



Economic Development Strategy

2018 – 2023

 **INVEST & CONNECT**

 **Antrim and
Newtownabbey**
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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1. Prosperity Building for all our residents

1.1. A new era of Economic Development

Economic Development and the economic context has evolved considerably since Councils first gained powers to support local growth several decades ago. A move towards 'localism' over the past decade is shifting the focus away from a 'one size fits all' national economic policy to one where cities and regions are gaining greater responsibility for driving economic competitiveness and innovative projects to unlock growth. This trend has seen a wave of 'city deals' announced across the UK including the Belfast Region City Deal of which Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council is a part. In addition, an ever more globalised economy has presented a range of opportunities and challenges at the local level that requires economic development to display agility to ensure Antrim and Newtownabbey is competing globally through having a highly skilled workforce, sophisticated infrastructure and competitive operating environment.

This economic strategy and action plan embraces a broad definition of economic development that understands the needs of the businesses in our Borough and supports them position for long term growth. Key to our broad vision is our desire to deliver improved prosperity across all the communities in the Borough. If the next generation of workers is not prepared to meet the needs of major employers, that stifles business development and retention efforts. If people are unemployed, they cannot purchase many of the goods and services the economy produces or sells, hampering businesses growth. Inefficient use of land and infrastructure hampers job access, limits productivity, and negatively impacts property values.

This economic strategy and action plan has been developed through extensive research and engagement and is rooted in a goal to create new jobs, investment and improve the wealth of individuals and the community. The evidence that underpins this strategy and action plan includes:

- A detailed socio-economic profile of the Borough
- Economic forecasts for the Borough to 2030 and reporting on global 'mega trends' that could impact on the Borough's growth
- A Benchmarking of key economic performance metrics against other locations
- A comprehensive series of conversations and opinion gathering
- Cognisance of strategic policy drivers such as the draft Northern Ireland Industrial Strategy and Belfast Region City Deal
- An assessment of current employment sites in the Borough and consideration of how the future needs for new and/or additional employment land could be delivered in a sustainable and rational manner through the Local Development Plan.

While our economy has emerged strongly from the long recession caused by the Global Financial Crisis, the current and future operating context is perhaps more uncertain now than ever before. This strategy and action plan will meet that uncertain context with Agility. We have identified a series of Calls to Action that will guide our work programmes over the next five years but remain alert to grasp new opportunities and address challenges as they arise.

Above all else, this strategy and action plan supports our Corporate Plan Vision to be a prosperous place, inspired by our people and driven by ambition and community plan, where all our citizens benefit from economic prosperity.

1.2. Providing Leadership and Partnership

Successful economic development relies on purposeful collaboration with a wide array of participants. The economic think tank that has been established in the Borough is testament to the broad range of organisations that have a role to play in our economic success. Key employers or 'anchor' institutions, education providers, government department and their agencies, banks, enterprise agencies and community and social economy groups are all invested in making the Borough a success. Successful economic development also requires leadership.

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council, with the enhanced economic development powers gained in the 2015 reorganisation of local government stands ready to lead, support and facilitate economic development activities across our Borough.

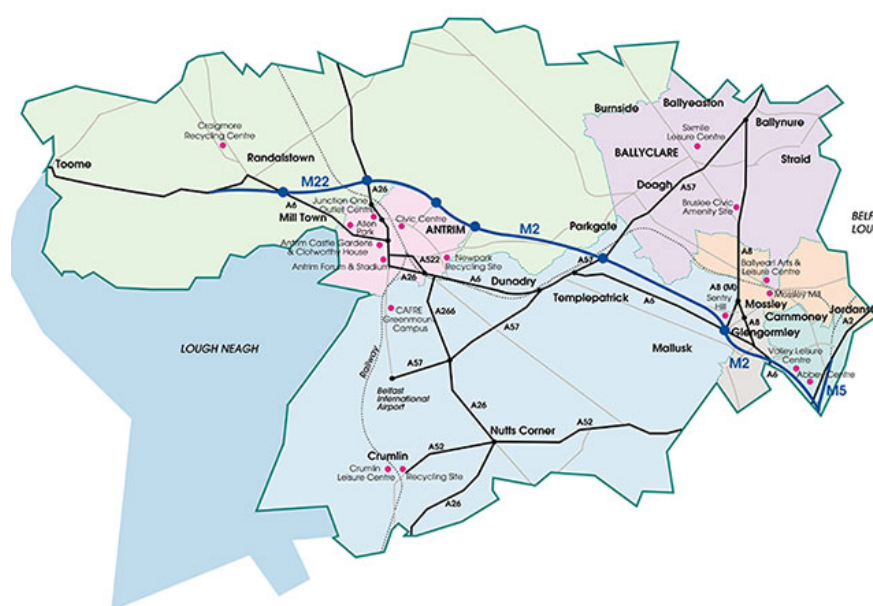
2. Antrim and Newtownabbey Profile

2.1. Our Diverse Borough

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council covers 274 square miles from the shores of Lough Neagh in the west to the shores of Belfast Lough in the east. Its northern boundary with Ballymena leads to the Glens of Antrim and the Causeway Coast, while to the south it borders Belfast and Lisburn and Mid Ulster Borough Council to the west. Whilst largely a rural borough, there are a number of established settlements within the Antrim and Newtownabbey area including Newtownabbey, Glengormley, Ballyclare, Crumlin, Antrim, Randalstown and Toome.

The M2 is the main artery of the Borough providing an east west connection between the main urban areas in the east and the settlements of Antrim and Toome, with the A8 providing further connectivity. Antrim and Newtownabbey is home to Belfast International Airport and has excellent links to the Port of Larne and Belfast Harbour.

Figure 1: Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council Area



A comprehensive socio-economic profile of the Borough is available separately¹. Key findings from that assessment are presented below.

2.1.1. Population Profile

In 2016 Antrim and Newtownabbey had a population of 141,032, 7.5% of the Northern Ireland total. Between 2001 and 2016 the population of Antrim and Newtownabbey increased by 12,272 persons, a growth rate of 9% which is on par with the Northern Ireland average. Antrim and Newtownabbey's demographic split is also largely on a par with Northern Ireland, with 21% aged under 16 and 64% representing the majority of the working age population (16-64). However, a marginally higher proportion (16%) of the population is people aged 65 plus.

Population growth in Antrim and Newtownabbey has slowed since the economic downturn, linked to a marked change in net-migration. Prior to the recession and downturn in 2009 and 2010, Antrim and Newtownabbey benefited from a net positive inward migration in excess of 500 people per annum. During and since the recession this shifted to become a net negative figure, with more people leaving the Borough than becoming residents. The decline reached a trough in 2014 with net out migration of c.400. More recently, between 2014 and 2016 net migration has returned to close to balance.

¹ [will these documents be webhosted to enable cross referencing]

Since 2001 there has been a noticeable shift in the local demographic trends. The most noticeable increase is in the number of 65 plus, with a 38% increase versus a 33% increase across Northern Ireland. In addition, the proportion of those aged 16-39 has decreased by 5.6% compared to 1.2% at Northern Ireland wide level. These trends impact on a range of issues including the availability of labour and consumption patterns within the Antrim and Newtownabbey area.

Figure 2a: Population Estimates by age bands 2001-2016

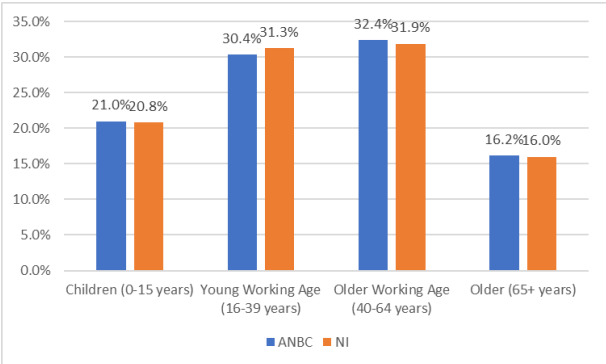
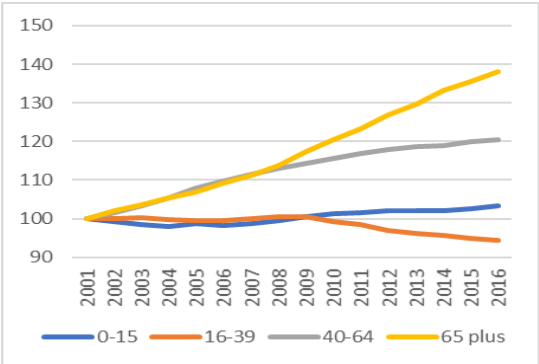


Figure 2b: Indexed Population trends 2001-2016



Source: NISRA

2.1.2. Labour Market

In 2016, 80.5% of those aged 16-64 living in Antrim and Newtownabbey were economically active and 19.5% were economically inactive. This compares with 74% economically active and 26% economically inactive for Northern Ireland. The long tail of the recession impacted economic activity levels in Antrim and Newtownabbey between 2011 and 2014, with economic activity decreasing from 80% to 74%, while Northern Ireland wide levels remained fairly constant. However, since 2014, activity has increased almost six percentage points, compared to just two percentage points across Northern Ireland.

