
- Engagement with officers who have noted an interest in the assessment outcome

5.2 Funding recommendations will be presented for consideration by the City Administration Committee on 20 November 2025.

6. Policy and Resource Implications

Resource Implications:

Financial:	Outcomes will be maximised through targeted use of resources and joint working and resourcing with partners
Legal:	No new legal issue
Personnel:	No direct personnel issues
Procurement:	There are no procurement implications
Council Strategic Plan:	This proposed programme of activity funded by the Glasgow Communities Fund supports the Council's Strategic Plan, specifically:- **Grand Challenge 1: Mission 1** – end child poverty in our city using early intervention to support families; **Mission 2** - meet the learning and care needs of children and their families before and through school; **Mission 3** – improve the health and wellbeing of our local communities; and **Mission 4** – support Glasgow to be a city that is active and culturally vibrant.

Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2021-25? Please specify.	Yes, the proposal has the potential to impact on the council Equality Outcomes in relation to the following improvement aims: Improve economic outcomes for people with Protected Characteristics; and Improve access to council Family services by people with protected characteristics.
What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?	No impacts identified at this stage.
Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage.	It is anticipated that future funding recommendations will have a positive impact on third sector jobs, skills, local communities, social and community cohesion

Climate Impacts:

Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify:	It is anticipated that future funding will contribute to the continuing regeneration of Glasgow with many of the supported projects also led by local communities and community organisations
What are the potential climate impacts as a result of this proposal?	It is anticipated that future funding recommendations will have a positive impact on third sector jobs, skills, local communities, social and community cohesion
Will the proposal contribute to Glasgow's net zero carbon target?	No contribution to Glasgow's net zero carbon target at this time

Privacy and Data Protection Impacts:	No privacy or data protection impacts identified.

7.   Recommendations

Committee is asked to note:

7.1   The Glasgow Communities Fund (2026-2029) framework and progress to date on the implementation of the assessment process.