



**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE CHAMBER, MOSSLEY MILL ON
THURSDAY 13 JUNE 2024 AT 6.30 PM**

In the Chair : Councillor B Webb

Members Present : Aldermen – M Magill and S Ross
Councillors – M Goodman, R Lynch, B Mallon and S Ward

**Non Committee
Members Present:** : Councillor R Kinnear

Officers Present : Director of Economic Development & Planning – M McAlister
Deputy Director of Investment and Business Development –
M McKenna
Deputy Director of Regeneration and Infrastructure – S Norris
ICT Helpdesk Officer – J Wilson
Member Services Officer – S Boyd
Mayor and Member Services Manager – AM Duffy

CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the June Meeting of the Economic Development Committee, and reminded all present of recording requirements.

1. APOLOGIES

Alderman M Cosgrove

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Item 4.2 – Councillor Webb
Item 6.3 – Councillor Mallon

3 PRESENTATION

3.1 ED/ED/284 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BUSINESS PLAN 2024/25

1. Purpose

The purpose of this presentation was to provide Members with an overview of the Economic Development Business Plan 2024/25.

2. Introduction/Background

The Director of Economic Development & Planning, delivered a presentation on the Economic Development Business Plan 2024/25 (circulated).

The Director of Economic Development and Planning responded to Members' questions following which the Chairperson and Members thanked her for her presentation.

Proposed by Councillor Mallon

Seconded by Alderman Magill and agreed that

the presentation be noted.

NO ACTION

Councillor Ward joined the meeting during Item 4.1.

4 ITEMS FOR DECISION

4.1 ED/ED/070 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY UPDATE AND 5 YEAR ACTION PLAN

1. Purpose

This report sought Members approval to commission an update of the Economic Development Strategy and the development of a costed 5 Year action plan.

2. Introduction/Background

Members recalled that in 2018 the Council adopted its current Economic Strategy and Action Plan, which took account of the new super Council area post RPA and identified the key sectors and future opportunities for economic growth. The documents were circulated.

In summary the strategy identified a number of interventions in particular sectors as summarised below:

- **Focus and Step Change:** These were "critical for growth" sectors which were considered likely to have the potential to support significant economic growth. These were sectors against which to prioritise resource and effort as a key economic development opportunity for Antrim and Newtownabbey

including Advanced Manufacturing, Transport & Logistics and Health & Life Sciences.

- **Sustain and Grow:** These were important core sectors for Antrim and Newtownabbey's economic development, with potential to enable [potentially significant] incremental growth. These were sectors which should be cultivated and nurtured to support future economic growth including Professional Services, Tourism and Digital/ICT.
- **Monitor and Intervene:** These were sectors which, although they may be important to the current local economy, were not considered as one likely to generate material economic growth moving forward. These sectors should be monitored on an on-going basis for opportunities and trends which might create potential for future economic development, and interventions made accordingly. These sectors included Construction, Retail and Agri Food.

Since 2018 there had been significant change at an international, national and local level including the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic, transformed trading arrangements with the European Union, increasing focus on sustainability targets and re-established NI governance structures, all set in the context of an ever-challenging financial environment.

It was clear therefore that going forward the Council needed to reposition its growth strategy to take advantage of changing economic circumstances and to ensure that the Borough was in the best possible position to capture and realise economic growth, prosperity and productivity improvements over the course of the coming months and years.

Of particular relevance in this regard was the new Local Development Plan and the opportunities that could be created at the Council's Strategic Employment Locations as well as the realisation of jobs and related benefits emerging from the Belfast Region City Deal particularly the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre at Global Point.

From an alignment perspective it would be important for the Council to understand the future direction both policy and operational to be adopted by key stakeholders such as the Department for the Economy and Invest NI. In February the Department via Minister Murphy set out 4 key objectives namely;

- Good jobs
- Promote Regional Balance
- Raise Productivity
- Reduce carbon emissions

The Minister had appointed four Critical Friends who combined academic rigour and real-life practical application to provide advice at a strategic level as to how these objectives could be pursued.

Invest NI would have a key role to play in the delivery of the Department's objectives, and as Members' were aware, they were in the process of bringing forward action plans in response to the Lyon's Review. Of key relevance to the Borough would be Invest NI's proposals in relation to land and property and its approach to sub-regional development across the region. The Minister had

highlighted 3 aspects of reform which he expected to see within Invest as follows;

- Attaching stronger conditions and incentives to its support for business in line with the 4 objectives
- A new regional structure dedicated to home-grown SMEs and Start-Ups (similar to the service provided by LEDU)
- Invest must develop industries as well as individual firms

He also promoted working in partnership with industry and academia to develop sectors such as Advanced Manufacturing, Life and Health Sciences and Low Carbon.

In this context, the key requirements of the brief would include:

- Update and 'sense check' the current economic strategy and vision for the Borough;
- Identify a set of new interventions for the Council to clearly articulate and execute its strategy to grow the local economy and increase productivity;
- Set a costed five-year action plan against those interventions to support the vision;
- Consider local economic impacts and opportunities from the new trading arrangements in place, changes to the national and local growth agenda and the Local Development Plan/emerging policies; and
- Align policy development and actions with wider strategic growth opportunities at a sub-regional and national level.

Following a request from a Member that prominence be given to social enterprise and community wealth building in the Terms of Reference the Director of Economic Development and Planning noted the feedback for inclusion.

Proposed by Councillor Goodman
Seconded by Councillor Lynch and agreed that

an update of the Economic Development Strategy and the development of a costed 5 Year action plan be commissioned, provision for which exists in the 2024/25 budget.

ACTION BY: Majella McAlister, Director of Economic Development and Planning

4.2 ED/REG/083 OUT OF TOWN CENTRE SHOP FRONT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME PHASE 2

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members the approval of Phase 2 of the Out of Town Centre Shop Front Improvement Programme for implementation in the 2024/2025 financial year.

2. Introduction/Background

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

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

3. Previous Decision of Council

The Council agreed in January 2023 to open the Expression of Interest Process and to procure the services of an independent QS art risk and subsequently in July 2023 to approve a budget of £250,000 to support the scheme and progress Phase 1 delivery in Abbots Cross, Monkstown and Carnmoney Village, at a maximum award of £5,000 per property, at a grant rate of 80%.

4. Key Issues

Members approved the delivery of Phase 1 of the Programme in July 2023 in;

- Abbots Cross
- Monkstown; and
- Carnmoney Village

These were the areas considered most in need of intervention and a scheme in these areas would have the greatest visual impact.

To date, Officers had worked with businesses and property owners in these areas and had recorded the following outputs:

- 41 Expressions of Interest received from Phase 1 areas.
- 29 applications submitted from Phase 1 areas.
- 29 Letters of Offer either issued or due to be issued.
- £111,450 committed to support the businesses.

Based on the Expression of Interest process in January 2023, there was interest in the programme from a further 16 properties at various locations. Given that most were single properties in different locations, the visual impact of any programme would be limited unlike Phase 1.

Area	EOIs Received
Richmond Gardens	1
Beverly Shopping Area	1
New Mossley	2
Mossley	1
Hillview Avenue	3
Rathcoole	4

Rushpark	2
Doagh Road	1
Shore Road	1
Total	16

Therefore, given the length of time that had passed since the initial call for Expressions of Interest opened in January 2023, Members wished a fresh Expression of Interest process, excluding those areas which had been supported under Phase 1.

An indicative timeline for delivery of Phase 2 would be:

- July 2024 - Refresh of the application pack and opening the scheme to new enquiries i.e. a new EOI process for additional applications.
- August /September 2024 – Phase 2 application process.
- October/November 2024 – Assessment Panel, Value for Money Assessments and Letter of Offer.
- December – March 2025 – Works to be completed.

5. Financial Position/Implication

In July 2023, £250,000 was approved from the Economic Development budget to be utilised to support the scheme. Members were advised that the costs included in the scheme could be capitalised.

£35,000 of this budget was approved to appoint an independent quantity surveyor to support the value for money assessment on this programme. This left a usable budget of up to £215,000 for grants.