The average number of people aged 16-64 in Antrim and Newtownabbey claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) in 2016 was 2,190 representing a claimant count annual average rate of 2.4%. This compares with a claimant count rate for Northern Ireland of 3.1% in 2016. The youth claimant count rate (aged 18-24) was 27% in Antrim and Newtownabbey and is higher than that of Northern Ireland overall (25%). The proportion of total claimants who were long term unemployed is lower in Antrim and Newtownabbey at 30.4% when compared to that of Northern Ireland overall (36.1%).

In 2016, the 16-64 employment rate in Antrim and Newtownabbey was 74.6%. This is higher than the overall 16-64 employment rate for Northern Ireland which was 69.3%. Employment rates reached a peak of 75.4% in 2011, declining until 2015 before recovering to the current rate in 2016.

Figure 3a: Economic Activity (% of working age population) 2009-2016

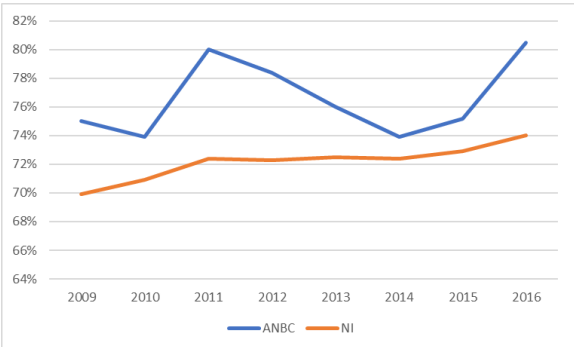
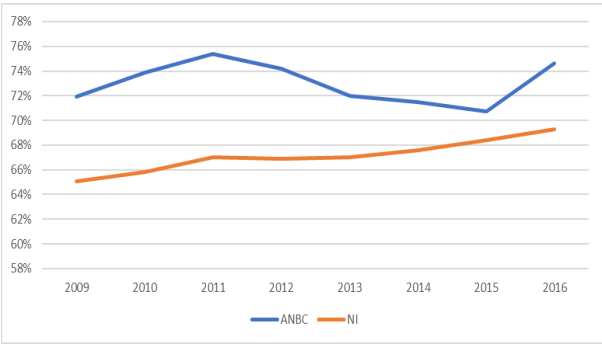


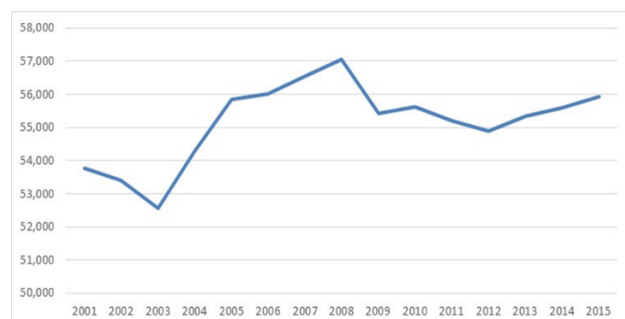
Figure 3b: Employment (% of working age population) 2009-2016



Source: NISRA

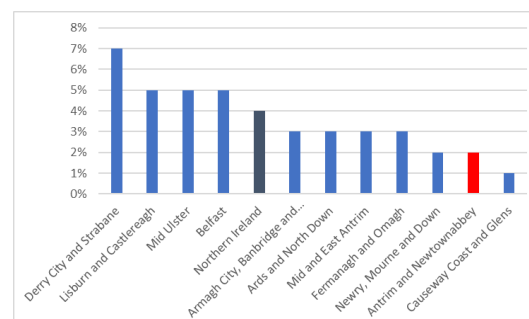
While resident employment numbers have surpassed pre-recession levels the number of employee jobs in the Borough remains c.1,000 below the previous 2008 high of over 57,000 employee jobs. Encouragingly, the post-recession downturn in employee jobs has reversed with growth now well established. Although positive, the pace of employee growth in Antrim and Newtownabbey is one of the slowest in Northern Ireland and was at half the Northern Ireland rate between 2013 and 2015.

Figure 4a: Employee jobs in Antrim and Newtownabbey, 2001-2015



Source: Nisra

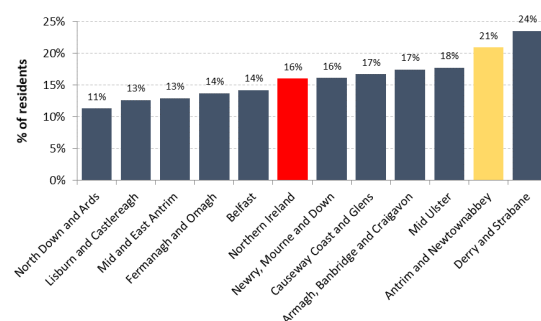
Figure 4b: % change in Employee Jobs v Northern Ireland Councils 2013-2015



2.1.3. Education and Skills profile

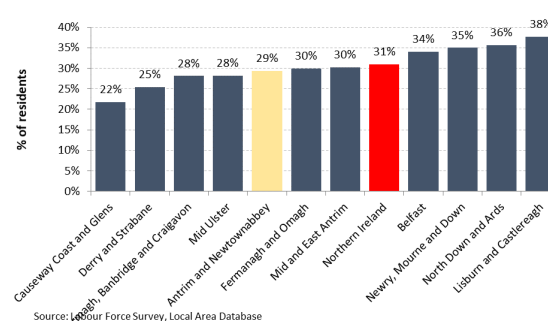
In 2016 the number of working age people in Antrim and Newtownabbey with no qualifications was 21%, considerably worse than the Northern Ireland average of 16%. At the other end of the skills spectrum, it is a slightly better relative position for Antrim and Newtownabbey. The number of working age people reported as holding level 4 or above qualifications is 29%, a figure which is more broadly aligned with the Northern Ireland average of 31% and better than four of the other Council areas.

Figure 5a: % 16-64 with no formal qualifications, Northern Ireland Regions, 2016



Source: Labour Force Survey Local Area Database/NINIS

Figure 5b: % 16-64 with 4+ qualifications, Northern Ireland Regions, 2016



Source: Labour Force Survey, Local Area Database

2.1.4. Business Base

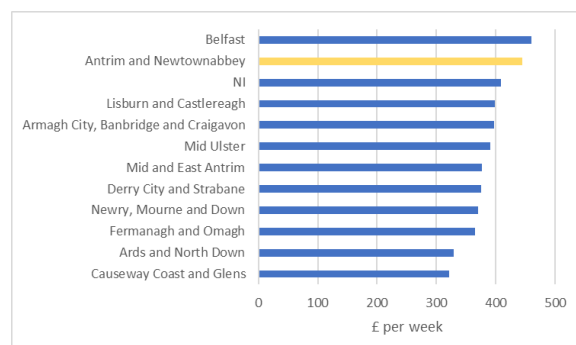
Whilst Antrim and Newtownabbey has the lowest number of businesses of all the Northern Ireland councils and the lowest number of businesses per capita, it is home to the largest number of businesses with a turnover over £500k and has the largest average business size of all Northern Ireland council areas. This business base includes large anchor firms and institutions such as Belfast International Airport, Antrim Area Hospital, NRC, RLC, Randox and Bombardier. The area also has the second lowest entrepreneurship levels of all Northern Ireland council areas (as measured by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor), indicating low levels of entrepreneurial activity.

2.1.5. Quality of life

The Antrim and Newtownabbey area is generally prosperous with average wages second highest of all the Northern Ireland Councils. Whilst prosperous, like all of Northern Ireland, pockets of deprivation exist. The Dunanney ward in Rathcoole is the only ward to fall within the top 10% of the most deprived wards in Northern Ireland, reflecting its neighbourhood renewal area status. When widening the scope to the 20% most deprived wards Carrmoney 1, Coole, Monkstown 1, Whitehouse

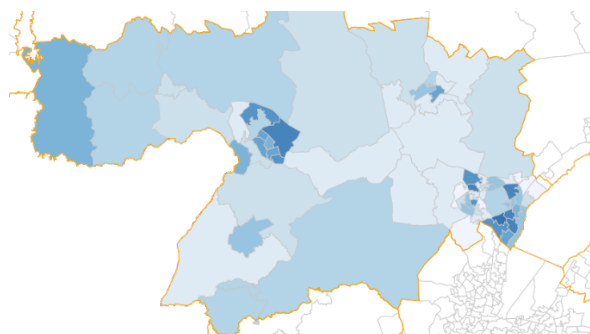
join Dunanney in the top 20% under Multiple deprivation. In terms of other specific areas of deprivation across the Borough there are pockets of deprivation with respect to 'education, skills and training' and 'proximity to services', as indicated in figure 6b below:

Figure 6a: Average gross weekly wage 2017, Northern Ireland Local Councils



Source: NISRA

Figure 6b: Concentration of Deprivation across Antrim and Newtownabbey



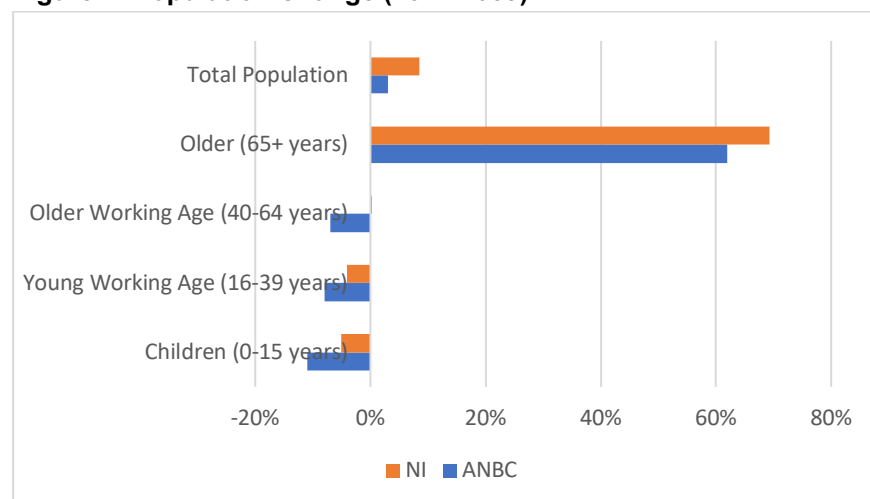
2.2. Our Future Borough

2.2.1. Population Forecasts

Antrim and Newtownabbey's projected population will grow by approximately 3% by 2039, to reach 145,347. Northern Ireland is forecast to add 9% to total population over the same period, breaking through the two million people mark.

