



06 November 2025

Committee Chair: Councillor B Mallon

Committee Vice-Chair: Alderman M Cosgrove

Committee Members: Councillors – M Cooper, N Kelly, E McLaughlin,
M Ní Chonghaile, M Stewart and B Webb

Dear Member

MEETING OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Economic Development Committee will be held in the **Chamber, Mossley Mill** on **Tuesday 11 November 2025** at **6.30 pm**.

You are requested to attend.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Baker".

Richard Baker GM MSc
Chief Executive, Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council

PLEASE NOTE: Refreshments will be available in the Café from 5.20

For any queries please contact Member Services:

Tel: 028 9448 1301

memberservices@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk

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**REPORT ON BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING ON
TUESDAY 11 NOVEMBER 2025**

3 ITEMS FOR DECISION

3.1 ED/ED/311 PEACEPLUS PROGRAMME

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update Members regarding the elements of the PEACEPLUS Action Plan that are due to be delivered by Economic Development over the next number of years and the steps in the process regarding the delivery of these interventions.

2. Introduction/Background

The PEACEPLUS programme is a €1.14bn investment in the social, economic and environmental development of Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland.

It comprises six themes and 21 individual investment areas. The Council has secured over £4m to deliver schemes and projects in the Borough over the next few years and this implementation is being managed by the Community Development Department within the Council.

Within the Local Community Action Plan (**enclosed**) Programme 6, 'Our Future Borough' is to be delivered by the Economic Development Section.

This programme has two main objectives:

- Firstly, to build the confidence and resilience of local people through personal education and learning, enabling them to grow in areas concerning their personal development and individual success.
- The second objective is to provide a community education and learning programme designed to support those deemed the hardest to reach, and/or who are economically inactive to enter the workplace through apprenticeships and other career path opportunities.

The outputs of this programme are anticipated to be as follows:

- Minimum of 350 (175 each objective) participants to take part in the programme.
- Deliver a programme that provides a minimum of 24 hours of meaningful contact on a cross-community basis.
- Creation and delivery of a personal development programme to support local people support themselves and their families.
- Creation and delivery of a community education and learning programme to enhance employment opportunities.

The budget for this element of the programme is €730,000 which includes a proportion of costs for administration, management and staffing. To enable the

Economic Development section to undertake this project additional temporary staff will be required. Further detail will be provided in due course.

3. Previous Decisions of Council

Members are reminded that a Letter of Offer was received from SEUPB offering €5,103,757 (approx. £4.4) towards delivery of the Antrim and Newtownabbey Co-designed PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan and reported to Council on 24 February 2025.

In May 2025, Members approved the signing of the SLA between the PEACEPLUS Partnership and Economic Development and the recruitment of temporary staff to support the implementation of to the programme.

4. Key Issues

On the 14th October Officers presented to the PEACEPLUS Partnership regarding the delivery of Programme 6 and some anticipated changes to the scope of the project to avoid duplication with other existing provision. This modification procedure has now been officially submitted to SEUPB for approval. It did not propose to alter the targets of the programme.

| Objective | Delivery | Proposed Actions |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>To build the confidence and resilience of local people through personal education and learning, enabling them to grow in areas concerning their personal development and individual success.</p> | <p>The programme will offer a range of non-accredited and accredited options which will increase participants' skills and employability to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life and Social Skills • Digital Skills • Budgeting • Personal Leadership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills for Independence Programme - Personal Development Programme- Budgeting Skills, Personal Development- build self-confidence and emotional resilience. This programme may include volunteering / internship element. • Digital Skills Programme - Improved digital skills, identification of digital and entrepreneurial skills, social inclusion, employability and maintaining the pipeline of local skills within the borough. Pre and post skills impact assessment, App prototype quality and pitch feedback and stakeholder impact assessment. • Work Readiness Programme - Community Education & Learning Programme- series of activities/ workshops to aid entry/ re-entry into the |

| | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | workplace. Delivered in partnership with local industries. |
| To provide a community education and learning programme designed to support those not currently in the labour market to enter the workplace through training and a range of other career path opportunities. | The programme will seek to provide training, alternative career pathways and /or apprenticeships including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills and Employability Training and encompass retraining • Mentoring and support through the application and interview process • Alternative pathways to employment • Apprenticeship and internship programmes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Experience / Internship Programme – improved access to work experience and work internships for local people within the Borough. • Apprenticeship Portal – creation of a new portal to promote and support apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities in ANBC. • Roadway To Employment Programme- series of activities/ workshops/ qualifications to aid entry/ re-entry into the workplace through the removal and focus on barriers to employment. • Entrepreneurship Support – Co-investing in local entrepreneurs with seed equity funding. |

5. Financial Position/Implication

The budget for this element of the programme is €730,000 which includes a proportion of costs for administration, management and staffing. There is no additional financial contribution required from the Council at this time.

6. Governance

The 'Our Future' programme elements will be managed by the Economic Development Team via an SLA with the PEACEPLUS Partnership and regular reports will be brought to the Economic Development Committee.

7. Recommendation

It is recommended that the action plan for PEACEPLUS Programme 6 'Our Future Borough' be approved.

Prepared and Agreed by: Michael McKenna, Deputy Director of Investment and Business Development and Steven Norris, Deputy Director of Regeneration and Infrastructure

Approved by: Majella McAllister, Director of Economic Development and Planning

3.2 ED/ED/315 RURAL INVESTMENT AND GROWTH FUND

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the development of a new Pilot Rural Investment & Growth Fund to support micro and SME businesses in rural locations within the Borough

2. Introduction/Background

Following the cessation of the European funded Rural Development Programme (RDP) in 2020, Rural organisations have faced a significant funding gap. Local Action Group, GROW South Antrim previously delivered £2.48m in support for rural development, 60% of which focused upon co-funding rural business investment.

While the Department for Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has continued to administer the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) programme, this focuses more on sustainability than growth and, for 2025/26, is capped at relatively low grant level of £7,500 at a 50% intervention rate, with 135,000 expected to be allocated to 30 local businesses this year.

In contrast, the European funded RDP provided up to £50,000 in capital grants at a 50% intervention rate. In this Council area this was used to support 39 businesses, creating 53 full-time and 13 part-time jobs over a 5-year programming period that ended in 2020.

Officers have sought guidance from key stakeholders including DAERA and SOLACE regarding the development of any future rural development programmes funded by the Department.