Given the level of spend to date, there was £103,550 remaining from the approved budget to support Phase 2. It was proposed that Expression of Interest be invited for Phase 2 of the Programme, with a maximum award of £5,000, at a grant rate of 80%. Businesses would be required to demonstrate a minimum contribution of 20% of the overall project costs.

6. Governance

The Economic Development team would lead the delivery of this scheme.

The project would be overseen by a Project Board with representation from internal Council departments and external agencies if and when relevant. Procurement and financial management would be progressed in line with the Council's own policies. The independent QS appointed by the Council would also support the assessment of value for money and ensure that works were completed in line with the application.

The team had significant experience of managing and delivering schemes of this nature.

Proposed by Alderman Ross
Seconded by Councillor Ward and agreed that

the Shopfront Improvement Programme Phase 2, as outlined be approved, with a budget of £103,550, which could be capitalised. A maximum award of £5,000 would be applied per property at a grant rate of 80%.

ACTION BY: Steven Norris, Deputy Director of Regeneration and Infrastructure

4.3 ED/ED/264 WORKPLUS PROGRAMME PHASE 2

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members the approval of Phase 2 of the Work Experience Programme 2024-2025 up to a value of £29,250, with agreement for Officers to proceed pending a full, detailed proposal being completed.

2. Introduction/Background

Members would be aware that in August 2023 approval was granted to launch a new pilot Work Placement Programme 2023-2024.

The Work Experience 2024 programme, led by Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council alongside Workplus Ltd was Northern Ireland's pioneering work experience initiative. Working with employers, teachers, students and parents this innovative, first of its kind programme, delivered meaningful, structured work experience opportunities for students based on their actual career aspirations. This dynamic programme supported students to make informed education and career choices, demonstrated the breadth of opportunities available within our local area and streamlined the placement process for all participants.

The key aims of the pilot project were to:

- Co-ordinate meaningful work experience for pupils before they made their post GCSE decisions.
- Make opportunities easier to find for young people, thereby widening access.
- Make it easier for young people to rank multiple work experience opportunities.
- Offer placements in a variety of sectors.
- Offer a choice of placements to young people.
- Inspire career choices young people make, through encounters with employers and employees.
- Provide work-based learning and key employability skills.
- Equip young people with skills language and skills growth
- Build confidence in young people as they enter the world of work to help them become workplace ready.
- Help employers deliver work experience making it fun and meaningful.

The quantitative outcomes of the pilot programme were as follows:

- 28 employers engaged with the programme and offered work placements to students.

- 67 placements offered by local employers.
- 67 placement opportunities taken by young people.
 - 37 placements for students from mainstream schools; and
 - 30 placements for students from SEN schools.
- 16 schools involved in the wider sub-group.
- 66 businesses attended the engagement sessions and webinars.

The schools involved in the programme included Abbey Community College, Glengormley Integrated College, Riverside Special School, Jordanstown Special School and Hillcroft Special School.

The Council itself was able to offer 9 placement opportunities across the organisation with 4 being taken up in sections including Leisure, Parks, Media etc.

A Celebration Event was hosted by the Mayor of Antrim and Newtownabbey on the 8th of May 2024.

3. Previous Decision of Council

August 2023 – approval for Pilot Schools Work Placement Programme

4. Key Issues (or the relevant titles for the main body of the report)

Following on from the success of the pilot programme Members' were asked to consider the further development of this programme for the next academic year continuing to work with post primary schools, special educational settings and the business community.

Work experience was an identified policy response to addressing labour shortages in the Borough and the difficulties faced by schools and employers in this area remain prevalent.

Feedback from Pilot Phase and Next Steps

Officers were still collating the feedback from the pilot phase and would undertake one-to-one meetings with each post primary and SEN school in the Borough to understand:

- Why they did (or did not) engage with the pilot phase.
- The need for this type of on-going support.
- How the programme could be improved.
- Barriers to participation etc.

The out workings of these meetings would help to shape the future direction of the programme. However, sufficient feedback from participants, teachers and businesses had been garnered to confidently say that there was support for a further phase of the programme.

The video developed as part of the celebration event for the pilot phase could be viewed via the below link:

antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/workpluscelebrationevent

What will Phase 2 Deliver?

It was envisaged that Phase 2 would closely follow the model of the pilot phase linking schools and employers to meaningful work placement opportunities for young people across the Borough. This was the basis on which the procurement would be undertaken.

However, there were a number of variables to be considered in relation to phase 2, including:

- **SEN and Mainstream** – there had been unprecedented demand from SEN schools, and this was a highlight from the pilot programme as it was not an anticipated outcome.
- **Year Group** – the pilot programme aimed to support pre A-Level students i.e. those who were in the GCSE years before they made decisions on the next stage of the career or education. Some feedback indicated that the programme could be opened up to even younger year groups e.g. pre-GCSE to help with choices. This has implications for insurances and releasing students.
- **Time of Year** – during the pilot programme the young people all had a set time in year to complete their work placement. Consideration was being given to offering a rolling list of placements that students could avail off throughout the year which means that schools don't have to change their plans in relation to the time of year they normally complete their placements.

The procurement exercise for this programme to be undertaken would follow the model of the pilot programme but with enough built in flexibility to adapt to any of the variable changes outlined above.

How will the programme be delivered?

In order to be ready for roll-out of the programme at the beginning of the new academic year in September 2024 a new delivery partner was required. Workplus Limited had been appointed via a Direct Award Contract for the pilot phase in 2023. However, a procurement process would be required as the programme moves into Year 2.

Officers requested Members approval to undertake this procurement exercise, over the summer in order to have a potential provider lined up for September 2024.

A further report would be brought to the Economic Development Committee in September 2024 with a proposed delivery partner appointment and a full plan for the next phase of the programme based on the findings of the meetings with schools later this month.

5. Financial Position/Implication

Below was the breakdown of the budget for the pilot phase. It was anticipated that the costs would remain at the same level. This budget had been accounted for in the economic development budget for 2024/25. There were no new financial implications for the Council.

Activity	Cost
Set up matching platform	£9,500
Marketing campaign to employers	£4,500
Support to employers	£12,000
Planning workshops	£1,750
Promotional webinars to schools	£1,500
Support to schools and pupils	Included
Matching employers and pupils	Included
Total	£29,250

6. Governance

The programme would be managed by the Economic Development Team and regular reports would be brought to the Economic Development Committee.

Proposed by Councillor Lynch

Seconded by Alderman Magill and agreed that

Phase 2 of the Work Experience Programme 2024-2025 up to a value of £29,250, the specification for which would be based on the outcome of the schools engagement, be approved.

ACTION BY: Steven Norris, Deputy Director of Regeneration and Infrastructure

4.4 **ED/LMP/44 MULTIPLY PROGRAMME UPDATE**

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to provide Members with an overview of the Multiply programme, administered by the Department for the Economy (DfE) and locally delivered by ANBC, and, seek approval to accept the associated Letter of Offer for £250,000 for project costs (circulated). The Council had previously accepted the Letter of Offer of £50,000 relating to staff costs, which had subsequently been paid to the Council.

2. Introduction/Background

Members recalled that in 2023 the UK Government announced that "Multiply", a scheme to boost numeracy skills would be introduced in Northern Ireland via the Department for Economy locally. The Multiply programme was targeted at those individuals aged 19 and over who did not have maths GCSE at grade C (or equivalent). In November 2023 the funding was subsequently paused by the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities.

In March 2024 the Council received confirmation that the Multiply funding bid for Northern Ireland had been approved. The total bid was for £5.9m, for delivery between 1st April 2024 and 31st March 2025, through local colleges, universities, and Labour Market Partnerships.

The Department for the Economy (DfE) was the Departmental lead on the programme and would work with the Further Education Colleges and Higher Education Institutions on its delivery. DfE had asked the 11 Labour Market Partnerships if they would be willing to deliver the Multiply projects. To date, all eleven Councils had agreed to participate.

3. Previous Decision of Council

It was approved at Full Council in April 2024 that the Council would participate in the Multiply programme.