Although the general population is expected to increase by 3%, the core message is one of a sharply aging demographic profile. All age cohorts are projected to decline except those in the age 65+ band. This cohort is projected to increase by 62%. When compared to Northern Ireland trends, there will be a larger fall in the proportion of children and those of working age, likely increasing the average age within the Borough. By 2039, the number of children will make up 17% of the Antrim and Newtownabbey population compared to 25% of the population aged 65 years and over. As a result, the working age population (16-64 years) is projected to decrease by 5% or 6,483 persons from 2016 to 2039. These trends will continue to impact the function of the local economy in terms of availability of labour and consumption patterns and place demand on services such as health and social services.

Figure 7: Population Change (2014-2039)

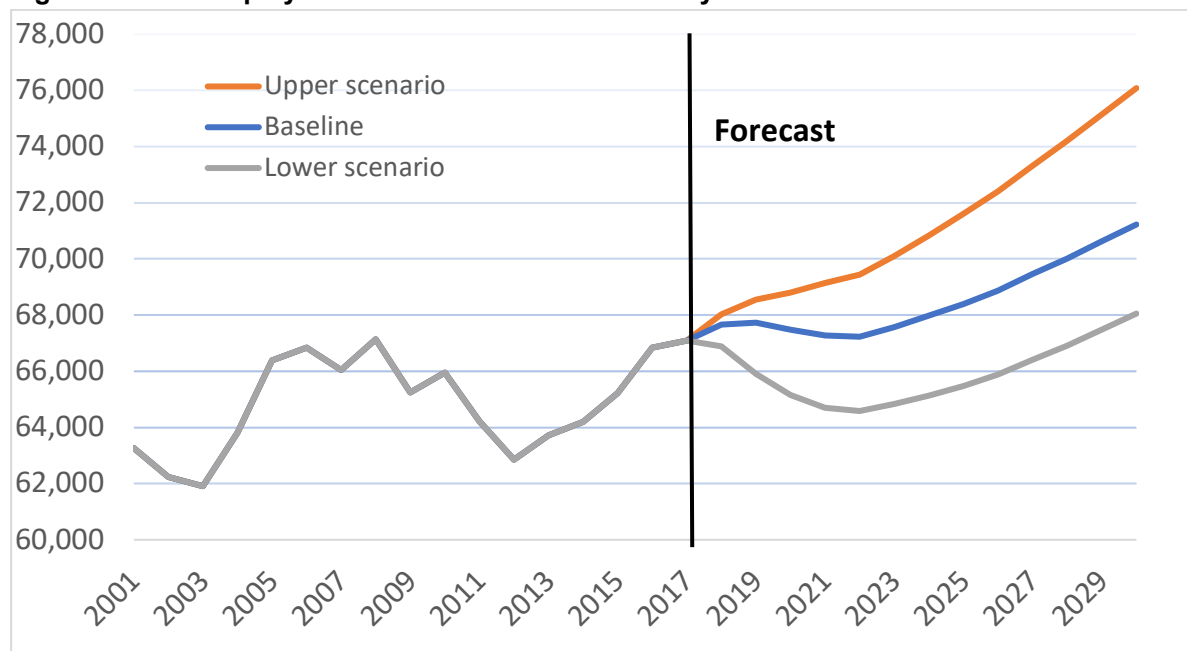


Source: NISRA 2016

2.2.2. Employment Forecasts

Forecasts from the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre (UUEPC) for Antrim and Newtownabbey suggest that total employment will decline in the base and lower forecasts until 2022 before beginning a consistent upward trend (figure 8).

Figure 8: Total Employment in Antrim & Newtownabbey 2001-2030

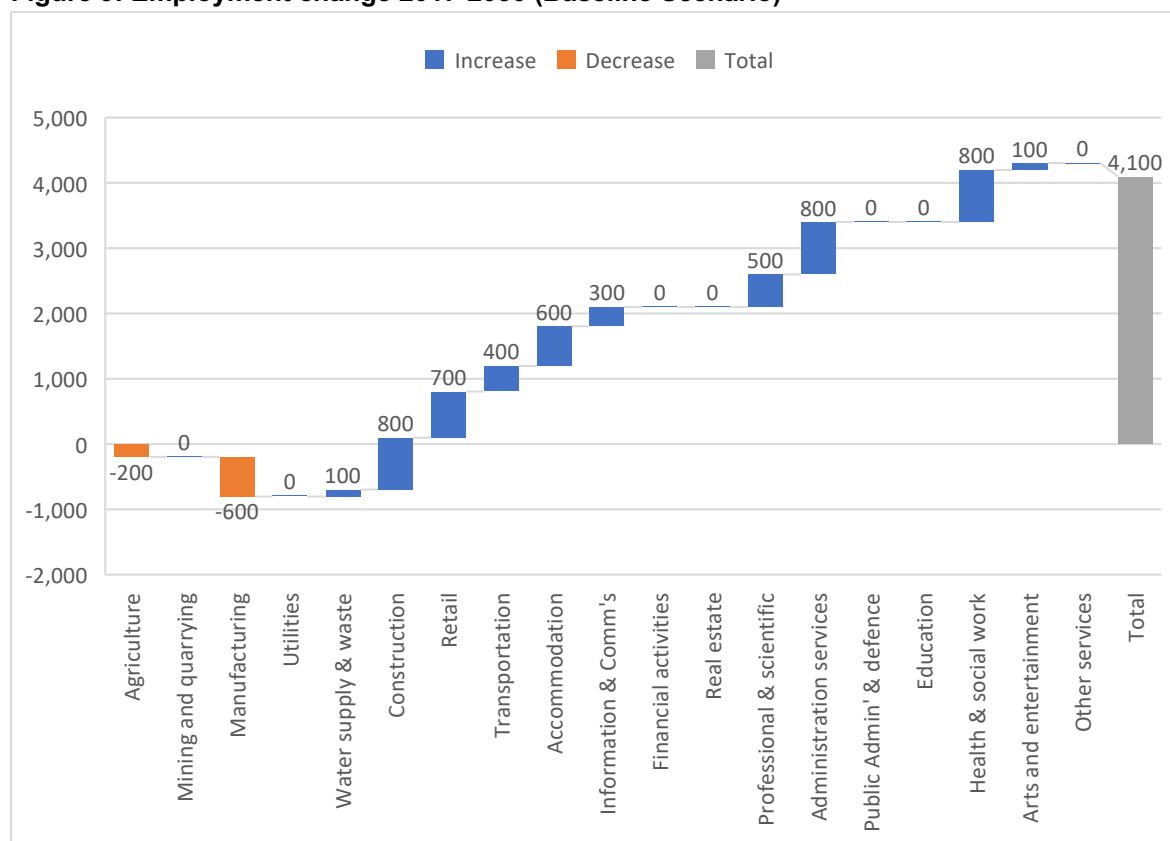


Source: NISRA, UUEPC

By 2030, UUEPC's forecasts suggest that Antrim and Newtownabbey's employment will be 4,100 higher than the current total employment levels of 67,000. The upper scenario, as defined above, would result in considerably stronger job creation, adding a further c.4,000 above the baseline scenario and resulting in total employment of c.76,000.

The sectoral mix in Antrim and Newtownabbey is heavily weighted towards private sector office/retail type employment and transportation. Private sector jobs account for 70% of total employment, with 30% in the public sector. Across all sectors, retail is the largest, accounting for close to one in five of all jobs in the Borough. (A full sector analysis is included as an annex and summarised in section 2.3). The contribution to Antrim & Newtownabbey's growth from each sector in the baseline scenario is presented in figure 9. In this scenario, administration services, Construction and Health & Social Work contribute more jobs by 2030 than any other, adding 800 each. At the other end of the spectrum, manufacturing is expected to shed 600 jobs by 2030, roughly 10% of current employment levels.

