



**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE CHAMBER, MOSSLEY MILL ON
TUESDAY 14 JANUARY 2025 AT 6.30PM**

- In the Chair** : Councillor B Webb
- Members Present (in person)** : Aldermen – M Magill and S Ross
Councillors – M Goodman, B Mallon and S Ward
- Members Present (Remote)** : Alderman M Cosgrove
- In attendance** : Gary Cushnahan, Property Manager, Invest NI
Sharon Keenan, Property Manager, Invest NI
- 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
Head of Finance – R Murray
ICT Helpdesk Officer – J Wilson
Mayor and Member Services Officer – S Fisher
- Officers Present (Remote)** : Chief Executive – R Baker

CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the January Meeting of the Economic Development Committee Meeting and advised Members of the audio recording procedures.

1 APOLOGIES

Councillor R Lynch

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

The Chairperson advised that items In Confidence would be taken at this point of the meeting and would begin with the presentation for Item 6.6.

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED TO 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Councillor Goodman
Seconded by Alderman Magill and agreed that

In Confidence Items would be taken at this point and that the livestream and audio recording would cease until the conclusion of the In Confidence items.

6 ITEMS IN CONFIDENCE

6.6 **IN CONFIDENCE** ED/ED/301 INVEST NI GLOBAL POINT UPDATE

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Proposed by Alderman Magill
Seconded by Councillor Goodman and agreed that

the report be noted.

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

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

1. **Purpose**

The purpose of this report was to provide Members with an update on the Supporting Direct Investment Fund, the Supporting Town Centre Fund and the Workspace Development Fund, an update on current applications and a request for Letters of Variation and expressions of interest.

2. Introduction/Position

Since August 2021 the Council had introduced a number of funds to support investment across the Borough, primarily with a view to stimulating or securing further investment, jobs and associated business rates. Set out below was an overview of these funds and a breakdown of the beneficiaries to date.

3. Supporting Direct Investment Fund

The purpose of the Supporting Direct Investment (SDI) 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 elsewhere.

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council had 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 and Indigenous businesses with mobile strategic growth plans who could add economic value by locating in the Borough, creating jobs and 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 over £350,000 to strategically selected businesses and had supported beneficiaries in creating job opportunities, improving the supply chain and increasing the Borough's business rates 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. Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering
- b. Transport and Logistics
- c. Construction and Materials Handling
- d. Life and Health Sciences
- e. Food and Drink
- f. Aerospace and Defence
- g. Creative, Digital & Technology
- h. Professional & Financial Services

The Council's 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 and impact on local supply chain.
- Company Viability including historic and projected financial performance.

- Additionality – did the business require financial intervention?
- Displacement – by locating in the Borough would it displace existing businesses?
- Mobility – was the business mobile?

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

A summary of the current SDI awards is set out in the following table.

Strategic Direct Investment Fund - Applications to date:					
Business Name	Amount Awarded	Paid to Date	Remaining	Anticipated Payment date	KPI's
Tribe Technology Group Ltd	£15,000	£15,000	£0	N/A	
BLK BOX	£74,250	£50,000	£24,250	Final Payment Q4 24/25	
Hilton Templepatrick	£89,760	£89,760	£0	N/A	
Jans Offsite Solutions Ltd	£58,435.66	£20,000	£38,435.66	Final Payment Q1 25/26	

Ashers Baking Co	£56,381.25	£28,191.25	£28,190	First Payment Q1 25/26	
PING Handling Ltd	£55,000	£41,250	£13,750	Final Payment Q1 25/26	
Contact Marketing NI Ltd	£32,494	£16,247	£16,247	Second of four Payment Q1 25/26	
Total	£381,320.91	£260,448.25	£120,872.66		

Calculations showed to date that the Fund had generated £33.7m worth of investment into the Borough creating approximately 160,000ft² floor space leading to an increase of £332,238.72 to the rates bill.

SDI Fund Proposals:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Financial Position:

Supporting Town Centre Fund Applications to date:					
Business Name	Amount Awarded	Paid to Date	Remaining	Anticipated Payment date	Project Brief & KPI's
Keneagles	£35,000	£35,000	£0	N/A	[REDACTED]
Total	£35,000	£35,000	£0		

Council Officers were continuing to explore opportunities to support 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.