There are currently ongoing discussions around the development of a dedicated rural fund, however, to date there is no proposal, business case or budget allocation and as a result any future programme is not envisaged to be live in the forthcoming years.

The absence of a targeted rural development programme has resulted in a gap in funding provision in rural areas across the Borough. There is now a strong rationale for introducing a new capital-focused programme that encourages investment and growth in rural businesses.

To address this gap in support for local businesses it is proposed to develop a pilot Rural Investment and Growth Fund locally. Should a fund similar to that proposed be instigated by Central Government during this pilot period, officers will adapt as required.

3. Previous Decision of Council

No previous decision.

4. Programme Overview

The proposed Rural Investment & Growth Fund aims to provide substantial capital support to micro and SME businesses operating in rural areas across the Borough.

The Programme will aim to:

- Deliver funding to a minimum of 5 rural businesses
- Create a minimum of 10 new FTE jobs
- Generate £1m of private funding
- Stimulate rural economic growth

Eligible projects for funding will focus primarily on capital purchases and capital works that contribute directly to business growth.

Due to the potential high value and complexity of projects with the possible requirements for statutory approvals, it is recommended that the pilot programme is delivered over an initial two-year period.

The programme, once finalised, is expected to provide substantial capital support to micro and SME businesses in rural areas. It is envisaged that grants will be in the region of £20,000 to £100,000 at a 50% grant rate, ensuring a minimum project value of £40,000 emphasising the fund's strategic intent to deliver meaningful and impactful investments while avoiding duplication with other business support programmes.

For the purposes of the fund, and in line with previous DAERA funded rural support schemes, rural Antrim and Newtownabbey is defined as all areas outside the statutory development limits of towns with a population less than 5,000. This means that the below settlements are not eligible for funding under the programme:

- Antrim
- Metropolitan Newtownabbey
- Ballyclare
- Crumlin
- Randalstown

Eligible project spend is proposed to include:

- Capital Builds
- Capital Purchases
- Capital Improvements
- Digital transformation Projects

Not eligible:

- Vehicles (cars / vans / farming vehicles)
- Business running costs (utilities, rates, rent, salaries etc.)
 - Business Services
- Marketing / media expenditure (websites, social media etc.)
- Training

The above list is not exhaustive, and each application will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

Officers propose that Members approve the development of the Rural Investment & Growth Fund. This development phase will establish the detailed design and governance framework necessary for a future launch of the programme. As part of this work, officers will:

- Develop draft programme guidance and eligibility criteria.
- Design application forms, guidance notes and supporting templates.
- Establish eligibility and assessment/approval processes.
- Identify monitoring and evaluation requirements.
- Engage with stakeholders, including rural businesses and representative bodies, to test the proposed approach.

5. Strategic Alignment

If approved, this fund aligns with Council's strategic priorities to:

- Support sustainable economic development
- Promote rural growth and resilience
- Encourage investment in micro and SME businesses
- Address rural disparities in access to funding and infrastructure

The fund also complements existing regional and national policies for rural development, while filling a critical funding gap not currently addressed by DAERA or any other funding body.

6. Financial Position

It is proposed that budget is included in the 2026/27 financial estimates, with further detail to be brought to Committee in due course.

7. Recommendation

It is recommended that members approve the development of a pilot Rural Investment & Growth Fund with an update report to be provided to the Committee in January.

Prepared by: Stewart McCormack, Investment Officer

Agreed by: Michael McKenna, Deputy Director of Investment and Business Development and Steven Norris, Deputy Director of Regeneration and Infrastructure

Approved by: Majella McAlister, Director of Economic Development and Planning

3.3 ED/ED/277 TOWN CENTRE SHOPFRONT PROGRAMME

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to:

- Provide Members with an overview of the DfC Urban Shop Frontage Scheme Phase 3 call;
- Update Members on the levels of claims paid out to local businesses to date; and,
- Seek approval for the latest grant awards (Tranche 7).

2. Introduction/Background

Members have been regularly updated with details of the shopfront improvement programme. This report covers Tranche 7, with an additional eleven applications presented for review and approval. Following a Project Board meeting on 23 October 2025, further grant awards of £43,700.60 are now brought before Committee for approval (Table 1, below).

| TABLE 1: Tranche 7 Awards | | | |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| Ref No | DEA | Name of Business | LoO Amount |
| B055 | Ballyclare | CIP Insurance Brokers | £ 4,999.00 |
| B060 | Ballyclare | DC Jewellers | £ 2,680.00 |
| B061 | Ballyclare | Reid Black Solicitors | £ 4,999.00 |
| | | (Ballyclare) Total: | £ 12,678.00 |
| R033 | Dunsilly | Laverty's Bar | £ 3,792.00 |
| R037 | Dunsilly | Istanbul Kebab House | £ 2,680.00 |
| R038 | Dunsilly | The Vintage Wine Merchants | £ 4,999.00 |
| | | (Randalstown) Total: | £ 11,471.00 |
| A030 | Antrim | DA Martin Solicitors | £ 2,189.60 |
| A031 | Antrim | Nanabelle's | £ 4,999.00 |
| A033 | Antrim | The Vintage Wine Merchants | £ 4,999.00 |
| | | (Antrim) Total: | £ 12,187.60 |
| G025 | Glengormley | Momentum Physiotherapy | £ 3,524.00 |
| | | (Glengormley) Total: | £ 3,524.00 |
| C011 | Airport | Café One | £ 3,840.00 |
| | | (Crumlin) Total: | £ 3,840.00 |
| | | Tranche 7 Total: | £ 43,700.60 |
| Total Grant Assistance (Tranche 1): | | | £ 47,096.94 |
| Total Grant Assistance (Tranche 2): | | | £ 99,003.16 |
| Total Grant Assistance (Tranche 3): | | | £ 153,937.62 |
| Total Grant Assistance (Tranche 4): | | | £ 58,544.25 |
| Total Grant Assistance (Tranche 5): | | | £ 14,299.00 |

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Total Grant Assistance (Tranche 6): | £ 20,168.40 |
| Total Grant Assistance (Tranche 7): | £ 43,700.60 |
| | |
| Rolling Programme Total, as at 23/10/2025: | £ 436,749.97 |

Following a process where Letters of Offer have been issued to approved applications to date, officers are now processing grant claims that have been received in respect of works undertaken.