Figure 9: Employment change 2017-2030 (Baseline Scenario)



Source: UUEPC, Webb Advisory

2.2.3. Future Skills

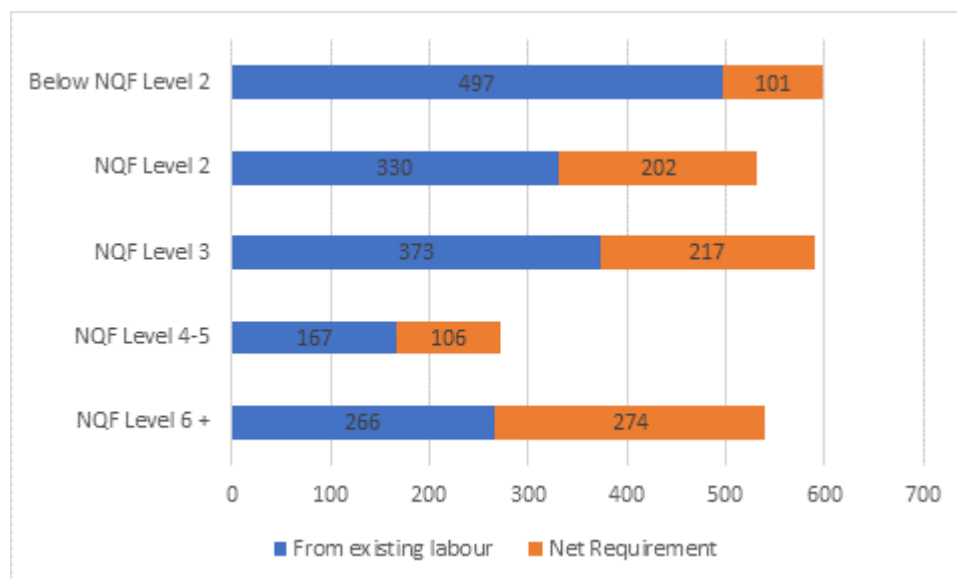
The Northern Ireland Skills Barometer² forecasts that there will be an annual demand for 80,400 additional employees across Northern Ireland annually to 2026 of which 20,600 will require new labour market entrants from migration and education.

Using the Northern Ireland Skills Barometer and the forecasts above Webb Advisory analysis has identified that there will be demand for 2,531 roles to be filled per annum to 2030 in the Antrim and Newtownabbey area. 64% of these, 1,633 are forecast to be filled from the existing labour market³, with 899 identified as requiring new labour market entrants. Over the period to 2030 this will lead to the following requirements across the various National Qualification Framework levels:

² The NI skills forecasting model commissioned by Department for the Economy

³ This analysis is based on a pro-rated approach which does not take account of changing trends in demographics of the Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council area. For example, the number of retirees is expected to increase in the Borough at a faster rate than in NI as a whole. As such there is potential for the demand for new labour market entrants to be greater than calculated here.

Figure 10: Annual Skills Demand to 2030, Antrim and Newtownabbey



Source: Webb Advisory Analysis of Northern Ireland Skills Barometer

The movement of labour between administrative boundaries and the increasing draw of Belfast make it difficult to forecast skills supply within the context of this project⁴. As such Webb advisory has not aimed to quantify a skills mismatch but highlight how the local labour market and skills context is likely to impact and where areas of oversupply and undersupply may be. When considering where the demand is forecast to be, this analysis would indicate the following in terms of supply:

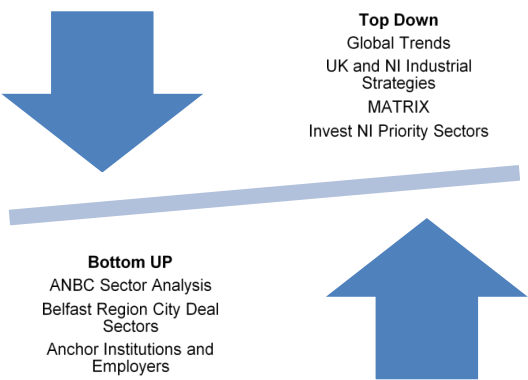
- There is likely to be a reduction in overall supply given the reducing proportion of the working age population and ongoing forecast negative net migration.
- The increasing draw of surrounding areas, specifically Belfast, is likely to put further pressure on supply, drawing labour in from Antrim and Newtownabbey and seeing less flow out from Belfast to Antrim and Newtownabbey.
- There will be a significant 'knowledge loss' with the older population moving towards retirement;
- Given the existing skills profile and ongoing attainment issues, there is likely to be an oversupply at NQF 2 and below consistent with the Northern Ireland trend at this level.
- Again, based on the current skills profile and attainment issues, with Antrim and Newtownabbey underperforming in comparison with other council areas, this would suggest undersupply from levels 3 to 6, again consistent with the Northern Ireland trend.
- It is difficult to forecast whether levels 7 and 8 will experience an over or undersupply as there is limited data at a sub-regional level.

2.3. Sectors of Advantage

⁴ As part of the next phase of the NI Skills Barometer, there will be a focus on sub-regional areas.

The employment forecasts in the previous section point towards several sectors that are projected to increase over the forecast period. Equally, there are important sectors in Antrim and Newtownabbey that are forecast to decline. In seeking to understand which sectors Antrim and Newtownabbey could gain, or have a competitive advantage in, forecasts are but one, albeit important, mode of investigation.

Based on a top down and bottom up approach denoted in the diagram, a long list of potential sectors of advantage were considered and ultimately reduced to a short list of sectors where Antrim and Newtownabbey could gain economic advantage (a full overview of the analysis is presented in supporting documentation⁵). In prioritising, Webb Advisory has considered the following:



- Scale of local output, employment, exports and productivity
- Recent growth trends
- Alignment with wider regional priorities
- Likely success of local level policy intervention, based on previous evidence

The long list of sectors has been prioritised into the following three segments:

- **Focus and Step Change:** These are “critical for growth” sectors which are considered likely to have the potential to support significant economic growth. These are sectors against which to prioritise resource and effort as a key economic development opportunity for Antrim and Newtownabbey
- **Sustain and Grow:** These are important core sectors for Antrim and Newtownabbey’s economic development, with potential to enable [potentially significant] incremental growth. These are sectors which should be cultivated and nurtured to support future economic growth.
- **Monitor and Intervene:** These are sectors which, although they may be important to the current local economy, are 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.

Table 1 below presents an overview of the short list of sectors which have been identified:

⁵ [will these documents be webhosted to enable cross referencing]

Table 1: Short list of sectors and rationale for inclusion

Strategic focus	Sector	Why a Priority?	What this strategic focus/
Focus and Step Change	Advanced Manufacturing, Materials and Engineering (AMME)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant contributor to GVA (13.7%) and Employment (12%) (Manufacturing) Significant exporter Productive sector Quorum of sector and anchor firms Northern Ireland and BRCD sector of priority 	Manufacturing is a major employer with a significant concentration of employment in the Antrim and Newtownabbey area, contributing significantly to the local economy and generating significant export revenue. It is a sector in transition, given many of the global and technological trends and as such requires a significant focus to retain employment and support future growth. This sector is also a Northern Ireland wide priority, with an opportunity for Antrim and Newtownabbey council to leverage Invest Northern Ireland and other's investment in the AMME sector.
	Transport and Logistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant contributor to GVA (10.4%) and Employment (2.4%) Largest concentration of Transport and Logistics employment in Northern Ireland (2.4 Times the Northern Ireland average) Quorum of sector and Anchor Firms 	The Borough has the highest concentration of Transport and Logistics Employment in Northern Ireland. Antrim and Newtownabbey's strategic location close to the main ports and with strong infrastructure make it a natural location for firms in this sector.
	Life and Health Sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant contributor to GVA (12%) and Employment (12%) (Health) Significant exporter Productive sector Quorum of sector and Anchor Firms and Institutions Northern Ireland and BRCD sector of priority 	Life and Health Sciences is a significant sector in the Borough, with a concentration of anchor institutions contributing significantly to the local economy and generating export revenue. This sector is also a Northern Ireland wide priority, with an opportunity for Antrim and Newtownabbey council to leverage Invest Northern Ireland and other's investment in the Life and Health Sciences sector.
Sustain and Grow	Professional Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growing (88% since 2012) and productive sector (36% higher than Northern Ireland average) and Northern Ireland and BRCD sector of priority Significant employment growth forecast 	Whilst having a relatively small concentration of employment in the Antrim and Newtownabbey area (3%) this is a growth sector in the Borough, generating relatively higher output per employee. The sector is a sector of strategic focus across Northern Ireland. As such this sector has significant future growth potential for the Antrim and Newtownabbey area.
	Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growing sector and major Northern Ireland and BRCD sector of priority Quorum of sector and Anchor Firms Employment growth forecast 	Consultation identified the Tourism offer in Antrim and Newtownabbey area as under developed and under leveraged but as having significant potential. While Tourism performance in the area is below that of other council areas, there is evidence of growth in recent years. With significant Northern Ireland wide investment, a strategic location between Belfast and the Causeway coastal route, the presence of anchor firms and a developing product offer, this has the potential to be a growth sector for Antrim and Newtownabbey. Having a strong tourism

Monitor and Intervene			offer also underwrites the amenity of the Borough, providing value for residents and rate payers and enhancing the liveability of the area.
	Digital and ICT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growing and productive sector (double the Northern Ireland average) and Northern Ireland and Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) sector of priority Significant employment growth forecast 	Whilst having a relatively small concentration of employment in the Antrim and Newtownabbey area, this is a highly productive industry and is a sector of strategic focus across Northern Ireland. As such this sector has significant future growth potential for the Antrim and Newtownabbey area.
	Construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant contributor to GVA (9.2%) and Employment (7%) Productive sector Quorum of sector Significant employment growth forecast 	Construction is market led and aligned to investor and developer confidence and availability of capital. As such there are limited levers for Antrim and Newtownabbey to support this sector beyond ensuring planning policy supports balanced development and reflects demand. As a major employer in the area, Antrim and Newtownabbey should track the sector's performance and seek to intervene where and if required i.e. addressing access to labour.
	Retail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant contributor to GVA (14.4%) and Employment (18%) Quorum of sector and Anchor Firms 	As with construction, retail is traditionally a market led sector, with success broadly aligned to consumer confidence. Again, while there are limited levers for Antrim and Newtownabbey to intervene, as a sector which employs a significant number of residents in the area, Antrim and Newtownabbey should look to intervene where issues arise i.e. connectivity and access to labour.
	Agri-Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quorum of large farms and anchor institution (CAFRE) Northern Ireland and BRCD sector of priority 	As a largely rural area with a concentration of large farms (4 th highest of all Northern Ireland council areas), Agri-food plays a small but significant role in the local area. As such Antrim and Newtownabbey should continue to monitor the sector.