4. Key Issues

The Letter of Offer and additional appendix (circulated) set out the key interventions to be delivered by the Council in the Financial Year 2024/25 with an associated delivery budget of £251,007.20:

- Maths for speakers of other languages,
- Engaging mature learners,
- Counting on you – industry upskilling,
- Numeracy bootcamps,
- Bring your grown up - adult/child numeracy collaboration,

Included in Multiply were staff costs and resources for a Multiply Officer to support the delivery of the projects. A Letter of Offer for £50,000 was received for the Officer post and the money had been paid to the Council by the Department. The Multiply Officer was a fully funded post until 31 March 2025 and had been advertised internally within Council and via agencies on 31st May 2024, with a closing date for applications of 14th June 2024.

5. Financial Position/Implication

The total budget for the programme was approximately £300k comprising of £250,000 for project costs and £50,000 for salary costs.

6. Governance

The initiative would be managed by the Economic Development Team with update reports brought to the Labour Market Partnership.

Proposed by Councillor Lynch

Seconded by Alderman Ross and agreed that

- a) the overview of the proposed Multiply programme be noted; and**
- b) the associated Letter of Offer for £250,000 be accepted.**

ACTION BY: Terry McNeill, Economic Development Manager

4.5 ED/DI/001 DIGITAL READINESS ASSESSMENT PILOT PROGRAMME

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members a pilot Digital Factory Accelerator Initiative in partnership with Leading Manufacturing Accelerating Change (LMAC) to support local manufacturing businesses in their digital transformation journeys.

2. Background

The Digital Factory Accelerator for Manufacturers, launched by the UK's High Value Manufacturing Catapult (HVMC) in partnership with the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC) and Invest NI, offered comprehensive support to manufacturers seeking to enhance their digital manufacturing readiness using the Smart Industry Readiness Index (SIRI). This pilot programme provided a thorough assessment and roadmap for integrating advanced digital technologies into traditional manufacturing operations. The Council's partnership with AMIC positioned this pilot programme as a platform to further support and integrate with the initiatives of AMIC by offering extended benefits and opportunities for participating businesses. This further demonstrated the Council's proactive role in addressing barriers such as access, cost, and awareness, ensuring innovative solutions were available to local businesses.

3. Previous Decision of Council

Previously, the Council had successfully supported various digital initiatives, including the Digital Transformation Flexible Fund and Digital Surge, which had stimulated digital innovation by addressing financial barriers for small and micro-businesses. The positive outcomes of these programmes demonstrate the requirement for further investment in digital transformation initiatives, particularly in manufacturing; a growth sector for the Council area that currently accounts for 12% of employment in the Borough.

4. Key Issues

What will the programme deliver?

The pilot Digital Factory Accelerator for Manufacturers would assess an organisation's digital manufacturing readiness using SIRI – the Smart Industry Readiness Index. SIRI was a global standard assessment and prioritisation process for manufacturing organisations looking to adopt digital manufacturing technologies.

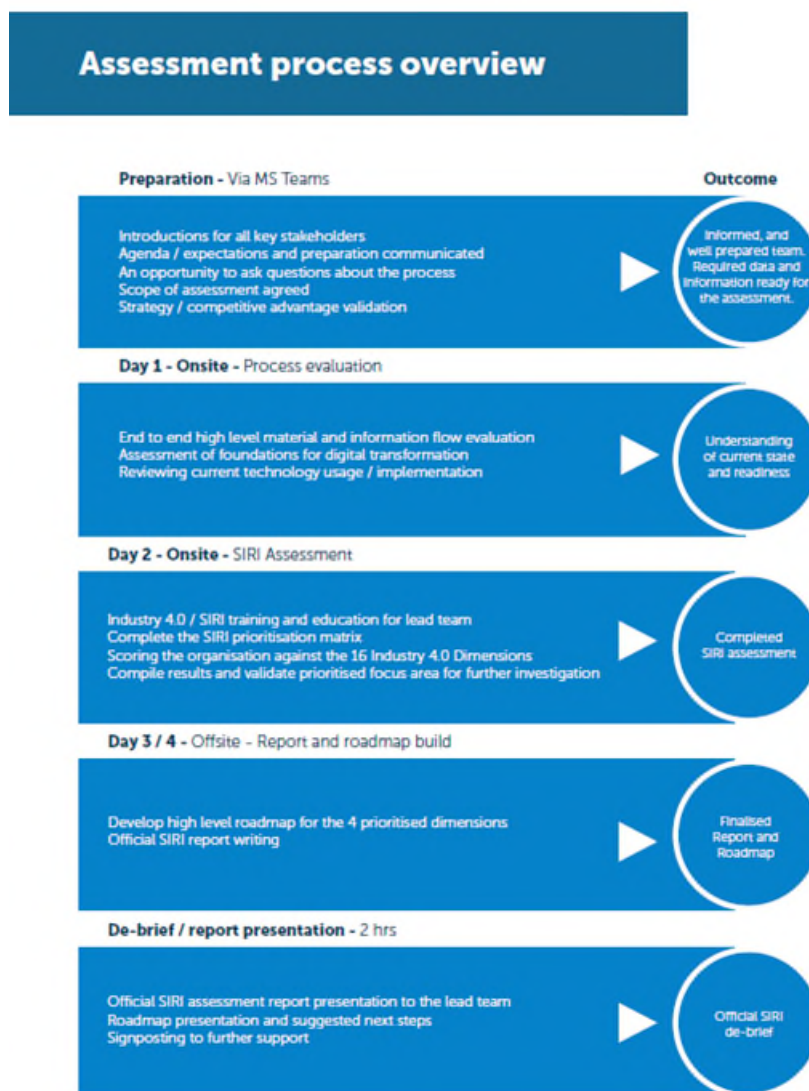
Participating businesses would receive:

- Five days of dedicated support from HVMC and LMAC representatives.
- Comprehensive digital manufacturing maturity assessment (Official SIRI - Smart Industry Readiness Index assessment).
- Benchmarking against a global pool of manufacturers and organisations

in your sector.

- Technology scan against the prioritised areas for your business.
- Debrief presentation from HVMC & LMAC representatives.
- A bespoke, high-level roadmap for how to transform your business with digital manufacturing technologies.
- Signposting to any relevant funding or business support available in Northern Ireland.
- An Invitation to join the community of manufacturers in Northern Ireland growing the local sector and economy.

The process for each company was detailed in the diagram below.



How will it be delivered?

The programme would be an open application for eligible businesses from across the Borough. In the pilot programme we anticipated supporting 7 businesses to complete the programme.

The programme would be delivered by the Economic Development section, working alongside LMAC, AMIC and QUB. These partners had committed to providing the necessary expertise and resources for the Smart Industry Readiness Index (SIRI) assessments. Their involvement ensured that participating businesses received high-quality, tailored assessments and roadmaps for their digital transformation journeys.

Officers in the Economic Development Team focused on Digital Innovation would play an essential role in the successful implementation and outcomes of the pilot programme. Specific roles had been identified as follows:

- **Team Involvement:** Officers would actively shadow the assessment process. This hands-on involvement ensured that the team gained valuable insights and practical experience.
- **Upskilling & Knowledge Exchange:** The Council's participation in all stages of the assessment, from company identification to ensuring completion and the satisfaction of the assessments facilitates continuous upskilling for the team and supports the wider business community with a knowledge exchange.
- **Project Management:** The team would oversee the entire project, ensuring adherence to timelines, governance, and maintaining high standards of execution.

Promotion Strategy –

Given that 51% of businesses in the Borough had indicated the need for Digital Support (as per the Economic Development business engagement survey), the pilot offered significant added value to local businesses by addressing several key barriers:

- **Accessibility:** Many of the Borough's SMEs lacked the access to high-quality digital assessments like SIRI. This programme made resources available which would improve economic growth at a micro and macro level.
- **Cost:** Of the 32 companies in Northern Ireland which had received a SIRI assessment, one is from the Borough. The cost of comprehensive digital assessments is prohibitive. By subsidising 80% of the assessment cost, the Council removed the financial barrier, making it feasible for more businesses to participate.
- **Council's Role:** The pilot clearly demonstrated Council's commitment to promoting innovation and economic growth by supporting the manufacturing sector locally. The initiative helped create an attractive environment for employment and would entice new businesses to consider the Borough as an area for investment, in turn, this provided our citizens with a committed investment with sustainable, long-term benefits for the local economy.