The current Phase 3 call opened on Friday 20 June 2025 and closed on Friday 29 August 2025, with 27 applications submitted.

3. Previous Decision of Council

In September 2025, Council approved the previous update report which endorsed the sixth tranche of grant awards (to a value of £20,168.40) for 6 businesses.

4. Financial Position/Implication

Under this programme, officers have approved payment claims for 57 local businesses to date, amounting to £142,761.23 in grant award, with 10 claims still being verified. More claims are anticipated as works are completed.

5. Governance

The Economic Development team is managing the programme.

6. Summary

This report offers an update for Members in respect of the project to date, including the level of current grant claims paid out and the status of the final Phase 3 call.

7. Recommendation

It is recommended that Members note the update on the scheme and approve the grant awards to the Tranche 7 recipients totalling £43,700.60.

Prepared by: Alastair Law, Regeneration Officer

Agreed by: Steven Norris, Deputy Director of Regeneration and Infrastructure

Approved by: Majella McAlister, Director of Economic Development and Planning

3.4 ED/REG/083 OUT OF TOWN CENTRE SHOPFRONT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME GRANT AWARDS

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek Members approval to award five grants under the second Call of Phase 2 of the Out of Town Centre Shopfront Improvement Programme, subject to the receipt of all relevant documentation.

2. Introduction / Background

The aim of the Out of Town Centre Shopfront Improvement Programme is to visually enhance commercial areas outside town centres, improving the overall appearance of the street and changing the way residents and visitors view local retail areas. It is envisaged that this will ultimately attract more shoppers and boost local trade.

The programme covers minor works to include painting, signage, window dressing and other visual improvements. Major structural works are not covered under this scheme.

Eligible businesses/property owners can apply for a grant of up to £4,999, at a grant rate of 80%.

3. Applications Received

Members are advised that for the period 26 July – 26 September 2025, a total of five applications were received and assessed by a panel of officers, with £21,586.80 being recommended for approval, subject to the receipt of all relevant documentation, as **enclosed**.

4. Financial Position

The overall programme budget for Phase 2 is £139,743.55. An award of £2,640 was previously approved in September 2025, and should Members approve the five grant recommendations enclosed, the total spend to date would be £24,226.80, with a remaining programme balance of £115,516.75. A further call for applications opened on 27 September and will close on 28 November 2025.

5. Summary

This report makes five grant recommendations under the second Call of Phase 2 of the Out of Town Centre Shopfront Improvement Scheme, subject to the receipt of all relevant supporting documentation.

6. Recommendation

It is recommended that the five grant awards totalling £21,586.80 to the successful applicants under the second Call of Phase 2 of the programme be approved, subject to the receipt of all relevant supporting documentation.

Prepared by: Natasha Donald, Regeneration Officer

Agreed by: Steven Norris, Deputy Director of Regeneration and Infrastructure

Approved by: Majella McAlister, Director of Economic Development and Planning

3.5 ED/ED/305 BALMORAL SHOW 2026

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval regarding the Council's involvement in the 2026 Balmoral Show.

2. Introduction/Background

For the last number of years, the Council has purchased a stall at the Balmoral Show with the aim of providing a platform to promote local food, drink and hospitality businesses, as well as the tourism and hotel offering in the Borough.

The 2025 Show took place from Wednesday 14 – Saturday 17 May. As in previous years, the Council purchased a stand in the Food NI Pavilion to promote the Borough, and four local food/drink businesses benefited from free use of space on the stand.

The businesses showcasing at the Council stand included:

- Never Worry Coffee, Antrim DEA
- Get er Brewed, Dunsilly DEA
- Cocobros Chocolate, Three Mile Water DEA
- Tasty Grub Club, Ballyclare DEA

Each business availed of 2 days on the stand to showcase and sell their products, enabling them to promote themselves to the 120,000 attendees.

Exhibitors availed of pre- and post-event mentoring support through the Go Succeed programme which was specifically tailored to their exhibition at the show and how to maximise this opportunity. As well as this, officers provided support in the form of an online briefing session for participants, facilitating engagement with Council's Environmental Health team and event promotional opportunities. The Council's Tourism team also used the opportunity to promote the upcoming Garden Show Ireland 2025 by selling tickets and distributing promotional fliers.

In addition to the showcasing businesses, the Council stand was made available to local hotels including The Maldron, The Rabbit and McKeever Group who availed of the opportunity to promote themselves in conjunction with the Council's Tourism offer.

2025 Event Feedback

Public Feedback

Consumer feedback of the public's perception of the Council's Stand; 257 survey responses were received and indicated a very high level of satisfaction with the stand, as detailed below:

- 99% of responses were satisfied with their experience at the stand.
- 96% of responses indicated that they had been attracted to the stand by the mix and variety of the showcasing businesses, with 84% of respondents stating that they had engaged directly with the businesses.
- More than 1 in 3 visitors to the stand purchased something from at least one of the showcasing businesses.
- 86% of responses indicated that, in the last 12 months, they had visited Antrim Castle Gardens and Clotworthy House. Over the same period, 48% had visited Antrim Lough Shore and The Gateway, and 24% had visited the Coronation Garden.
- 99% considered the stand to be attractive and informative.
- 99% felt that staff were helpful and engaging in promoting the Borough.
- 80% had visited one of our five town centres in the past 12 months to shop or dine.

Business Feedback

The showcasing businesses were positive in terms of their experience, the support provided by the Council and the highly visible location of the stand, with the opportunity to showcase their businesses and products.

The benefits to the participating business are challenging to quantify, however over the last number of years businesses on the Council stand have reported:

- Increased sales and turnover
- New contract and supplier opportunities
- Increased brand awareness
- Uptake in social media following.

3. Previous Decision of Council

In November 2024, approval was granted for the Council's participation in the 2025 Balmoral Show but with a reduced presence at a cost of £17,000.

4. Key Issues for Consideration

Whilst much of the feedback on the Council's stand at the Balmoral Show is very positive, the net impact to the Borough is difficult to calculate and there is limited evidence of a return on investment.

In considering the Council's continued participation in the Balmoral show, several factors should be considered.