2.4. Summary

The preceding assessment defines a Borough with a concentration of economic and social assets. A relatively large business base contributes to the Borough's higher than Northern Ireland average prosperity levels with higher average wages and a wage premium over the rest of Northern Ireland (outside of Belfast), a premium which has been retained in recent years despite challenging economic conditions. The Borough has generally been more productive than other parts of Northern Ireland, fuelled by a higher skilled population and higher levels of economic activity. Combined these make Antrim and Newtownabbey a desirable place to live, with lower crime and better health levels.

There is a high concentration of larger businesses and an indicator of agglomeration benefits occurring around Newtownabbey and Mallusk. The Borough continues to boast a strong manufacturing base, with access to Belfast, the Port of Larne and Belfast International Airport making the area an ideal location for transport, logistics and wholesale firms. With major employers such as Randox, the Health and life sciences sector is also a leading sector locally and a strong retail offer across a number of the main settlements, places retail as a major employer. Whilst the area's tourism offer is still underleveraged, investment in infrastructure and hotel rooms is seeing tourism emerge as a significant employer, and growing service industries such as professional services and digital technology present opportunities for high value employment in the area. With a notable concentration of large farms, agriculture is a small but significant contributor to the local economy that requires nurturing along with major employment sectors such as retail and construction.

The Borough faces a range of challenges in the medium and long term. In terms of skills and labour, a declining working age population, net negative migration trends and growing 65 plus population places a number of challenges on future supply of labour. While the Borough has traditionally had a strong skill base comparable to the Northern Ireland average, recent school leaver data indicates that school leavers in the Antrim and Newtownabbey are amongst the least qualified in Northern Ireland.

While there is a strong base of large businesses, this is counteracted with a lower concentration of small businesses within the Borough and entrepreneurship levels that are the second lowest in Northern Ireland. This is despite the Borough being home to a university and two FE Campuses.

Despite generally higher levels of prosperity, pockets of deprivation exist across the Borough with respect to 'education, skills and training' and 'proximity to services'. These pockets of deprivation are concentrated around the main settlements.

In conclusion, the Antrim and Newtownabbey area has a strong economic base to build from. However, with external challenges ahead and the above structural and demographic challenges there is a need for an integrated and agile response focusing on a range of areas including employment, skills, entrepreneurship and infrastructure.

3. Ensuring Fit with wider objectives

3.1. Introduction

There are many organisations engaged in economic development activities across Northern Ireland. There are also a broad range of policy initiatives (both current and forthcoming) that are influencing the focus and thematic areas being pursued. A core principle of Council's economic development activity will be to only act where a clear gap and need has been identified and where Council can add value in addition to any current provision or where council is required to take a leadership position to enable and facilitate others to intervene. It is important therefore to take cognisance of the wider operating context.

3.2. Close alignment with current policy

Following the Global Financial Crisis, increasing voice has been given to 'inclusive growth' focused economic development strategies which aim to address the economic inequities that have emerged in the last decade. Aligned with this, supporting sustainable and inclusive economic growth is at the heart of UK, Northern Ireland and local level policies and plans. Cascading from the UK Industrial Strategy, which seeks to create an economy 'that boosts productivity and earning power'; through the Northern Ireland Draft Industrial strategy which aims to create a 'globally competitive economy' right down to the Antrim and Newtownabbey community plan which has a vision of 'all citizens benefiting from economic prosperity' a consistent thread is a focus on inclusive and more equitable growth. This hierarchy of plans presents the strategic context for the development of the Antrim and Newtownabbey Economic Development Strategy. Common policy themes emerging include:

- **Inclusive growth and prosperity** – all citizens benefiting from growth, creating more and better jobs;
- **Innovation** – stimulating enhance productivity through development and implementation of new technology and processes;
- **Infrastructure** – addressing infrastructure deficits and supporting infrastructure to fuel growth; and
- **Global focus** – playing an active role in the global economy, being export orientated and open for investment.

Table 2 below highlights all common areas of policy focus across key policy areas.

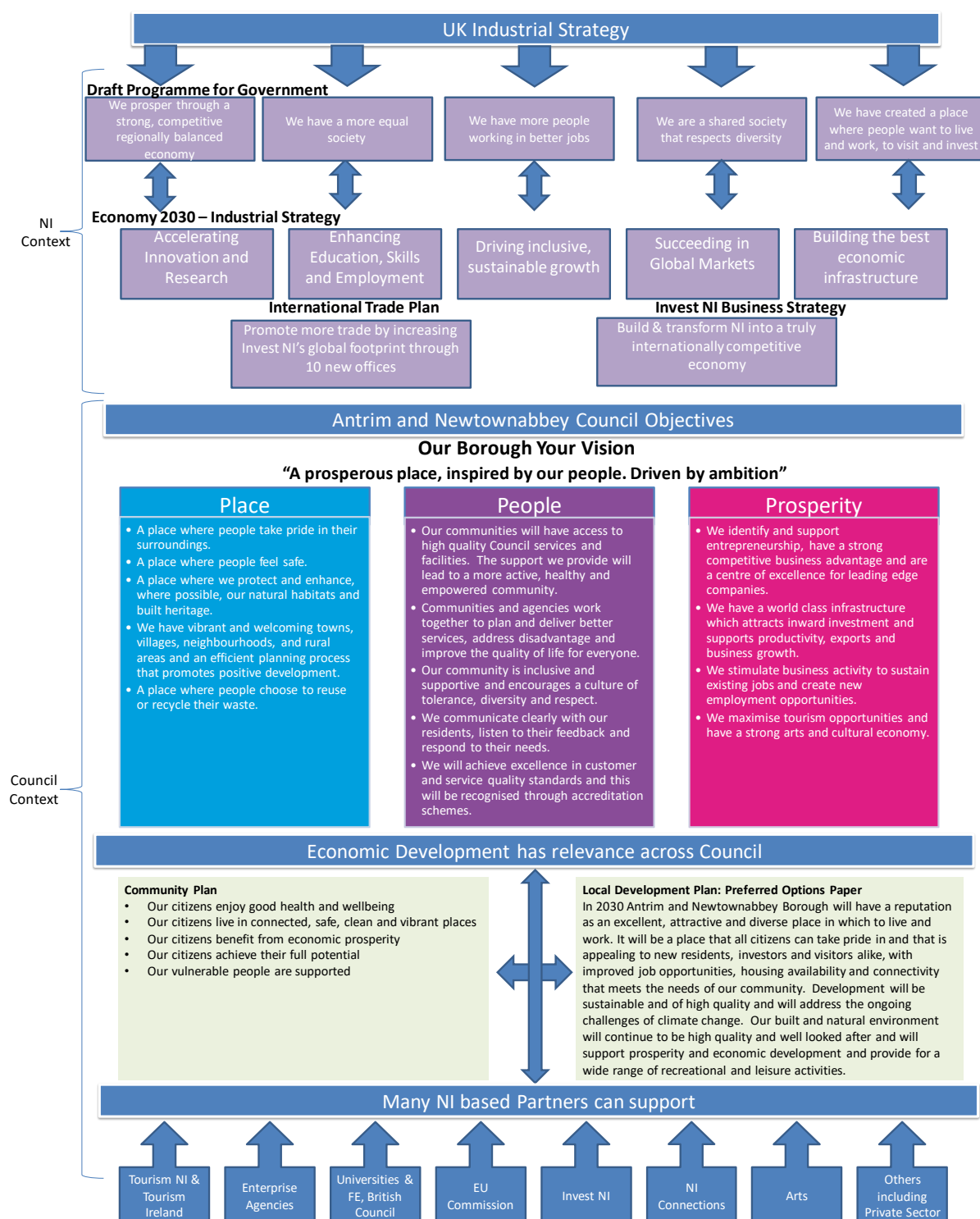
Table 2: Common economic policy areas

Strategic focus	UK Industrial Strategy	Northern Ireland PfG	Economy 2030	Antrim and Newtownabbey Corporate and Community Plan
Innovation	✓		✓	✓
Prosperity for All	✓	✓	✓	✓
Infrastructure for growth	✓	✓	✓	✓
Supportive business environment	✓		✓	✓
Place based growth	✓			✓
Competitive Economy	✓	✓	✓	✓
Globally Focused	✓	✓	✓	✓
Skills for growth			✓	✓

Source: Webb Advisory Analysis

More specifically, our economic development plan is framed in such a way as to endorse the themes and vision of the Northern Ireland Draft Industrial Strategy to be a 'globally competitive economy that works for everyone'.