Business Engagement –

The recruitment process for the pilot programme would be strategic, ensuring a representative selection of businesses from across the Borough:

- **Targeted Recruitment:** Officers' proposal to LMAC/QUB was that focus would be on a range of manufacturing businesses from across the Borough, ensuring the programme covered a varied range of scale and sectors, where possible.
- **Wider Call for Interest:** To ensure inclusivity and performance a call for expressions interest would be issued. This would ensure the Council engaged a diverse range of businesses and ensured distribution of the benefits of the programme across the Borough.
- **Member Engagement:** The selection process and the geographical distribution of participating companies would be communicated to local Members to them involved.

5. Financial Position/Implication

The proposed funding for the pilot initiative was £30,000 and was accounted for within the Economic Development 2024/25 budget.

Cost Area	Amount
Programme costs for the 7 businesses to complete	£28,000
Support costs e.g. marketing materials	£2,000
Total	£30,000

Participating businesses would be required to contribute £1,000, representing 20% of the total £5,000 cost for each SIRI assessment, the Council programme would meet the other 80% (i.e. £4,000 per business).

The funding model aimed to subsidise the high cost of the assessments, making them more accessible to local manufacturing businesses.

6. Governance

The initiative would be managed by the Economic Development section. The procurement process would involve a direct award to LMAC, justified by their unique expertise and the specific requirements of the SIRI assessment. Compliance with Council procurement policies and transparency in fund allocation would be ensured.

7. Summary

The Digital Factory Accelerator initiative aimed to support local manufacturing businesses in their digital transformation. By providing comprehensive assessments and tailored roadmaps, the programme enhanced the competitiveness and growth of the manufacturing sector in the Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough. The initiative aligned with the Council's broader economic development goals, supported the local economy's resilience and digital innovation objectives. The programme's collaboration with AMIC not only enhanced the credibility and quality of assessments but also provided a platform for businesses to access broader support and integration with AMIC's initiatives.

Proposed by Alderman Magill
Seconded by Councillor Lynch and agreed that

- (a) a pilot Digital Factory Accelerator initiative be progressed at a cost of £30,000 for which provision has been made in the 2024/25 budget; and**
- (b) a Direct Award be made to LMAC to conduct the SIRI Assessment due to their unique expertise.**

ACTION BY: Roddy O'Flaherty, Digital Innovation Officer

4.6 ED/ED/281 BUSINESS MERCHANDISING SUPPORT PROGRAMME

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members' the approval of a new Business Merchandising Support Programme for 2024/2025.

2. Introduction/Background

Officers had been proactively engaging with local businesses over the last number of years to understand how the Council could support them to grow and maximise their sales potential. This had been successful with an almost 40% response rate from almost 1,500 businesses of all shapes and sizes.

Through this survey and on-going work on programmes such as the Town Chambers of Commerce, the shop front improvement programmes and our town centre marketing campaigns a need had been identified to support businesses with the visual merchandising elements of their businesses i.e. how they display and promote their products.

The development of the new programme was a natural follow-on from the Council's shop front improvement programmes which had focused on the external appearance of shops whilst the proposed programme aimed to improve how retail businesses display products behind their shop window and in their stores internally.

3. Key Issues

Through the business engagement work and the existing shop front improvement programmes a need had been identified to provide support to retailers in relation to how they displayed their products to maximise the visual impact and increase footfall into their stores.

The new programme would now focus on those businesses with products to display or a 'shop window' to improve how they promote their products.

What will the new programme provide?

The proposed programme would work with up to 25 businesses, 5 businesses per town, and be delivered by an appointed visual merchandising expert.

The programme would deliver up to 5 hours of mentoring support to each business as well as a dedicated redesign of both their window display (if applicable) and the layout of products on their shop floor. The programme would also provide a small grant to each participating business, subject to approval from the visual merchandising expert, to purchase items to help with the visual improvements e.g. shelving units etc.

The support would be delivered in a number of steps:

- a) Initial meetings between business owner, key staff and the expert consultant to scope out the business, understand the key selling points, and the businesses view and understanding of visual merchandising.
- b) Expert to review and develop a plan for each business to be discussed and agreed with the owner.
- c) Expert would have a small budget to purchase items to help with the remodel of the shop window and floor e.g. window dressings, themed items.
- d) Expert would work with the business owner to undertake the remodel of the store and provide any additional training, input to the business owner in relation to other activities that might be useful particularly with regards to themed campaigns e.g. Christmas.

The cost for each business would be approximately £1,000.

- £500 would be used to cover the mentoring support for each business; and
- £500 would be used for a grant for each business.

This would be 100% funded and no financial contribution would be sought from the business owners. However, their commitment to the programme would be provided 'in kind' through their time given over to the mentoring elements. At the discretion of individual business owners, they could provide financial support to help implement the changes if they were in a position to do so. The expert would discuss this with the business owner at the initial meeting.

To be eligible for the programme it was envisaged that a business must:

- a) Be a rate paying business.
- b) Be located in a town centre.
- c) Be a retail focused business with products to sell to the general public.
- d) Have a customer facing shop presence (i.e. a commercial unit); and
- e) Have a 12-month trading history.

Additional criterion may be added as the scheme develops. The programme would not be open to online businesses.

How will the new programme be delivered?

The programme would be managed by the Economic Development Team, however at least one independent visual merchandising consultant would be procured to support the programme delivery. The number of experts would depend on the business types to be involved and the availability of each expert.

The Council team would work closely with the Chambers and Business Networks in each town during the delivery of this programme.

Where will the programme be delivered?

The Economic Development Team would work collaboratively with the Chambers of Commerce or Business Networks in each town to deliver this programme. This would be the first collaborative venture between the Council and our refreshed Chambers of Commerce.

Specifically, the Chambers would support the identification of businesses who could benefit from this support in each town.

4. Financial Position/Implication

£25,000 for this programme had been accounted for in the current economic development budget for 2024/2025 and there were no further financial implications for the Council.

Officers were continuing to discuss this project with the Department for Communities to understand any support, financial or otherwise, that they would be willing to contribute.

5. Governance

This programme would be procured in line with the Council's Procurement guidance.

Economic Development would be the lead section for the scheme.

Proposed by Councillor Lynch
Seconded by Councillor Goodman and agreed that

£25,000 from the existing Economic Development budget for the Business Visual Merchandising Programme 2024/2025 for up to 25 businesses across the five towns in the Borough be approved.

ACTION BY: Steven Norris, Deputy Director Economic Development

5 ITEMS FOR NOTING

5.1 ED/ED/284 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to update Members on the delivery of the Economic Development Action Plan.

The Director of Economic Development and Planning provided Members with an Action Plan update, which had been circulated to Members in advance of the meeting with a hard copy being made available in the Chamber.

Proposed by Alderman Magill
Seconded by Councillor Lynch and agreed that

the Economic Development Action Plan as outlined be noted.

NO ACTION

5.2 ED/ED/280 GILBERT STUDENT AMBASSADOR PROGRAMME UPDATE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to provide Members with an update on the Student Ambassador Programme with Gilbert.

2. Introduction/Background

The Sister Cities Student Exchange Programme was a programme that typically provided eight students, four from Antrim and Newtownabbey and four from Gilbert, Arizona with an opportunity to develop an understanding of a different country, its culture, and its people through a family living experience. The programme lasts approximately six weeks during the summer with half the time spent in Gilbert and half in Antrim and Newtownabbey.

3. Previous Decision of Council

It was approved at Full Council on 29 January 2024 that four students from the Borough will take part in the 2024 Student Exchange Programme.

4. Key Issues

The Student Exchange was now on its 21st year, and formed a key component of the Councils ongoing Sister City Relationship with Gilbert, Arizona.

This year's exchange would take place from 13th June until 21st July, commencing in Gilbert and concluding in Antrim and Newtownabbey with a BBQ planned for 18th July at Antrim Castle Gardens (confirmation to follow), to which all Members were invited. Students and their partners would be partaking in volunteering with groups across the Borough including the Parkrun.