Costs – over the last three years £67,000 has been allocated to support participation in the Balmoral Show (£25,000 in 2022/2023, £25,000 in 2023/2024 and £17,000 in 2024/2025). The cost of participation is largely driven by the size of the

stand and by the Council having to use the preferred suppliers for the event. For the 2025 event the cost for rental of the pitch from Food NI was £7,055 and the cost to design, assemble and disassemble the stand, through Redhead Exhibitions, was £9,912, totalling £16,967.

Stand Capacity – In 2025, the Council utilised a 6x3m stand, which provided three separate 2m booths, limiting the offer to two booths for local business use and one central booth for the Council's presence and the Garden Show Ireland 2025 promotion. In total four local businesses showcased, this is a reduction from 8 – 10 in previous years.

Business Appetite – the food and drink sector in Antrim and Newtownabbey is relatively small and the number of artisan producers, which is the main requirement of FoodNI, is very limited. Once a business exceeds £500,000 in turnover or 10 staff, they are not allowed to showcase in the FoodNI Pavilion, this further limits the options. In addition, recruiting businesses to showcase on the stand has become increasingly difficult. Asking micro businesses to give up two days away from core business is a large commitment and to produce product to sell at the show, with no sales guaranteed can cost the business money in the longer term.

Staff resources – supporting the show also requires a significant staff resource from the Economic Development Team. The economic development team lead the recruitment process, the liaison with Food NI and the Balmoral organisers, the workshop and marketing of the businesses involved in our stand, invites, tickets and specialist business requirements e.g. fridge storage, sinks and cleaning areas. In addition, two members of staff must attend each day of the show Wednesday – Saturday.

Given this, there are several options for Members' to consider:

- **Option 1: Withdraw (do nothing)** - Under this option, the Council does not attend the 2026 Balmoral Show. There will be no cost associated with this option.
- **Option 2: Continue Participation with formal review-** the Council will attend the 2026 show with a 6x3m stand and showcase four local businesses. This option will cost £17,000 and is accounted for in the Economic Development budget. In addition, a further £10,000 should be allocated from the Economic Development budget to complete a formal review of the project, the impact on the businesses and the net impact for the Council area.
- **Option 3: Share Stand** - the Council would explore the potential of sharing a space at the 2026 show with another Council Area or stakeholder. This approach would reduce overall costs for both organisations. However, it would also limit the number of businesses that could showcase and the Council's presence on the stand would be reduced. If this option is preferred, officers will engage with neighbouring Council areas and other stakeholders to assess feasibility and report back with further information.

5. Recommendation

It is recommended that Members approve Option 3 however, should no partner be found in the coming weeks, that the Council reverts to Option 2 for 2026, with a review thereafter.

Prepared by: Hannah McVeigh, Regeneration Project Officer – Economic Development

Agreed and approved by: Steven Norris, Deputy Director – Economic Development

3.6 ED/ED/282 CCTV PROGRAMME GRANT AWARDS

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval for the issue of Letters of Offer to five further business applicants under Phase 2 of the CCTV Scheme, at a value of circa £8,115.

2. Introduction/Background

Members are reminded that, in August 2021, the Council approved a 'CCTV Grant Programme', providing town centre businesses with financial assistance to install external, public facing CCTV systems and associated equipment.

The programme focused on supporting local businesses, reducing anti-social behaviour and crime hot-spots, and improving the safety and well-being of the public within our town centres.

More than £49,000 in grant funding was awarded to help businesses install their required CCTV equipment under Phase 1 of the scheme, as follows;

| Town Centre | Completed Projects | Spend |
|--------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Ballyclare | 4 | £4,222.65 |
| Crumlin | 8 | £16,335.25 |
| Randalstown | 4 | £6,735.00 |
| Antrim | 6 | £9,509.27 |
| Glengormley | 8 | £12,833.26 |
| TOTAL | 30 | £49,635.43 |

3. Previous Decision of Council

In February 2022, a budget of £327,500 was approved for the CCTV scheme of which £49,635.43 was awarded in Phase 1.

At the 10 September 2024 meeting of the Economic Development Committee approval was granted for the launch of Phase 2 of the Business CCTV Scheme with a budget of £49,000. Phase 2 encompasses an open call approach and prioritises the PSNI's suggested areas at the application scoring stage, via a scoring matrix.

The 09 September 2025 meeting of the Economic Development Committee approved grant funding of £19,829 to ten eligible applicants under Phase 2 of the CCTV scheme.

4. Key Issues for Consideration by Members

Five further applications to Phase 2 of the CCTV Scheme have now been received as follows;

| Town | Business | Grant requested |
|-------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| Ballyclare | The Office | £2,437.50 |
| Doagh | Deja Brew | £937.50 |
| Monkstown | Abbey Kitchens and Bathrooms | £1,781.25 |

| | | |
|--------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Carnmoney | U Pay Less | £2,115.00 |
| Mossley | The Railway Fryer | £843.75 |
| Total | | £8,115.00 |

While Officers are continuing with the assessment of these applications, the initial grant assistance requested is in the region of £8,115. This figure may reduce as assessment of the applications progresses against the eligibility criteria. Upon Committee approval, Officers will issue Letters of Offer and provide Members with an update in due course.

Officers are considering further, targeted promotion in the PSNI's recommended locations as well as Crumlin, Randalstown and Ballyclare, to encourage applications in those areas.

Following completion of Phase 2 of the Business CCTV scheme, Officers intend to undertake a post-project evaluation of both phases of the scheme. The evaluation will consider outputs and outcomes against value for money and effectiveness. A report on the evaluation will be provided for Members' information and direction in due course.

5. Financial Position/Implication

Upon approval of the maximum grant assistance of £8,115.00, £21,350 will remain in the CCTV Phase 2 budget. The scheme will remain open with a rolling call for applications.

6. Governance

The project will be delivered by the Economic Development section.

7. Recommendation

It is recommended that delegated authority be granted to Officers to issue Letters of Offer to the five listed businesses to a maximum value of £8,115.00, subject to final assessment.

Prepared by: Tara McCormick, Executive Officer Economic Development

Agreed by: Steven Norris, Deputy Director of Regeneration and Infrastructure

Approved by: Majella McAllister, Director of Economic Development and Planning

3.7 ED/DI/006 THE GATEWAY PROJECT – SMART ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING AT LOUGH NEAGH

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update Member's on the Council's facilitative role in supporting delivery of The Gateway Project. A Department of Science Innovation and Technology -funded 5G Innovation Region initiative by private sector company Helix8 Ltd, and to outline next steps in coordination with Estates Services, IT, and partner agencies.