Figure 11: Policy alignment



Source: Webb Advisory

3.3. Belfast Region City Deal

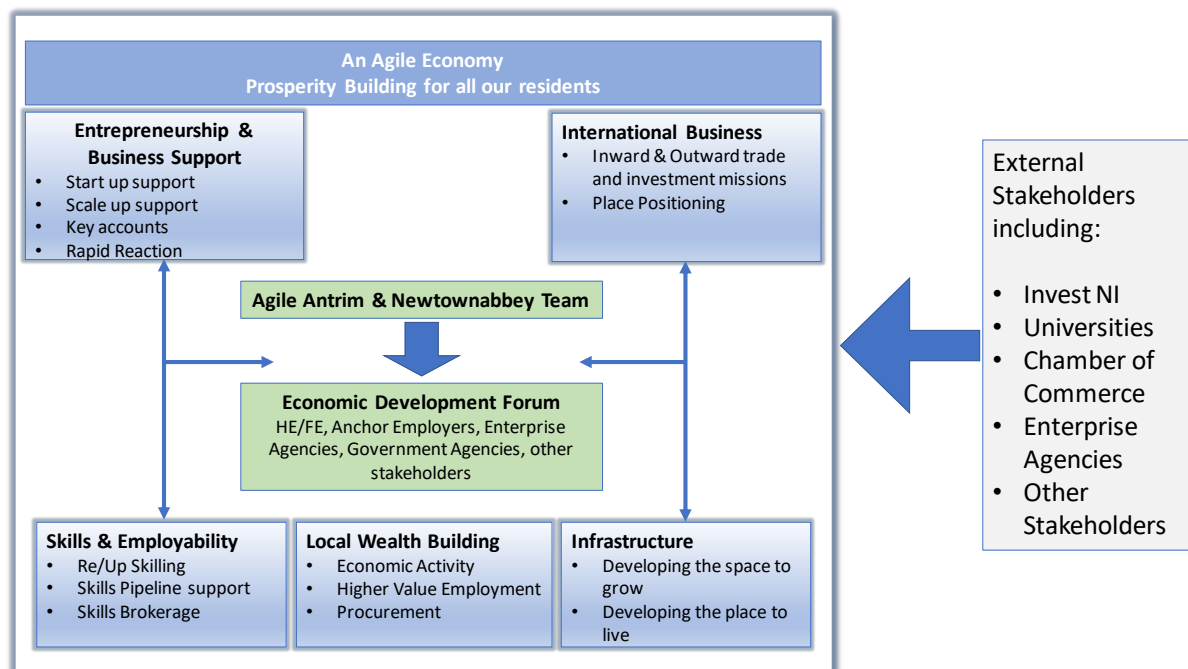
A core operational consideration in developing our economic strategy is the current consultation on developing a city deal for the Belfast Region, of which Antrim and Newtownabbey is part. Implementation of the City Deal would be a 10-year investment plan to improve infrastructure in the

region, develop innovation skills and attract more – and better – jobs. The City Deal represents an opportunity to seek to overcome some of the challenges presented previously and to work with neighbouring councils to address common sub regional challenges. Projects being developed through the City Deal are consistent with the challenges and opportunities that have been identified in developing this action plan and strategy.

4. Areas of Focus: Our call to Action

Building on the series of consultations and body of supporting work undertaken in support of the development of this strategy, the following areas of focus are proposed. The five areas of focus are presented in figure 12 below, with a commentary on their rationale for inclusion.

Figure 12: Areas of Focus



Source: Webb Advisory

4.1. Entrepreneurship & Business Support

Northern Ireland's public sector provides the business sector with various forms of support. Business support is not the sole preserve of the public sector. Indeed, providing business support in Northern Ireland is a crowded space, as evidenced by an audit of enterprise support provision conducted by McClure Watters in 2008 (the most recent comprehensive assessment of business support). This audit estimated that 200 organisations are providing approximately 2,000 business support programmes.

The needs of businesses and awareness of supports have been assessed through a recent comprehensive study undertaken by Ulster University on behalf of the Federation of Small Businesses Northern Ireland. Across 200 businesses, the study queried the barriers and obstacles impacting on growth and what role government could play in addressing these barriers. Of particular relevance is that a lack of suitable business support was noted by 27% of respondents as being a significant barrier to their business success. During consultations undertaken over the course of developing this strategy, this issue was raised several times. Several consultees noted that there is far too much support but that small business does not know where to look for it. Indeed, the FSB/Ulster University survey found that one in ten survey respondents did not know where to seek support. Perhaps, as one consultee noted this is due to 'business owners are focussed on the task of surviving/growing their business and do not have the time to hunt out 10 different providers of the same course to decide which one works for them. Reinforcing this point further, both enterprise agencies in the Borough cite a clear need to engage with the wider business base to identify their growth potential and needs.

Antrim and Newtownabbey is one of the lowest performing area's in Northern Ireland in terms of entrepreneurial activity and business start-up. Creating a culture of entrepreneurship and generating more indigenous businesses has the potential to generate local wealth and provide future employment opportunities within the borough.

When considering any gaps in provision, there was a broad consensus from consultees that Council needs to engage more and provide a service that better links businesses to support.

Table 3: Entrepreneurship and Business Support

Theme	Sub theme	Issue	Implication	Antrim and Newtownabbey's Call to Action
Entrepreneurship and Business Support	Business Starts	Antrim and Newtownabbey have a relatively low level of entrepreneurship	Fewer new business starts hinders economic growth and diversity	Enhanced 'exploring enterprise' programmes from school age and up and ongoing 'Go for it' business start support
	Business Starts	Local Enterprise Agencies are full/close to full	There is a lack of business start/incubator space in the Borough from where new business starts can start and grow. This is partly driven by a lack of 'follow on' space for established businesses to grow into	Deliver an Enterprise hub/incubator
	Supporting more business	A considerable majority of Northern Ireland companies are not Invest Northern Ireland clients, thus not accessing client company support levels	A clear cohort of companies can be serviced without overlap with Invest Northern Ireland	Understand the pool of non-serviced companies and build engagement plan to provide relevant support programmes
	Tailored, Useful Support	Business support is crowded with limited effectiveness and low awareness	The solution is not merely 'more' support but value added, high quality support that business know about	Map current provision, listen to business and create a concierge and signposting service
		Interactions are transactional rather than being focused on relationship building	Does not build ambition or promote correct behaviours	Longer term engagement with smaller pool of companies where Antrim and Newtownabbey can show leadership, mentorship, accredited courses

Source: Webb Advisory Analysis

4.2. Skills and Employability

The availability of appropriately skilled people is of fundamental importance to economic growth. A large body of research notes the importance of skills to economic success and there is a noticeable increase in reports of skill shortages and gaps across the UK and Northern Ireland from employer bodies such as the CBI and Chamber of Commerce. Findings from a recent CBI/Pearson education and skills survey found that more than four in five companies in Northern Ireland expect to hire in high-skilled roles in the next three to five years; but only three in every ten companies are confident of having the supply of talent they need to fill them. Most recently, the Bank of England has reported the

views from its network of regional agents dotted in each UK region. The regional agents' views are collated into various measures, including an index of recruitment difficulties. This is at its highest level since 2015. Skills shortages erode competitiveness and send out a negative message to potential investors.

The Northern Ireland Skills Barometer from Ulster University, which estimates the extent of future demand across a range of skills levels and a range of sectors, supports the findings of the studies referenced above, that the demand for skills will outstrip projected supply over the next decade. There is a marginal undersupply of skills at graduate levels and a more acute shortage at mid-tier skills levels. Considering Skills Barometer research at a local level suggests similar issues around employability and skills.

The work that been undertaken as part of the negotiations for the Belfast Region City Deal capture a comprehensive assessment of the key employability and skills issues that are common to the City Deal region. These, and the proposal to address them are wholly endorsed through this strategy and action plan and include:

- Labour market mis-matches with respect to location of jobs and accessibility by means other than by car
- Labour market mis-matches with respect to the channels used to market job vacancies
- Barriers to employment due to a lack of affordable/available childcare
- Skills gaps at medium and higher levels
- One third of school leavers are gaining less than 5 GCSE A*-C including English and Maths
- High rates of economic inactivity
- Changing trends (automation, digitisation etc) are shifting demand for skills

Table 4: Skills and Employability

Theme	Sub theme	Issue	Implication	Antrim and Newtownabbey's Call to Action
Skills and Employability	Skills Supply	Significant cohort of economically inactive people unable/unwilling to engage in labour market	Demand for labour outstripping supply and economic inactivity levels impacting on wider community performance	Labour market activation programmes for hard to reach economically inactive people
		Skills gaps	Current hard to fill tasks and vacancies	Training programmes for current staff
		Skills shortages	Longer term hard to fill vacancies	Skills pipeline development
		Communication gaps in skills demand and supply	Skills issues and job opportunities not reaching right audience	Antrim and Newtownabbey can act as a conduit between employers and job seekers
	Mismatch in job accessibility	Employment clusters are poorly served by public transport	Job seekers without access to cars struggle to attend employment	Lobby for improved public transport routes/provide concessionary fares/fund 'town service' type provision
		A lack of affordable/available childcare	Hinders labour market participation	Promote social enterprise and employers to develop childcare solutions