The Council and its lead Officers had engaged directly with the lead contacts in Gilbert regarding the future of the Exchange Programme- both during last year's inward delegation from Gilbert and during the most recently outward visit by representation of the Council in May 2024.

A future report would be brought to Members' regarding the exchange and how it operated including;

- Associated Governance
- Marketing and Promotion
- Eligibility and Duration

5. Financial Position/Implication

The costs for this programme of up to £10,000 would be met through the existing Economic Development budget.

6. Governance

Update reports would be brought to Committee in due course.

The Chairperson requested that when the invitations to the concluding programme event planned for 18th July are circulated, a background summary to the exchange and participants be provided to Members.

Proposed by Councillor Lynch

Seconded by Alderman Rodd and agreed that

the update for this year's student ambassador programme and the scheduled BBQ on 18th July 2024 at Antrim Castle Gardens be noted.

ACTION BY: Michael McKenna, Deputy Director of Investment and Business Development/Matthew Mulligan, Business Development Project Officer, Economic Development

5.3 **ED/LMP/061 LABOUR MARKET PARTNERSHIP 2024/2025 DELIVERY**

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to provide an overview of the delivery of the Labour Market Partnership Action Plan for 2024/25 including the key events scheduled. The report also outlined to Members that a letter of offer for £25,197.87 to cover administration costs from 1 April 2024 to 30 June 2024 had been accepted, however, no Letter of Offer for programme delivery had yet been received.

2. Introduction/Background

Members were aware of the Labour Market Partnership (LMP), the aim of which was to improve labour market conditions by working on a collaborative basis with a range of partners.

The Labour Market Partnership was comprised of representatives from:

- Department for Communities
- Antrim Jobs & Benefits Office
- Newtownabbey Jobs & Benefits Office
- Department for Economy Careers Service
- Health Trust
- Education Authority
- Northern Regional College
- Invest Northern Ireland
- 1 representative from each Enterprise Agency – Antrim, LEDCOM and Mallusk

- 1 representative from each political party of Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council & the Mayor (2 DUP, 1 UUP, 1 Alliance, 1 SDLP and 1 Sinn Fein).

2024/25 Action Plan

The 2024/25 Action Plan a copy of which was circulated would focus on similar strategic priorities as the 23/24 Action Plan, including activities such as **employment academies** and support programmes, **upskilling academies**, **employment events** such as job fairs, as well as continuing to maintain and **form partnerships** with external support organisations, training providers and businesses.

The 2024/25 Action Plan implemented a new strategic priority around support and **employability programmes for employers** and **people with disabilities** to increase awareness of supports and opportunities available to both employers and residents.

Subject to receipt of the full budget, the LMP would seek to appoint a Schools and Business Engagement and Outreach Officer to act as a point of contact for businesses and residents, develop an online information hub and work in partnership with Disability programme providers in the area to provide workshops and information sessions.

The Action Plan would focus on the following themes:

- **Economic Inactivity** - People not in employment who had not been seeking employment within the last four weeks and/ or were unable to start work in the next two weeks;
- **Unemployment** - People who are without a job, currently available to work, and have been actively looking for work within the previous four weeks;
- **Disability** – People who report a physical or mental health condition(s) or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more where this reduces their ability to carry out day-to-day activities; and
- **Skilled Labour Supply** – DfE's 2021 Skills Barometer utilises the National Qualification Framework (NQF) Skills Classification.

Key events scheduled to date include:

Date	Event
29 June 2024	Wellbeing & Employability, The Junction
17 October 2024	Health & Wellbeing Fair, Abbey Centre
25 October 2024	Large Job Fair, Valley Leisure Centre
4 February 2025	Careers Fair, Theatre at the Mill
22 February 2025	Wellbeing & Employability, The Junction
TBC March 2025	Industry Youth Event, Theatre at the Mill

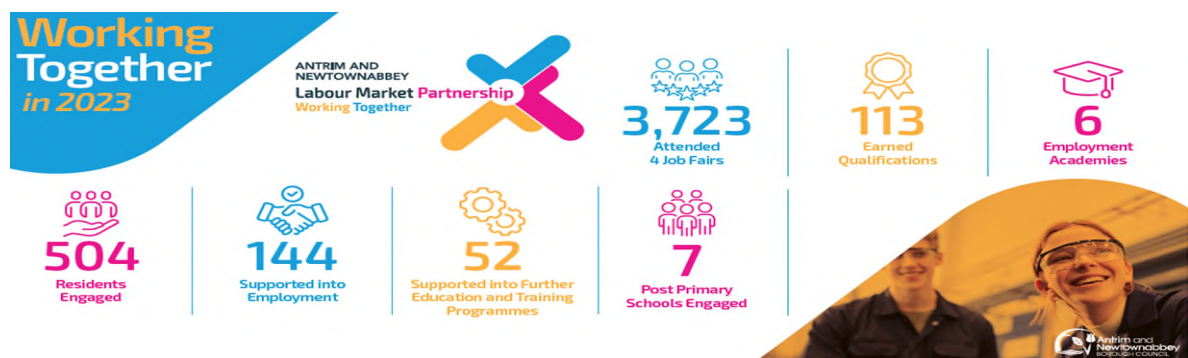
The review of the 2023/24 Action Plan was underway and would be reported in due course.

The LMP was awaiting a formal Letter of Offer of funding from the Department for the Community (DfC), estimated to be received in June to enable delivery of the 24/25 Action Plan.

LMP Schools Sub-Group

The LMP had established a sub-group comprising all 16 local post primary schools. The subgroup provided an excellent opportunity for the Council to promote current and future careers and career routes within the Borough, as well as gaining input from schools on their student's needs. This in turn directed and informed the design of the support provided by the Partnership.

A number of projects had taken place as a result of the Sub-Group including the Careers Fair, which took place in February 2024 and attracted over 860 attendees.



3. Previous Decision of Council

At full Council on 29 April 2024, the LMP Action Plan 2024/25 was approved along with agreement for Officers to proceed at risk with project delivery preparation, without entering into any contract until a formal letter of offer was issued by Department for Communities, and accepted by the Council.

4. Key Issues

The delayed receipt of a letter of offer from the DfC posed a significant risk to the LMP achieving the targets set out within the Action Plan. The Council had agreed that Officers commence preparation for the delivery of the action plan at risk without entering into any contract. Members would be updated in due course regarding the receipt of a Letter of Offer.

In the interim a Letter of Offer was issued and accepted for £25,197.87 to cover administration costs from 1 April 2024 to 30 June 2024.

5. Financial Position/Implication

The total budget for the programme was:
 Overall Total (Administration & Operational) £528,263.40.
 This was made up of £503,957.40 from DfC and £24,306 ANBC contribution.

The below table shows a breakdown the funding allocation:

Strategic Priority 1 (LMP Delivery and Development; LMP Subgroups; Strategic Planning)	£8,500
Strategic Priority 2 (Programme delivery, including: Upskilling, Academy and Employability Programmes)	£349,666.40
Strategic Priority 3 (PR and marketing; employability events and initiatives including career and job fairs)	£45,000
Total Operational	£403,166.40
DfC Admin Costs	£100,791.00
ANBC Admin Costs	£24,306.00
Total Administration	£125,097.00
Total Budget	£528,263.40

6. Governance

The Partnership meet bi-monthly (6 times per year) and was chaired by the Mayor. Minutes from LMP meetings would be reported to the Economic Development Committee.

Proposed by Councillor Ward
Seconded by Councillor Lynch and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

5.4 **PT/CI/049 PERFORMANCE AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2023/24 PERFORMANCE PROGRESS REPORT (ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT) QUARTER 4**

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members' that the Performance and Improvement Plan 2023/24 Performance Progress Report (Economic Development) Quarter 4 be noted.

2. Background

Members were reminded that Part 12 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 put in place a framework to support the continuous improvement of Council services.

The Council's Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2023/24 was approved in June 2023. This set out a range of robust performance targets,

along with six identified improvement objectives and a number of Statutory Performance Targets.

3. Previous Decision of Council

As agreed at the August 2023 Council meeting, quarterly performance reports would be presented to the relevant committee or Working Group.