2. Background

Helix8 Ltd, a Larne-based technology company, has secured funding under the Belfast 5G Innovation Region (5GIR) programme, supported by the UK Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT).

Their proposal, The Gateway Project, will establish Northern Ireland's first 5G-enabled, automated environmental monitoring system at the Gateway Building / Antrim Marina, supporting early detection of blue-green algae blooms in Lough Neagh.

The proposed area to initially benefit from this initiative is **enclosed**.

The project will use a drone-in-a-box system, IoT sensors, a private 5G-ready network and edge computing, and an interactive kiosk (pending agreement with DAERA/NIEA).

3. Council's Relationship to the Project

The Council's involvement is as a facilitating partner, not as project owner or regulatory authority.

Specifically, the council's role is to:

- Provide site access and coordinate with Helix8 on the use of Council-owned land and assets at The Gateway building.
- Support digital connectivity through existing infrastructure (e.g., potentially LFFN) where feasible.
- Ensure appropriate governance, including NIEA/DAERA validation of public-facing environmental information.
- Champion local innovation by enabling a high-profile demonstration of advanced connectivity benefiting tourism, education, and public engagement.
- Helix8 Ltd remains the project lead and data controller, with regulatory oversight continuing to rest with DAERA/NIEA.

This distinction ensures that while the Council is a key stakeholder, it is not responsible for the environmental or statutory outputs of the project.

In the project documentation and DSIT reporting, the Council will be referred to as a: "Facilitating Partner and Site Host within the 5G Innovation Region ecosystem.

4. Strategic Context

The Gateway Project complements the borough's Smart District and Digital Borough ambitions, aligning with initiatives such as the Local Full Fibre Network (LFFN) and Belfast Region City Deal (Digital Pillar).

Colleagues from Belfast City Council (Belfast City Innovation, as 5GIR lead authority) maintain oversight of regional reporting into DSIT. ANBC's participation ensures representation of rural and tourism-based use cases within the region's wider 5G ecosystem.

In addition to this application, Belfast City Council has also confirmed that additional applications under consideration for 5GIR and BRCD funding include one logistics-sector proposal from within the Antrim & Newtownabbey borough, alongside projects in Newry, Mid & East Antrim, Lisburn & Castlereagh, and Belfast.

5. Financial Position/Implication

The 5GIR funding covers delivery through to March 2026, ensuring the installation, testing, and early operational phase of the system. Beyond that period, Helix8 has committed to sustaining the technology as part of its commercial operations, supported by a combination of:

- Direct operational savings through automation;
- Subscription-based environmental data services to other stakeholders; and
- Future participation in 5G and IoT demonstrator programmes under BRCD and DSIT.

The Council's post-March 2026 involvement would remain light-touch, limited to:

- Maintaining site permissions;
- Coordinating with Helix8 and relevant agencies on educational use; and
- Continuing to promote the borough's role as an early adopter of advanced wireless applications.

6. Equality and/or Rural Screening Requirements

Not applicable

7. Governance

The Council's facilitating role in the project will be co-ordinated by the Economic Development Team, supported by Estates Services and IT.

8. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Council's role as a facilitating partner and site host for *The Gateway Project* led by Helix8 Ltd be approved.

Prepared by: Roddy O'Flaherty, Digital Innovation Officer

Agreed by: Steven Norris, Deputy Director of Regeneration and Infrastructure,
Simon Goldrick, Head of Arts, Culture, Tourism & Events and David Blair, Head of
Estate Services

Approved by: Majella McAlister, Director of Economic Development and Planning

3.8 ED/ED/284 NORTHERN IRELAND CHAMBER MEMBERSHIP 2026

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to recommend the renewal of the Council's annual membership of the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce.

2. Introduction/Background

The Council has been a Corporate Member of the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce since 2017. The Council's alliance aligns with the needs and expectations of Borough businesses. Benefits of membership include;

- Connection through the Chamber network, including Chambers Ireland and British Chambers of Commerce
- Priority access to NI Chamber's signature events
- Personal invitations to high level networking, In Camera events and policy roundtables. For example, in October 2025, Officers were invited to attend the Northern Ireland Chamber Future Workforce Summit,
- Potential to speak and/or host NI Chamber events; the Council's Chief Executive, Richard Baker, has previously sat upon NI Chamber speaking panels,
- Access to 110 + events per year with circa 7.8k delegates to connect with. These include general and regional networking; business support and international themed events
- Profile raising
- A copy of Ambition magazine and access to, and inclusion in, the Annual Member Directory
- Discounts to all conferences and Awards including the Voices of Leadership Conference, Women in Tech Conference, All-Island Female Entrepreneurs' Conference and the Chair's Lunch.

3. Previous Decision of Council

2025 Membership of the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce, at a cost of £3,230 +VAT, was agreed by the Economic Development Committee in their January 2025 meeting.

4. Cost

With a slight increase on last year (£80), the cost of this year's Corporate Membership of the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce is £3,230+ VAT (£3,876 inc).

This cost will be met from within the existing Economic Development budget.

5. Recommendation

Members' approval is requested for 2026 renewed annual membership of the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce at a cost of £3,230 (excluding VAT)

Prepared by: Tara McCormick, Executive Officer Economic Development

Agreed by: Steven Norris, Deputy Director of Regeneration and Infrastructure

Approved by: Majella McAllister, Director Economic Development and Planning

3.9 ED/ED/203 BELFAST CITY AND REGION PLACE PARTNERSHIP PARTICIPATION

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update regarding the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership and seek direction on next steps.

2. Introduction/Background

The Belfast City and Region Place Partnership (BCRPP), formerly the Renewed Ambition Partnership, is a joint public-private initiative that is delivering a programme of work aimed at ensuring the wider City Region is positively positioned to continue to attract inclusive investment to unlock the development, regeneration and infrastructure required to deliver the City Region's ambitions.

The BCRPP comprises public, private and key anchor institution partners with the Belfast City Region. Partners include Belfast City Region Deal Partner Councils, Invest NI, Belfast Harbour, Translink, Housing Association representation, and representatives from the local development community bringing forward significant regeneration and development projects.