Source: Webb Advisory Analysis

4.3. International Antrim and Newtownabbey

Agility in economic development must also mean that we are an outward looking Borough, ready to seize new opportunities wherever they appear. Antrim and Newtownabbey has a solid international platform to build on, with a cohort of internationally focused firms exporting across the globe. Building on this platform and leveraging strong and active International relations such as our relationship with Gilbert, Arizona are a key strand of our economic development plans, contributing to a range of economic drivers and challenges:

- **Trade:** Two opportunities are evident in a trade context. There is a large body of evidence from research and trade statistics to confirm that our local companies do not export enough and those that do need to diversify into more markets.
- **Tourism:** Council has developed a detailed strategy to secure a greater economic return from tourism. International Relations activities proposed through this strategy and action plan take full cognisance of other relevant council initiatives.
- **Inward Investment:** Inward investment has tended towards Belfast over many years. A key tenet of an outward looking Antrim and Newtownabbey will be to build on any opportunity to attract inward investors and grow their presence here. Brexit challenges aside, we have much to offer inward investors and it will be crucial that our message is brought to the market.
- **New Residents:** The labour market has been well served by the arrival of new residents. Building links with source countries could offer social and economic benefits.
- **Shared Learning:** The opportunities to experience new ways of working and best practice behaviours are wide ranging, either through membership of collaborative networks or through partnering on projects across jurisdictions.

Table 5: International Antrim and Newtownabbey

Theme	Sub theme	Issue	Implication	Antrim and Newtownabbey's Call to Action
International Antrim and Newtownabbey	Place Positioning /Marketing	Antrim and Newtownabbey 'message' not being heard	Others doing a better job of promoting investment offer support alongside and above national agencies	Develop pitchbook and pop-up events
		More effective use of networks e.g. diaspora, CEO's, Mayor	Narrow referral base	Senior business leaders could be engaged to leverage peer groups and promote the specific Antrim and Newtownabbey opportunity
		There is a perception that FDI companies are more important to the economy than indigenous companies	Much of the PR effort from INI centres on good news stories about FDI, and export achievements	Champion indigenous growth successes
	Lack of Coordination	Too many 'players' in FDI can confuse investors and the messaging	Northern Ireland's pitch to investors could become fragmented	Focus on landing service, aftercare and sectors not serviced by INI (property, retail, construction etc.)
	Trade Development	Local companies do not trade enough	Growth is constrained by size of local market	Trade development and international relations programmes

Source: Webb Advisory Analysis

4.4. Infrastructure

The success of any modern economy is dependent on a world class road, water, communication and public transport infrastructure and an attractive living environment is increasingly important in attracting investors. The importance of infrastructure investment as a key driver of economic growth is documented across key policy documents such as Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland. A well-developed infrastructure can enhance the overall competitiveness of Antrim and Newtownabbey, enhance employment opportunities and enhance the quality of life for residents. Consultation with key stakeholders highlighted that while Antrim and Newtownabbey benefits from some excellent infrastructure (e.g. M2 and A8 dual carriageway to Larne), there remains significant gaps in provision, such as intra borough public transport, the lack of dual carriageway or train to the international airport. Further, global trends towards automation and 'Industry 4.0', as well as consumer demands for streaming will drive an increasing demand for high speed broadband bandwidth.

Aligned to infrastructure is the need to ensure an adequate supply of land to facilitate sustainable economic growth, as noted in the Regional Development strategy. To that end, the development of this strategy has been supported by an Employment Land Evaluation Report which has assessed the current provision and future demand for land across the Borough.

Maintaining and improving quality of life and place is thus an important challenge for Antrim and Newtownabbey Council to ensure people want to live and work in the area and that businesses wish to invest.

Table 6: Infrastructure

Theme	Sub theme	Issue	Implication	Antrim and Newtownabbey's Call to Action
Infrastructure	Property	A lack of sufficient employment property mixes across the Borough	Potential employers and growth companies will seek alternative out of Borough solutions	Develop a strategic approach to identifying/promoting/ supplying business premises
	Land	Antrim and Newtownabbey has a range of sites and areas of significant deprivation that struggle to attract new investment	Uneven growth across the Borough is not consistent with the aims of the Community Plan	Develop a portfolio of sites and areas for enhanced support/investment
	Connectivity and Quality of Place	Quality of Place is becoming increasingly important to investors	A poorly connected Borough with poor infrastructure, a lack of culture, arts and leisure will hinder growth	Deliver a portfolio of initiatives that enhance connectivity (broadband speeds/air, sea, rail, road links) and improve public realm

Source: Webb Advisory Analysis

4.5. Local Wealth Building

Economic development success will be muted if it doesn't reach the whole Borough, especially those areas of greatest need, which are often hardest to reach. The Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation measures show that only the Dunanney ward in Rathcoole falls within the top 10% of the most deprived wards in Northern Ireland across all measures of deprivation. There are however pockets of deprivation in access to 'education, skills & training' and 'access to services' across the Borough. Economic development policy can take several paths and the recent trend has been a tendency for local economic development practitioners globally to pursue inward investment (the profits from which leave the area) above all else. CLES, an independent think tank has championed the concept of local wealth building, a concept that seeks to harness the potential of existing wealth within local bodies, or

anchor institutions and change procurement practice away from pure cost towards a consideration of social value. This approach, which often involves breaking large procurements into smaller constituent parts (which makes them more accessible to local SMEs) can then benefit local suppliers, with more wealth staying in the local area. Federation of Small Business Research supports the case for local wealth building, citing that that every £1 spent with local SMEs generated an additional 63p of benefit for local economy, compared to just 40p when it is spent with large local firms.

Aligned to a focus on local wealth building is an increasing trend towards wellbeing and happiness indicators as measures of success. Wellbeing moves beyond the traditional measure of productivity or wages growth and considers economic outcomes, social outcomes, environmental outcomes and democratic outcomes to give a more holistic view of how our Borough is performing.

Table 7: Local Wealth Building

Theme	Sub theme	Issue	Implication	Antrim and Newtownabbey's Call to Action
Local Wealth Building	Local Procurement	Procurement process is complex and SME's not universally well placed to win tenders	Significant procurement and supply chain opportunities being lost by local companies	Procurement/bidding support and 'meet the buyer' events
		Anchor institutions and public sector procurement can be a significant annual expenditure	Significant procurement opportunities can 'leak' out of the Borough	Devise a procurement strategy that promotes local delivery and promotes social clauses
	Education, Skills and Training	Deprivation measures identify pockets of deprivation with respect to Education, Skills and Training	Low levels of education attainment and poor training accessibility hinder growth opportunities for businesses and residents	Skills pipeline development per skills and employability theme
	Access to services	Deprivation measures identify pockets of deprivation with respect to access to services	Poor access provision, or a lack of access to current provision can embed a cycle of deprivation	Lobby for improved public transport routes as per skills and employability theme

Source: Webb Advisory Analysis

5. Meeting our growth challenges

Our Economic Development vision mirrors our Community Plan outcome objectives. By pursuing a vision of **positioning Antrim and Newtownabbey as an energised and entrepreneurial economic hub**, we strive to achieve a Borough where, by 2030, our residents:

- enjoy good health and wellbeing
- live in connected, safe, clean and vibrant spaces
- benefit from economic prosperity
- achieve their full potential
- our vulnerable people are supported

We will measure the success of our economic development actions against appropriate community plan priorities, specifically:

- Our local economy thrives, with local businesses starting up, growing, expanding and generating employment.
- Enterprise and innovation are encouraged and supported from an early age to build businesses and entrepreneurs of the future.
- Our area has a skilled population and infrastructure which is attractive to investors and employers.
- Barriers to accessing employment are reduced or removed enabling all of our citizens to have equitable access to the opportunities available in the Borough.
- A range of formal and informal learning opportunities are available.
- There is a culture of lifelong learning in Antrim and Newtownabbey with a range of opportunities to acquire new skills and qualifications.
- Our children and young people achieve throughout their education and progress to employment.
- Our children and young people are ambitious and inspired to achieve from an early age.
- The range of ways in which people learn, and develop skills for life and work, is acknowledged through availability of placements, internships and apprenticeships.
- Getting around our Borough is easier for those who don't have access to a car and for those who would prefer a more active mode of transport.
- Our town and village centres are vibrant places where people live and where they spend their leisure time.
- Our towns and villages, and our green and open spaces, are clean and vibrant places which our citizens have pride in.

Reflecting our areas of focus, specific measures of success will include:

- Improve our Entrepreneurship levels (as measured by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor) to NI levels or better.
- Improve the proportion of the working age population with no formal qualifications to at least the NI average.
- Support an increase in employment of 5,000 jobs above current levels by 2030.

The activities and initiatives the Council will undertake have been guided by the preceding analysis. A core principle of our actions will be to ensure we deliver value to our ratepayers. Our approach is therefore focussed and agile – we will complement rather than duplicate initiatives that are already being delivered by other providers and we will respond quickly to need and opportunity.

5.1. Proposed Actions

Based on the themes outlined above and drawing on consultations and best practice from elsewhere, our activities will include the following suggested actions (overleaf). Costs and outcomes will be refined as projects are developed for delivery.