4. Key Points

Fourth Quarter performance progress reports for Economic Development were circulated for Members information.

Proposed by Alderman Magill
Seconded by Councillor Lynch and agreed that

the Performance and Improvement Plan 2023/24 Performance Progress Report (Economic Development) Quarter 4 be noted.

NO ACTION

5.5 **FI/FIN/4 BUDGET REPORT – QUARTER 4 APRIL 2023 to MARCH 2024**

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to provide financial performance information at Quarter four (April 2023 – March 2024) for Economic Development.

2. Introduction

As agreed at the August Council meeting, quarterly budget reports would be presented to the relevant Committee or Working Group. All financial reports would be available to all Members.

3. Summary

The budget report for Period 12 did not include adjustments required to arrive at the final financial position of the Council for the 2023/24 financial year. These adjustments included final accruals of expenditure incurred and grants and debts invoiced after 31 March 2024, contributions to or from reserves, and prepayments of expenditure and income.

The budget report for Economic Development for Quarter 4 – April 2023 to March 2024 was circulated for Members' information.

Proposed by Councillor Lynch
Seconded by Councillor Mallon and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

5.6 ED/ED/171 MINUTES – BELFAST REGIONAL CITY DEAL COUNCIL PANEL

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to share with Members the minutes of recent BRCD Council Panel meetings held on 27 September 2023 and 31 January 2024; copies were circulated for Members information.

2. Introduction/Background

The BRCD Council Panel had been established to fulfil an oversight role, ensuring that the BRCD continued to be aligned with the vision for inclusive economic growth with the Panel meeting regularly during the development of the BRCD.

A query was raised in relation to the recent UKREiiF event and the Belfast region promotional material and stand. Following discussion it was agreed that the Chairperson would write to the Belfast City and Region Place Partnership seeking assurance that Antrim and Newtownabbey would be appropriately represented in future promotional material and at relevant events.

Proposed by Councillor Mallon

Seconded by Councillor Lynch and agreed that

the minutes of the 27 September 2023 and 31 January 2024 meetings be noted and that the Chairperson write to the Belfast City and Region Place Partnership.

ACTION BY: Majella McAlister, Director of Economic Development and Planning

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Alderman Magill

Seconded by Councillor Lynch and agreed

that the following Committee business be taken In Confidence and the livestream and audio recording would cease.

6 ITEMS IN CONFIDENCE

6.1 **IN CONFIDENCE** ED/ED/199 SUPPORTING DIRECT INVESTMENT FUND SUMMARY AND UPDATE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to provide Members with an update on the Supporting Direct Investment Policy and the associated the Supporting Town Centre Fund and the Workspace Development Fund, outlining the background of the Fund and the state of play of current applications.

2. Introduction/Position

Since August 2021 the Council had managed a number of funds under the Supporting Direct Investment Policy to support investment across the Borough, primarily with a view to stimulating or securing further investment, jobs and associated business rates income. Set out in this report was an overview of those funds and a breakdown of the beneficiaries and local impact to date.

Supporting Direct Investment Fund

The purpose of the Supporting Direct Investment Fund was to support the delivery of economic growth across the Borough with a view to enabling growth and creating jobs, whilst safeguarding businesses that might have otherwise relocated Council area.

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council implemented the Strategic Direct investment Policy to remove barriers and offer financial incentives to:

- a) Businesses based in the Borough with strategic growth plans that may be considering relocating outside the area; and
- b) Foreign & Indigenous businesses with mobile strategic growth plans who could add economic value by locating in the Borough, creating jobs & enhancing opportunities for both residents in gaining employment/skills and providing added value to the local supply chain.

Approved by Full Council in March 2021, the Policy to Support Direct Investment from its inception had committed more than £350,000 to strategically selected businesses and had supported beneficiaries in creating job opportunities, improving the supply chain, increasing the Borough's rates base and enhancing skills.

Funding awards were assessed on a case-by-case basis however the priority sectors relating to the strategic direct investment policy, in line with the current Economic Development Strategy were:

- a) Advance Manufacturing & Engineering
- b) Transport & Logistics
- c) Construction & Materials Handling
- d) Life & Health Sciences
- e) Food & Drink
- f) Aerospace & Defence
- g) Creative, Digital & Technology
- h) Professional & Financial Services

The Councils Investment team prepared a casework for each application for consideration by the Economic Development Committee. Details included:

- Background to the business.
- Strategic Context – value of investment, jobs created included value of wages & impact on local supply chain.
- Company Viability including historic and projected financial performance.
- Additionally – did the business require financial intervention?

- Displacement – by locating in the Borough would it displace existing businesses.
- Mobility – was the business mobile and capable of relocating to the Borough

The level of assistance would be proportionate to the scale of investment, jobs created, business rates secured, and strategic opportunities gained by the business locating, or investing, in the Borough.

Successful Applications to date:

- Tribe Technology Group Ltd - approved at OPODG 26 May 2021 ratified at Full Council June 2021
Supporting the business to locate in the Borough by mitigating start-up costs
- BLK BOX - approved at OPODG 29 September 2021 ratified at Full Council October 2021
Supporting the business to locate in the Borough and creating job opportunities for residents, increase business rates income, develop the manufacturing supply chain and enhance the infrastructure of the surrounding area.
- Jans Offsite Solutions Ltd - approved at OPODG 12 Jan 2022 ratified at Full Council January 2022
To support a manufacturing business to grow and meet strong demand enabling the creation of jobs and the development of supply chains and enhance infrastructure in the surrounding area
- Hilton Templepatrick - approved at OPODG 7 April 2022 ratified at Full Council April 2022
To support the development and expansion of the hotel to sustain existing jobs as well as the creation of new jobs, to support Council's Tourism provision
- Ashers Baking Co – approved at OPODG 22 August 2023 ratified at Full Council August 2023
Support investment in new manufacturing food production facility and retain indigenous business within the Borough and the creation of new jobs and enhancing local supply chains
- PING Handling Ltd – approved at OPODG 22 August 2023 ratified at Full Council August 2023
Support the remodel of the BIA facility and investment in electric ground handling vehicles and equipment, and creation of new jobs on site

Extensive monitoring and reporting would be undertaken by officers in liaison with recipients of the funding to ensure that all associated KPIs and project outcomes were met before funding payments are made.

Impact

Calculations to date show that the Fund has secured **£28.6m** worth of investment into the Borough creating approximately **430 jobs** (secured and new across project construction and operation), **150,000ft²** of new commercial floor space leading to an **increase of £332,238.72** to the annual business rates income.

The below table set out the current financial position and recipients of the SDI Fund.

Financial Position:

Strategic Direct Investment Fund					
Business Name	Amount Awarded	Paid to Date	Remaining	Anticipated Payment date	KPI's
Tribe Technology Group Ltd	£15,000	£15,000	£-	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To create 28 Jobs within 24 months Create 20,000sq ft of floor space
BLK BOX	£74,250	£50,000	£24,250	Q4 24/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To create 70 Jobs within 24 months To generate £40m of sales by 2023 To export (sales outside UK) £36m by 2023
Hilton Templepatrick	£89,760	£89,760	£-	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment of £█ to develop and upgrade the Hotel Expansion of the Hotel by 23,000 sq ft To sustain 130 existing jobs To create 10 jobs within 24 months
Jans Offsite Solutions Ltd	£58,435.66	£20,000	£38,435.66	Q1 25/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build new 107,639sq ft factory by 2023 Fit out and purchase specialist equipment by 2023 To create 50 jobs by 2022 To create 100 jobs by 2023
Ashers Baking Co	£56,381.25	£28,191.25	£28,190	Q1 25/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest £█ in a new 19,375sq ft food production facility To create 45 jobs during the construction phase To create 47 jobs within 2 years of executing the lease
Total	£349,326.91	£230,691.25	£118,635.66		

Supporting Town Centre Fund

Members were reminded that the Council operated a Strategic Town Centre Investment Fund to provide financial assistance to companies making strategic investment in our town centres, either as a new business or an indigenous business that is growing and developing.