Objectives of the BCRPP programme include:

- continue to build collaboration and partnership in the wider City region;
- continue to promote and market the Belfast City region outside Northern Ireland;
- increase engagement and advocacy with key stakeholders, in particular investors and government;
- support delivery of the Belfast Region City Deal programme of investment by attracting collaborative partners;
- deliver the shared ambition to drive inclusive, sustainable growth.

Members are reminded that the Council has participated in the BCRPP / Renewed Ambition Partnership initiative as part of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) from 2022 onwards.

The Council has been invited to renew its membership of the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership for 2025/26.

Membership of the partnership for 2025/26 includes:

- 2 x delegate passes to UKREiIF 2026
- Access to reduced rate delegate passes for UKREiIF 2026
- 2 x delegate passes to MIPIM 2026
- Invitation to join dedicated BRCD investment showcase events

3. Key Issues

Over the last number of years the Council has participated in the BCRPP. Each year Council Officers have attended UKREiIF and until last year, MIPIM. These events were opportunities to promote and showcase the investment proposition of the Borough and to discuss key investment priorities with sector leaders in industries such as Advanced Manufacturing and Logistics/Distribution. In addition, it has

provided an opportunity for officers to hear the latest policy considerations in relation to key economic drivers e.g. investment zones, innovation districts, and strategy relating to long term investment attraction and delivery.

Participation in the Partnership provides the wider City Region with the opportunity to meaningfully compete with other similar sized or larger locations that are seeking to attract major investment, such as Manchester, Newcastle, Liverpool City Region and Cardiff City Region. As a result of this participation the Council is part of a collective approach that seeks to represent the wider City Region with a collaborative strategy considered by the BCRPP more effective than individual Council areas seeking to represent their investment proposition on a stand-alone basis.

Taking part in the Partnership affords the opportunity for the Council to be part of a collective representation at major international investment events. These events include MIPIM, the world's leading built environment conference and exhibition attended by approximately 20,000 public and private sector representatives from across the globe, major European and UK cities including London, Manchester, Newcastle, Cardiff, Liverpool. It provides an opportunity for the wider city region to position itself to a global audience and attract the interest of institutional investors, developers, occupiers and funders in the context of bringing forward sustainable development to create a well-connected and culturally vibrant, sustainable city region.

The UK's Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum (UKREiIF) is also part of the BCRPP programme. Held in Leeds, the multi-day event seeks to connect developers, investors, local and national government and industry representatives to showcase investment opportunities and attract potential investment.

It was reported to Economic Development Committee in November 2024 that the Council had previously raised concerns regarding the lack of exposure and profile Antrim & Newtownabbey receive as part of the cluster particularly around adequately showcasing of key investment sites. As a result, the chairman of the BCRPP met with the Chairperson of the Economic Development Committee and Senior Officers with a view to responding to the Council's feedback.

In 2025 the Council paid £15,000 to continue its role in the partnership. As part of this participation, the Council did attend UKREiIF in Leeds, but decided against participating in MIPIM in France. No other events or bespoke pieces of research were undertaken last year by the Partnership.

4. Financial Position/Implication

The cost of participation in the wider Belfast City & Region Place Partnership is £15,000 per annum which is met through the Economic Development budget and is included in the 2025/26 budget allocation. This fee includes the delegate passes for both UKREiIF and MIPIM, although travel expenses and accommodation etc. are an additional cost.

5. Summary

The Council has participated in the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership for the last three years. Officers believe that there is value in the work of the partnership in presenting the region as a location for investment and to showcase the area. However, work must continue to align the programme of events and research to demonstrate more of the breadth of opportunities that exist across the region and showcase investment opportunities across the Borough.

Given the invitation to participate in the partnership again this year, and in the context of the previous engagement BCRPP leadership, Members are asked to consider inviting representatives from the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership to Committee in January to present their proposed programme of activities and other relevant information to Members, in advance of the Committee making a decision on the Council's future involvement.

6. Recommendation

It is recommended that Members note the update and consider inviting representatives from the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership to present to Committee in January.

Prepared by: Jill Murray, Executive Officer, Economic Development

Agreed by: Michael, McKenna, Deputy Director of Investment and Business Development and Steven Norris, Deputy Director of Regeneration and Infrastructure

Approved by: Majella McAlister, Director of Economic Development and Planning

3.10 ED/ED/292 RURAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT GRANT SCHEME (RBDGS) FUNDING AWARDS

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the award of funding through DAERA's RBDGS to applicants detailed in Annex 1, subject to satisfactory eligibility checks, successful application and DAERA budget allocation.

2. Introduction/Background

Members are reminded that in August 2025, it was agreed to deliver a Rural Business Development Grant Scheme through the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), alongside the other Councils in Northern Ireland. Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council's available grant aid budget under this scheme is yet to be confirmed, although a budget of 10% of Letter of Offer value will be provided from DAERA to the Council to administer the scheme.

The key aim of the Scheme is to provide capital grants of up to £7,500 to support micro-businesses located in rural areas with under 5,000 population to invest in new equipment or capital items. The objective of the fund is to enable businesses to remain sustainable or to grow. The maximum grant-funding rate is 50%, with at least 50% match-funding provided by participating businesses.

As determined by DAERA, the scheme was opened for applications on 25 September until 31 October for projects to be completed by 23 March 2026.

A total of 30 applications were received in the Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough. To be successful in securing a grant, businesses applying must score a minimum of 65% in their application assessment. Eligibility checks and assessments are due to take place during November 2025 by Economic Development Officers, however, application outcomes must be finalised in December 2025 in accordance with Departmental timelines. In a number of cases the grant awarded could be less than the request as items are not eligible or the grant award is based on the procurement presented.

Detailed in Annex 1 **enclosed** are RBDGS applicants and their proposed project costs. Officers will conduct eligibility checks and assessments on each application. This is a competitive grant, where awards will be determined on the basis of merit. Values contained within Annex 1 are subject to change pending satisfactory eligibility checks, successful application and DAERA budget allocation.

Projects that are deemed ineligible or do not meet the threshold or criteria for the programme will be notified of the outcome and offered business support through other Economic Development programmes where relevant.

3. Previous Decision of Council

In August 2025, the Council gave approval to participate in the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme through the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), alongside the other Councils in Northern Ireland.

4. Financial Position/Implication

There is no direct financial contribution required from the Council. DAERA will provide 10% of the funds awarded through Letters of Offer (for administration purposes) to promote and deliver the programme, which will be managed by the Economic Development Team.

5. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Rural Business Development Grants detailed in Annex 1 be approved, subject to satisfactory eligibility checks, successful application and DAERA budget allocation.

Prepared by: Matthew Mulligan, Economic Development Officer

Agreed by: Michael McKenna, Deputy Director of Investment and Business Development

Approved by: Majella McAllister, Director Economic Development and Planning

3.11 ED/ED/313 LOCAL ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP (LEP) UPDATE AND ACTION PLAN

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the progress of the Antrim and Newtownabbey Local Economic Partnership (LEP) and seek approval of the adjusted Year 1 Action Plan (enclosed).

2. Introduction/Background

Members will be aware that the former Department for the Economy Minister, Conor Murphy MLA launched a Sub-Regional Economic Plan on the 1st October 2024. The Plan outlined how the Department will work with Invest NI, Councils and other key stakeholders to establish Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs) between Oct-Dec 2024 in each Council area.

The LEP was tasked with co-designing a plan which would identify actions and develop projects that align with the Sub-Regional Economic Plan, Council Economic Development Strategy and Invest NI Business Strategy. These would be developed with advice from the Department for Economy (DfE) and Invest NI, and they would be appraised and scored/ ranked (where relevant) using a consistent and transparent methodology.

To support the delivery of these plans the Minister launched a £45m Regional Fund which seeks to address regional imbalance. Each Council area in Northern Ireland would be granted an allocation to support their individual action plan.

The Department has indicated that, for Antrim and Newtownabbey, up to £956,000 per year will be allocated, meaning a total fund of £2,868,000 across the three years. This remains the joint lowest allocation across Northern Ireland.

It was originally anticipated that 30% (£259,500) of this will be made available in Year 1 i.e. 2025/26. However, to date the Council has not received a letter of offer from the Department of Economy, and as a result the projected spend for Year 1 Action Plan (enclosed) activities is significantly reduced given the reduced timeframe for delivery.

3. Previous Decision of Council

In November 2024 Members agreed to establish the Antrim and Newtownabbey Local Economic Partnership as a Working Group of the Economic Development Committee.

In January 2025 Members agreed the Membership of the LEP including all eight members of the Economic Development Committee; and agreed the recruitment of temporary staff to service the LEP using associated funding.

In May 2025, members formally approved the proposed action plan and delegated the necessary authority to progress the Letter of Offer (LoO) and Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), enabling the next stages of

implementation to proceed in line with agreed governance arrangements with the Department for the Economy.

In August 2025 it was agreed by Committee that the update was noted and approval was made for the preparation of Year 1 projects to proceed at risk, in anticipation of the LoO and MoU from the Department for Economy. Confirmation was also requested regarding the 3-year funding provision.

4. Update

Since the last update to Committee, and as per the committee decision, the LEP has been developing the Year 1 Action Plan projects at risk, in anticipation of a Letter of Offer from the Department, through a number of focussed workshops.

Decisions based on budget for the scale of each programme has been reconsidered in light of the reduced timeframe for delivery, and the LEP is now ready to submit the updated Year 1 Action Plan for Committee approval.

Action Plan

The projects proposed in the Action Plan are those likely to be delivered in Year 1, providing that additional clarity from the Department is forthcoming. The themes outlined in the document include.

| Theme 1 – Investment & Strategic Employment locations | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Go Global – Skills, Business & Connectivity | <p>Aims to build a collaborative network of businesses, and stakeholders with links to advanced manufacturing, enabling local businesses to fully leverage the opportunities presented by AMIC's Factory of the Future and related City and Growth Deal initiatives.</p> <p>This programme includes stakeholder mapping, facilitated engagement events and would allow businesses to acquire innovation support from AMICs resources, and support the ambitions of the LEP including referrals to Invest NI and support to tradeable services.</p> |
| Global Point Masterplan | <p>Creation of a new Masterplan for the development of Global Point and exploration of "Global Point 2" to consider improvements to roads, footways, on site transportation, sustainable transport, sustainable waste management, 5G deployment, staff well-being etc. Joint working between the Council, Invest NI and Global Point tenants where relevant to support the realisation of Global Point as a best in class investment destination.</p> <p>Development of promotional collateral to highlight strategic selling points to potential investors e.g. AI, 5G, Waste Management, Energy Co-operation etc</p> |

| Theme 2 – Green Economy | |
|--------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Cluster Formation - Energy | <p>A scoping exercise to gather intelligence on the resources being consumed at key employment locations across the Borough and to consider ways in which better collaboration and co-operation could lead to efficiency and cost benefits.</p> <p>Key sites could include Global Point, Nutts Corner, Mallusk, International Airport. Key considerations are to address the energy impact of digital technology, automation, energy, resources, water, heat and other green power objectives.</p> |
| Green for Business Programme | Mentoring and grants for new green technology installation to support businesses in meeting climate and supply chain demands |
| Theme 3 – Workspace Development | |
| Technical and Capital support Grant | <p>Funding to create new workspace accommodation to facilitate entrepreneurial activity for businesses to complement the SPACE offering. Aims to facilitate workspace in areas which do not have current options or are deemed areas underserved.</p> <p>The programme will have two levels of support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technical Assistance for projects at concept and development stage. - Capital grant for projects which are ready for active development. |
| Theme 4 – Sector Development & Productivity | |
| Business Digitisation Programme | <p>Aimed at improving the productivity of businesses through financial grant aid support for operational projects. Specifically, the programme will be aimed at businesses who have been unsuccessful in securing support through DTFF or those who need small scale capital support.</p> <p>Funding will be available between £1000 - £5000 (ex VAT) for a project.</p> <p>Funding awarded will be worth up to 80% of the total value (ex VAT) of an investment project.</p> <p>All supported projects require a matched co-investment from Applicant Companies at a minimum of 20% of the overall project costs.</p> |

5. Financial Position/Implication

Council is awaiting a Letter of Offer for Project delivery. Verbally, Departmental Officials have now advised that any underspend “in year” will roll forward to future years, Council officers are engaging with the Department on these matters and await further clarification.

The Department has indicated that around £135,000 per year should be allocated to the administration of the programme and this includes the recruitment of additional staff. It is anticipated that all administration costs will be covered from this source and there is no anticipated additional cost to Council. An LEP Officer and Project Support Officer have now been appointed; contact details for these officers will be issued to Members.