Table 8: Actions Framework

Category	Sub Category	Proposed Activity	Timescale & Costs	Outcomes & Delivery Partners
Entrepreneurship & Business Support	Supporting and creating more business	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish a Client Relationship Service to actively engage existing (non-Invest Northern Ireland clients) business in the Borough with the aim of tracking their performance and needs and providing solutions. 2. Pre-Start: Support Exploring Enterprise Programmes for would be entrepreneurs from school level up. 3. Start-Up: Continue to support business creation through 'Go For It'. 4. Start-Up: Support provision of business start incubator space (as part of Entrepreneurial Hub packaged/branded support). 5. Growth: Based on demand identified via Client Relationship Service, deliver a suite of tailored support around: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Property • Sales Growth • Sustainability • Energy • Skills • Internationalisation and export • Suppliers/supply chain • Innovation • Finance • Sector specific support to our Rural businesses and our 'sectors of advantage' 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Operational by mid-2019. (c.£150,000 per annum) 2. Ongoing (£20,000 per annum) 3. Ongoing programme (c.£50,000 per annum) 4. Subject to business case (c.£3.5m) 5. Ongoing, based on demand from our business base (£200,000 per annum) 	<p>Outcomes</p> <p>Increase number of business start ups</p> <p>Increase SME base</p> <p>Improved business survival rates</p> <p>Increased scale up rates</p> <p>Partners</p> <p>Enterprise agencies, Rural Development Network</p>
	Tailored, Useful Support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Undertake a Feasibility Study to establish the most appropriate model (e.g. internal/joint venture) for an Antrim & Newtownabbey Entrepreneurial Hub to provide a 'one front door' service for business 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Feasibility Study completed by Q1 2019 (£15,000) 2. To Be Determined 	

		support signposting and access to programmes. 2. Establish the Antrim and Newtownabbey Entrepreneurial Hub	(subject to feasibility study)	
Skills & Employability	Skills Supply	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify needs of industry and needs of education through a facilitated skills forum. 2. Deliver a promotional campaign to maximise take up and value gained from apprenticeships. 3. Facilitate 'discover' sessions across priority sectors that enable primary school children to experience priority sectors in real world settings and hear from people that have chosen priority sector career paths. 4. Antrim and Newtownabbey's Employer Pledge - Work with a selection of local anchor firms and institutions and the community sector on a 'reactivate initiative' which aims to re-engage economically inactive with the labour market. 5. Promote reskilling programmes and management/leadership training for existing employees. 6. Agile Reaction: Develop a programme of support (CV support, retraining etc.) to rapidly react to any shock closures of large scale employers. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quarterly meetings (£10,000 per annum) 2. Deliver campaign in first half of each year to target school leavers (£5,000 per annum) 3. Ongoing (£5,000 per annum) 4. Annual programme (£50,000 per annum) 5. Annual programme (£20,000 per annum) 6. As required (£50,000 fund) 	<p>Outcomes</p> <p>Reduction in skills mismatches</p> <p>Reduced economic inactivity</p> <p>Improved labour supply</p> <p>Improved real time understanding of skills needs</p> <p>Partners</p> <p>DE, Community Voluntary Sector, NRC, Anchor firms and employers</p>
	Mismatch in job accessibility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a model/interface between employers and training providers. 2. Introduce concession fares for labour market returners on public transport. 3. Develop a support programme to boost 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. By Q4 2018 (£10,000 per annum) 2. By Q4 2018 £5,000 (per annum) 3. By Q4 2018 (£20,000) 	

		childcare provision across the Borough		
International Antrim and Newtownabbey	Place Positioning /Marketing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why Antrim and Newtownabbey – Develop promotional collateral that may be used to promote the Antrim and Newtownabbey region as an attractive region for overseas companies and deliver an investment lead generation campaign focussed on key assets and sectors. 2. Build on existing international relationships to deepen the economic, social and cultural ties that exist by developing a multi annual activity plan for Sister City in Gilbert Arizona. 3. Develop a 'country of origin' programme with Good Relations team to maximise social cohesion, trade, culture and investment links between our largest international populations. 4. Identify a new international linkage based on trade, cultural or investment 'fit'. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. By Q3 2018 (£20,000) 2. Annual work programme (£7,000 per annum) 3. Annual work programme (£2,000 per annum) 4. By Q1 2019 (£2,000) 	<p><u>Outcomes</u></p> <p>Additional export revenues</p> <p>Additional FDI</p> <p>Re-investment by existing international firms</p> <p>Learnings from international partners</p> <p><u>Partners</u></p> <p>Invest Northern Ireland, IntertradeIreland , Private sector</p>
	Lack of Coordination	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish an 'international Antrim and Newtownabbey' stakeholder working group to ensure alignment and coordination of international/inward investment efforts. 2. Work with Northern Ireland Connections to engage with global diaspora to build a network of friends and ambassadors who will promote our Borough and bring opportunities. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ongoing (£1,000 per annum) 2. Ongoing (£5,000 per annum) 	
	Trade Development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a market readiness programme for would be exporters. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Annual Programme (£25,000 per annum) 	

		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an export mentor scheme that pairs local exporters with non-exporters. Organise sector-specific trade missions to ROI and GB as part of a 'export taster' programme. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Programme (£5,000 per annum) Annual Programme (£12,000 per annum) 	
Infrastructure	Property	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an incubator space for new business starts. Regularly review availability of enterprise space for new/expanding businesses throughout the Borough and act to address need. Explore opportunities to use planning process to match oncoming supply with need. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> As per Entrepreneurship and business support theme Annual programme (£1,000 per annum) Ongoing (Staff Costs) 	<p><u>Outcomes</u></p> <p>Business growth enabled through available premises</p> <p>Employment stimulated</p> <p>Improved intra borough access</p> <p><u>Partners</u></p> <p>Invest Northern Ireland, Translink, Department for the Economy, Department of Infrastructure, Local Chambers of Commerce</p>
	Land	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Support preparation of development proposals for our strategic employment locations. Work with major landholders to support future development and use planning powers to shape development. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing (Staff Costs) Ongoing (Staff Costs) 	
	Connectivity and Quality of Place	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a programme of town/village redevelop. Promote Business Improvement Districts in core retail and industrial locations. Pursue development of strategic road links including a dual carriageway to the Belfast International Airport. Support delivery of fibre high speed broadband to core employment locations. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Programme of works (£150,000 per annum) Ongoing (£5,000 per annum) Ongoing (Staff Costs) Ongoing (Staff Costs) Ongoing (Staff Costs) 	

		<p>5. Supported and enhance 4G coverage outside the main settlements and maximise 5G coverage during roll out.</p> <p>6. Community bus service for employment sites.</p>	<p>6. Subject to feasibility study</p>	
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Local Wealth Building	Local Wealth Building	1. Work with local businesses to build their public procurement capability.	1. From Q3 2018 (£15,000 per annum)	<u>Outcomes</u> Indigenous business success Investment by local firms in local economy <u>Partners</u> Anchor institutions and firms
		2. Work with local anchor institutions around procurement opportunities for local suppliers.	2. From Q3 2018 (Staff Costs)	
		3. Develop a portal for local procurement opportunities.	3. Go live by Q1 2019 (£15,000)	
		4. Promote social clauses across Council procurement.	4. From Q3 2018 (Staff Costs)	
		5. Break significant Council Procurements into smaller lots to ensure increased access to opportunities for local SMEs	5. From Q3 2018 (Staff Costs)	
		6. Promote the increased use of Apprenticeships within Council and across key organisations in the Borough.	6. Ongoing (Staff Costs)	
		7. Support establishment of Social Enterprise/Community Interest Companies that aim to promote social inclusion/remove barriers to employment.	7. From Q2 2019 (£20,000 per annum)	

6. Operational Considerations

The planned economic development actions outlined in the previous section reflect Council's increased responsibilities for economic development and point towards a new level of ambition to deliver economic growth that benefits all residents. Excluding the potential £3.5m capital expenditure project, the proposed three-year Programme outlined in the preceding section could cost c.£2.5m.

Council has a finite set of resources from which it must deliver a broad range of services. The scale of resources that Council's economic development team secures must be organised and delivered in such a way as to reduce duplication of effort, identify and follow through on valued adding opportunities and maximise collaboration with key economic development partners.

The solution is not merely 'more' support but value added, high quality support. To that end, Council must now consider the best delivery mechanism for this economic development strategy and action plan.

Without having undertaking a workforce review, it is Webb Advisory's opinion that while the skill and commitment of the Economic Development team are wholly evident, the team is insufficiently resourced to be able to successfully deliver the scale of initiatives proposed in this action plan. This presents an opportunity for Council to consider how best to deliver economic development. Several options, which will require deeper assessment, include:

- Increasing the Council's economic development team to include a team of business engagement officers, in-house resources to deliver programmes and officers with responsibility for core thematic areas such as international linkages, skills development, local wealth building etc.
- Developing Service Level Agreements with the Local Enterprise Agencies to deliver core elements of the action plan
- Outsource delivery of Council's entire economic development function on a 'pay by results' basis

Webb Advisory does not advocate any one approach over another but would urge Council to consider resourcing as a priority issue. The ambition laid out in this action plan, coupled with the potential from the Belfast City Region 'City Deal' requires Council to be sufficiently resourced to seize the growth opportunities.

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