Town Centres across the Country had experienced significant challenges in the last five years, particularly with the impact of the pandemic and other external factors negatively affecting the economy and the associated cost of living crisis. Therefore, the Strategic Investment in Town Centres Policy was agreed by Council to ensure that our future town centres provide an offer that sets them apart and meets the changing demands of customers, visitors and residents.

To avail of the Fund, buildings may be vacant or occupied but not operating at full capacity and need support to repurpose. Like the Supporting Direct Investment Fund, applications were assessed on a case-by-case basis and funds would be awarded proportionally.

Applications to date:

- Keneagles Ltd (Castle Mall) – approved at OPODG 22 August 2023 ratified at Full Council August 2023
Remodel and fit out of 8,500 ft2 to introduce Lynas Foods to Castle Mall, Antrim.

Financial Position

Supporting Town Centre Fund					
Business Name	Amount Awarded	Paid to Date	Remaining	Anticipated Payment date	Project Brief & KPI's
Keneagles	£35,000	£35,000	£-	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Investment of £[REDACTED] in creation of a large 8,500 ft2 unit within Castle Mall• Remodelling of 8,500sq ft of retail space• To create 30 jobs during the construction phase and 10 jobs in the new retail unit
Total	£35,000	£35,000	£-		

Members noted that Council Officers were continuing to explore opportunities to support future town centre investments across the Borough in line with the Town Centre Masterplans and the Economic Development Strategy. Members would be updated on future applications in due course.

Workspace Development Fund

Members were aware that the Council, working in partnership with key stakeholders were developing a network of modern, accessible, fit for purpose workspace to meet the needs of businesses today and in the future. The network of facilities would be easily recognisable to the business community presenting a common brand and offered a consistent portfolio of business start-up and development support.

Through the Workspace Development Fund, The Council aimed to attract local, national, and international investment to the Borough by addressing barriers to business setup, developing new workspaces and offices and refurbishing existing or vacant properties, particularly in town centres. This initiative would involve cooperative efforts with key partners to implement those interventions, focusing support exclusively on local social enterprises with a proven track-record.

Funding was provided based on an agreed percentage split, with the Council providing up to 65% and the enterprise contributing the remaining 35%. In-kind contributions were not eligible. The funding contract detailed the model to be advanced, legal advice, key objectives, and annual KPIs for the workspace.

Successful Applications to date:

- LEDCOM / Foundry House – approved at OPODG 18 November 2021 ratified at Full Council November 2021.
Funding to re-develop Foundry House to align with Councils shared workspace hubs in Antrim and Glengormley.

Financial Position:

Workspace Development Fund					Project Brief & KPI's
Business Name	Amount Awarded	Paid to Date	Remaining	Anticipated Payment date	
LEDCOM / Foundry House	£200,200	£-	£200,200	From Q3 24/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1m spend by LEDCOM in the ANBC Supply Chain • 200 individuals from the Ballyclare area supported from unemployment/under employment into training, further and higher education,

					<p>other skills training and employment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support a minimum of 15 jobs created within 2 years through tenancy within the project. • To support a minimum of 10 jobs safeguarded within 2 years through tenancy within the project. • It is anticipated that a minimum of 25 business start-ups (with a minimum of 30 jobs) will be supported through business support provided through services and support related to the project.
Total	£200,200	£-	£200,200		

LEDCOM was exploring options for additional financial support as a result of significantly higher pre-tender estimates due to inflation and other external market conditions.

Key Issues

So that Council was in a position to deliver the programme in accordance with the planned project of works, the current recipients would receive their funding in line with the KPI's identified in the Letters of Offer and would be progressed in due course subject to appropriate contract monitoring.

Council Officers worked with the respective entities to ensure delivery and monitoring against targets as identified in the Letters of Offer.

Next Steps

Combining the three funds, a total of £584,526.91 had been committed to date that would enable Council deliver on its strategic growth plans.

Calculations show to date that the three Funds had:

- Secured **£29.5m** worth of investment into the Borough
- Creating approximately **172,000 sq ft** of commercial floor space
- Leading to an increase of approximately **£337,407.88** to the annual rates base; and
- Created **485 jobs** (secured and new across project construction and operation).

The SDI fund was a key vehicle of support for both foreign and indigenous business with extensive growth plans that could add economic value to the Borough by creating jobs, enhancing opportunities for residents and adding value to the local supply chain. The projects availing of these funds were at various stages of delivery and funding draw-down.

Members were aware from the Economic Development Business Plan that provision had been made for continued delivery of these funds in 2024/25 and further update reports would be brought to Members in due course.

Members noted the separate agenda item relating to the use of the Supporting Direct Investment Fund for Contact Marketing (NI) Ltd.

Proposed by Councillor Mallon
Seconded by Councillor Goodman and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

6.2 IN CONFIDENCE ED/ED/263 STRATEGIC INVESTMENT FUND GRANT - CONTACT MARKETING NI LTD

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek approval for a Strategic Investment Fund Grant for Contact Marketing NI Ltd as they plan to commence a significant expansion of their premises to support the growth of their business.

2. Introduction/Background

Members were reminded that through the Strategic Investment Fund Policy, approved by Full Council in March 2021 selective grant assistance could be provided to companies expanding into or within the Borough.

In January 2024 approval was granted for Officers to commence an application process with Contact Marketing NI Ltd.

Contact Marketing had operated in the borough for over 40 years having changed premises from Antrim Town to Randalstown.

3. Previous Decision of Council

Approval granted in January 2024 for application to be progressed.

4. Key Issues (or the relevant titles for the main body of the report)

Detailed casework had been completed by Officers and was enclosed for Members to review; however, the key points were highlighted below.

About the Project

Owing to an increase in demand for their products as well as an upsurge of contracts from third party suppliers, the business had plans to expand its operations enabling greater capacity and capability. The existing building required modernisation and the company wanted to increase warehousing amenities as well as develop new office space.

The improved facility would enable Contact Marketing NI Ltd to increase the volume of products stored and create state of the art office space to align with their corporate ambitions to expand.

The project saw a £[REDACTED] investment by the company and would have significant impact for the local area and would provide job creation for both permanent and seasonal staff, as well as safeguard existing employees.

Project Outcomes

The commercial objectives of the project included:

1. Investment in a new modern warehouse facility of 12,000 ft² created
2. Investment in the new build of £[REDACTED]
3. 7 FTE jobs created
4. New office space on ground floor and first floor of 2260ft²

The project would support a business that had very ambitious targets to grow in their home market through the provision of better storage/distribution and sales of products, enabling Contact Marketing NI Ltd to demonstrate efficiencies in their working procedures to keep up with market demand. As an indigenous business, the Council aimed to support and aid that growth as it complemented Councils strategic goals to be a place for businesses to feel supported and enabled.

Benefits to the Council

Through the casework process it had been confirmed that the proposed grant provided by the Council would be 'paid back' in new rates income in under two years and would then continue to generate over £24,000 in rates income going forward.

In addition, the Council would also see 7 new jobs created and the existing jobs maintained in the Randalstown area.

5. Financial Position/Implication

The proposed grant assistance for Contact Marketing was **£32,494**. This would be paid in two instalments, one on commencement of the capital build project and one on the completion of the project and achievement of the associated KPIs.

This was based on the company's investment of £[REDACTED] and multipliers based on the scale of the expansion, the number of jobs being created.

As per the budget agreed through the Economic Development Business Plan in February 2024 there was a budget of £300,000 set aside for grant awards under the three strategic funds. There would be no further financial implications to the Council.

6. Summary

Contact Marketing Limited had applied to the Strategic Investment Fund for grant assistance of £32,494 to support its business expansion plans. The business was investing £[REDACTED] in the Borough creating 12,000 Ft² of warehousing space and 2260 Ft² of office space. The project would create 7FTE jobs and support the business with its growth plans.

This support would be recouped by the Council through additional rates income in under 18 months and would provide the Council with £24,000 in additional rates revenue from that point onwards on an annual basis.

Proposed by Councillor Lynch
Seconded by Alderman Magill and agreed that

grant assistance of £32,494 from the Strategic Investment Fund for Contact Marketing Limited be approved to support their business expansion plans in the Borough.