6. Recommendation

It is recommended that the update on LEP activities be noted and the revised year 1 Action Plan be approved.

Prepared by: Philip Doherty Local Economic Partnership Project Officer

Agreed by: Michael, McKenna, Deputy Director of Investment and Business Development and Steven Norris, Deputy Director of Regeneration and Infrastructure

Approved by: Majella McAlister, Director of Economic Development and Planning.

4 ITEMS FOR NOTING

4.1 ED/ED/295 INVESTMENT READINESS PROGRAMME

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update Members' on the delivery of the "Investment Readiness Programme" designed to support micro, small and medium enterprises on their future growth journey.

2. Introduction/Background

As part of the Council's ongoing business engagement survey, local enterprises have highlighted a need for a range of different support including those relating to future business planning, expansion and growth strategies.

The Investment Readiness Programme seeks help address this need by providing local micro, small and medium businesses with the necessary knowledge and support to better understand the world of business finance, procurement, and contract opportunities as part of their continued growth in the Borough.

3. Previous Decision

The delivery of a new "Investment Readiness Programme" to support micro, small and medium enterprises at no additional cost to Council was approved by the Economic Development Committee and ratified by Full Council in September 2024.

4. Aims and Delivery of Programme

The primary aim of the programme is to support local businesses as they seek to become ready for future growth and investment opportunities.

The programme will primarily comprise a range of activities aimed at equipping local businesses with the knowledge and skills necessary for business development and growth on a one-to-one and one-to-many basis, including:

- Themed workshops and events featuring industry experts on key topics including:
 - Procurement and accessing work
 - Public sector procurement opportunities
 - Business Finance (accessing loans and overdrafts, Crowdfunding, pitch deck preparation)
 - Finding and applying for grants
 - Export
 - Work winning strategies
 - Growth opportunities in the Borough
- Access to specialist mentoring advice through Council's ASK programme (or other most relevant support programme)
- Direct connection to existing Council-led supports:

- Digital Transformation Flexible Fund
- Go Succeed
- ASK
- TRPSI
- Living over the Shops
- Supporting Direct Investment and Supporting Town Centre Investment funds
- Site search and pre-application engagement with other Council services
- Direct connection to existing external supports including Invest NI, Intertrade Ireland and Innovate UK

Members are reminded that the Economic Development team is currently delivering the ASK Programme that has procured mentors in over 24 specialisms. The Investment Readiness Programme will utilise existing business support programmes including Go Succeed and the ASK framework.

Events that have been delivered under the Investment Readiness Programme to date are:

| Event | Key Focus | Event Detail | Partners |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Oct 2024 | Public Sector Procurement / Construction | 35 business attended the event and were educated on how to access public sector funds as well as what monies are currently available through public sector works. | Housing Executive Education Authority Health Trust |
| Nov 24 & Jan 25 | Sustainability | A combined total of 31 business attended the two sustainability workshops where green energy and sustainability were discussed. Participants prompted to register for Councils Green for Business Programme. | Carbonfit Sensatta Power NI Danske Bank |
| May 25 | Access to Finance | 12 businesses and 21 people attended the workshop hosted by the British Business Bank to discuss finance opportunities for business growth | British Business Bank Whiterock Clarendon |
| May 25 | Access to Funding | 27 businesses attended the workshop hosted by Invest NI. Business heard from lenders of funds managed by INI from value loans to business viability grants. | INI Clarendon TechStart |
| Sep 25 | Financial Wellness | 14 Businesses and 22 people attended the workshop delivered by local experts IQ & CO who discussed everything finance including investing, pensions and business wills. | IQ & CO |
| Sep 25 | R&D Workshop | INI Hosted a R&D workshop that saw 33 businesses hear about the different supports INI have with regards to research & development. | INI |

From inception, over 150 local business have received guidance and support through the programme. For future delivery, it is anticipated that workshops will

take place on a bi-monthly basis however, flexibility will be applied depending on business needs and operational requirements.

5. Financial Position/Implication

The programme will be facilitated through the existing Economic Development Budget.

6. Summary of Timeline

A summary of events is detailed in the table below. Note that officers are exploring partner's availability to assist in the delivery of events therefore the scheduling has potential to change.

| Event | Key Focus | Business Benefit | Potential Partners |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Feb 26 | Financial Wellness | Helps to educate businesses with managing their money and prepare for the future. | IQ & Co Antrim Enterprise Agency |
| Mar 26 | Sustainability | Support businesses towards net zero & in turn reduce cost and increase efficiency | Invest NI ANBC Sustainability Team |
| Apr 26 | Advanced Manufacturing & AMIC | Promote the services of AMIC to local manufacturing businesses | AMIC LMAC ANBC Digital Transformation Team |
| May 26 | Procurement & Supply Chain | Opens new revenue streams | ANBC Procurement Team FSB Enterprise Agencies |
| Sep 26 | Access to Finance | Help businesses secure finance for growth | British Business Bank Whiterock Clarendon |
| Feb 2026 | Scaling & Innovation | Helps businesses expand into new markets | INI Enterprise Ireland NI Chamber of Commerce Enterprise Agencies |

7. Recommendation

It is recommended that the delivery of the “Investment Readiness Programme” be noted.

Prepared by: Stewart McCormack, Investment Officer

Agreed by: Michael McKenna, Deputy Director of Investment & Business
Development

Approved by: Majella McAlister, Director Economic Development and Planning

4.2 FI/FIN/4 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE REPORT - PERIOD 6 APRIL 2025 TO SEPTEMBER 2025

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the financial performance for the Economic Development Committee for Period 6 April 2025 to September 2025.

2. Introduction/Background

As agreed, quarterly budget reports will be presented to the relevant Committee. All financial reports will be available to all Members.

3. Summary

As at period 6:

The Economic Development and Planning Directorate has a favourable variance of £258k, or 21.5%, against the budgeted financial performance for the period. A report on the financial performance, employee costs, highest areas of expenditure and income, and the financial performance by Head of Service is **enclosed** for Members' information.

The overall financial position of the Council will be presented to the Policy & Governance Committee.

4. Recommendation

It is recommended that the report be noted.

Prepared by and Agreed by: Richard Murray, Head of Finance

Approved by: Majella McAlister, Director of Economic Development and Planning

5 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

Any Other Relevant Business (AORB) may be taken at this point.