ACTION BY: Stewart McCormack, Investment Officer, Economic Development

6.3 **IN CONFIDENCE** ED/ED/284 STRATEGIC PLANNING APPLICATIONS OVERVIEW

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to update Members regarding Major Strategic Planning Applications and for Members to note current Planning Application Notices.

A copy of the Major Strategic Planning Applications and current Planning Application Notices had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

Proposed by Alderman Ross
Seconded by Councillor Lynch and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

6.4 **IN CONFIDENCE** ED/REG/084 SMALL SETTLEMENT PROGRAMME – TEMPLEPATRICK ARTWORK

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek Members direction on the Small Settlement Programme's Artwork Scheme and the Templepatrick sculpture.

2. Introduction/Background

Members were reminded that, in February 2022, the Council was successful in securing £968,000 from the Department of Communities, Department for Infrastructure and the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs under the COVID-19 Small Settlements Recovery Fund, split over five areas as detailed below.

- Shop Front Scheme - £120,000
- Illumination Scheme - £180,000 (Templepatrick only)
- Environmental Improvement Scheme - £483,000
- Artwork, Signage, Interpretation - £126,000
- Programme Delivery - £51,000

Of the £126,000 allocated to the artwork element, £120,000 was provided by the Departments involved and the remaining £6,000 was contributed by the Council.

The artwork elements sought to enhance the key features, history and heritage of Doagh, Templepatrick and Burnside, and complement efforts to help these rural communities recover from the impact of the COVID pandemic. The artwork was also intended to complement a parallel Environmental Improvement Scheme (EIS) in these areas.

The Council's Invitation to Tender requested the design, construction and installation of public artwork:

- In Doagh Square to represent the history and heritage of the area.
- In Burnside Riverwalk to represent nature, wildlife and biodiversity; and
- In Templepatrick's two main roundabouts to represent an aeronautical theme.

Specifically considering Templepatrick, tendering artists were asked to ensure continuity between the two roundabout artworks and to use building materials which connected with local heritage features. Local Elected Members had also requested an aviation theme to reflect Templepatrick's location on the route to Belfast International Airport.

Following a competitive tendering exercise



As part of the required due diligence, the Economic Development team approached the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) about the proposed sculptures in August 2023.

DfI concluded that the proposed sculpture on the roundabout at the airport end of Templepatrick was a potential hazard, given its size and close proximity to a level crossing distracting driver attention from the level crossing signals and barriers on the approach.

It was agreed to remove artwork from the airport-end/ A57 roundabout entirely and proceed with a revised concept for the Paradise Walk roundabout only. Hatty and Young's revised plans presented [REDACTED]

Council Officers updated Airport DEA Members on project progress in early 2024, prior to the scheduled submission of the required planning application. Elected Members asked Officers to investigate the provision of [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] In light of this request, Officers delayed submitting a planning application and had worked with the artist to explore the implications of size increases of 20%, 40% and 60%.

An image of the original tendered proposal was circulated for Members' consideration.

3. Previous Decision of Council

- **Council meeting July 2022** – approval to proceed with the Covid Recovery Small Settlement Regeneration Programme (CRSSRP).
- **May 2023**- approval to appoint Hatty + Young Ltd for the public art commission in Templepatrick, Doagh, and Burnside at a total cost of £126,000.
- **February 2024** – approval to appoint ID Verde as contractor for the Environmental Improvement Scheme (EIS)

4. Key Issues

As outlined, the timescale for the delivery of this project had been delayed due to;

- Initial contract changes/ negotiations with the appointed artist including the detailed design period.
- Design adaptation following DfI's decision on the unviability of artwork on the A57 roundabout.
- A knock-on delay in appointing the EIS contractor.
- Time taken to investigate the potential for size increases to the scale of the sculpture.

These delays had significantly shifted the original timescales, whereby the sculptures were due to be installed in December 2023. The artist had informed Officers there would be a significant increase in costs across all elements of the Templepatrick artwork provision, beyond the size/scale increases requested.

5. Financial Position/Implication

As outlined, the total allocation for the Artwork element was £126,000. The Artist tender prices for each element were as follows:

- Doagh and Burnside - £ [REDACTED]
- Templepatrick - £ [REDACTED]

In recent weeks the appointed artist had indicated that due to inflation, a price increase had been recorded for the base materials to construct the airplane sculpture. The increase in cost was before the additional cost of increasing the size further and any additional groundwork required to accommodate this. The profile and breakdown of the cost increases were displayed in the table below.

BUDGET CATEGORY	Tendered ([REDACTED])	Revised Cost due to Inflation ([REDACTED])	Cost of larger sculpture 20% increase ([REDACTED])
Design	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Professional fees	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Materials	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Manufacture	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Storage	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Transportation	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Installation	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
TOTAL	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Increase	-	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Other charges e.g. additional ground surveys, foundations etc.		£15,000	£25,000
Total Estimated Costs	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Total increase	n/a	£40,938	£115,482

There were a number of other considerations that Members were aware of in relation to this project:

- **Tender and Contract**
 - Given the nature of the tender process undertaken for this project. The maximum threshold for this project was £ [REDACTED]
 - The Council retained the option of proceeding with the Doagh and Burnside pieces and terminating the Templepatrick element. This would incur a cost for work completed by the Artist to date. More information was provided on this option later in the report.
- **Planning Permission**

- The [REDACTED] sculpture would still require planning permission before construction could take place. Whilst initial conversations with DFI had been positive, the planning process had yet to be undertaken.

- **Additional Funding**

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

6. Governance

To date, this Programme had been managed by the Council's Economic Development team, working closely with the Capital Development Team as project lead for the Environmental Improvement Scheme. The team had significant experience in delivering projects of this nature for Council.

7. Summary

The artwork element of the Small Settlements Programme had run six months over timescale and was projecting a sizeable cost increase on the original budget. A number of options had been presented for Members' consideration.

The Director of Economic Development and Planning provided Members with an update on this report and requested that it be deferred. The reason for the deferral was to allow Officers to review further potential funding opportunities, and to allow further engagement with the DEA Members before being brought back to Committee for decision.

Proposed by Councillor Mallon
 Seconded by Alderman Ross and agreed that

that the Item be deferred.

ACTION BY: Steven Norris, Deputy Director of Regeneration and Infrastructure/Natasha Donald, Regeneration Officer, Economic Development

6.5 IN CONFIDENCE ED/ED/195 Vol.2 MINUTES – LEVELLING UP FUND PROJECT BOARD ANTRIM & GLENGORMLEY

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members for approval the minutes (circulated) of the Levelling Up Fund Project Board meetings held on 26th April 2024 for both the Glengormley and Antrim schemes.

2. Governance

The Levelling Up Fund award required that a governance structure be put in place to oversee the management and implementation of the approved schemes:

LUF0037 Glengormley Integrated Economic and Physical Regeneration Scheme

LUF0080 Antrim Integrated Economic and Physical Regeneration Scheme

Proposed by Councillor Mallon

Seconded by Councillor Lynch and agreed that

the minutes of the Levelling Up Fund Project Board meetings held on 26th April 2024 be approved.

ACTION BY: Jill Murray, Executive Officer, Economic Development

6.6. IN CONFIDENCE ED/ED/273 MINUTES - GLENGORMLEY PUBLIC REALM PROJECT BOARD

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to recommend to Members for approval the minutes (circulated) of the Glengormley Public Realm Project Board held on 26th March 2024.

2. Governance

The Board, as required by the Department for Communities (funder), was established to provide assurance and a formal governance structure for the successful delivery of the improvement works, as defined in the Glengormley Town Centre Environmental Improvement scheme business case.

Proposed by Councillor Mallon

Seconded by Councillor Lynch and agreed that

the minutes of the Glengormley Public Realm Project Board held on 26th March 2024 be approved.

ACTION BY: Jill Murray, Executive Officer, Economic Development

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED OUT OF 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Councillor Mallon
Seconded by Councillor Lynch and agreed that

that the remainder of Committee business be taken in Open Session.

The Chairperson advised that audio-recording would recommence at this point.

There being no further Committee business, the Chairperson thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting concluded at 7.55 pm.

MAYOR

Council Minutes have been redacted in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation, and legal advice.