5. Workspace Development Fund

Members would be aware that the Council, working in partnership with key stakeholders, were currently developing a network of modern, accessible, fit for purpose workspace to meet the needs of businesses today and in the future. This network of facilities would be easily recognisable to the business community presenting a common brand and offering 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 these interventions, focusing support exclusively on local social enterprises with a proven track-record. Financial evidence such as annual accounts may be required to qualify for support.

Funding was provided based on an agreed percentage split, with the Council covering up to 65% and the enterprise contributing the remaining 35%. In-kind contributions were not eligible. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The funding contract would detail the model to be advanced, legal advice, key objectives, and annual KPIs for the workspace. Additional technical assistance would guide the SLA term, annual KPIs, service standards, revenue budgets, and program activities.

Financial Position:

Workspace Development Fund Applications to date					
Business Name	Amount Awarded	Paid to Date	Remaining	Anticipated Payment date	Project Brief & KPI's
LEDCOM / Foundry House	£200,200	£0	£200,200	First Payment From Q4 24/25	[REDACTED]

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. Members would be aware from the Economic Development Business Plan that provision had been made for continued delivery of these funds in 2025/26. Further update reports would be brought to Members in due course.

The Director of Economic Development and the Deputy Director for Investment and Business Development responded to queries on land ownership, the challenges being faced in the market and grant management.

Proposed by Alderman Cosgrove
Seconded by Councillor Mallon and agreed that



ACTION BY: Stewart McCormack, Investment Officer

6.2 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.

Proposed by Alderman Magill
Seconded by Councillor Goodman and agreed that

the Major Strategic Planning Overview as outlined be noted.

NO ACTION

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

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek Members' approval of the circulated minutes of the Levelling Up Fund Project Board meetings held on 24 October for the Antrim scheme and 21 November 2024 for the Glengormley scheme.

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 Goodman

Seconded by Councillor Webb and agreed that

the minutes of the Levelling Up Fund Project Board meetings held on 24 October for Antrim and 24 October and 21 November 2024 for the Glengormley scheme be approved.

ACTION BY: Tara McCormick, Executive Officer

6.4 **IN CONFIDENCE** ED/LMP/001 MINUTES - LABOUR MARKET PARTNERSHIP PROJECT BOARD

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek approval for the minutes of the Antrim and Newtownabbey Labour Market Partnership meeting held on Thursday 19 September 2024; a copy of the minutes from the meeting was circulated for Members' consideration.

2. Introduction/Background

Members would be aware of the Labour Market Partnership (LMP), the aim of which was to improve labour market conditions by working through coordinated, collaborative, multi-agency partnerships, achieving regional objectives whilst being flexible to meet the needs presented by localised conditions and helping to connect employers with employees.

3. Previous Decision of Council

At the meeting of Full Council on 29 January 2024, the LMP the minutes of the Antrim and Newtownabbey Labour Market Partnership Meetings of 14 September and 22 November 2023 were approved.

4. Governance

The Partnership meet bi-monthly (6 times per year) and is Chaired by the Mayor. Minutes from LMP meetings were reported to the Economic Development Committee.

Proposed by Councillor Webb

Seconded by Councillor Goodman and agreed that

the minutes of the Antrim and Newtownabbey Labour Market Partnership Meeting on Thursday 19 September 2024 be approved.

ACTION BY: Jessica Smyth, Business Development Project Officer

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

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek approval of the circulated minutes of the Glengormley Public Realm Project Board meeting held on 15 October 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 Goodman

Seconded by Councillor Ward and agreed that

the minutes of the Glengormley Public Realm Project Board meeting held on 15 October 2024 be approved.

ACTION BY: Tara McCormick, Executive Officer

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED OUT OF 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Councillor Ward

Seconded by Alderman Magill and agreed that

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

The Chairperson advised that the live stream and audio-recording would recommence at this point.

3 PRESENTATION

3.1 FI/FIN/11 ESTIMATES UPDATE PRESENTATION

1. Purpose

A presentation was provided by the Head of Finance on the updates of the 2025/26 Estimates for the Economic Development Committee.

Proposed by Councillor Webb

Seconded by Councillor Goodman and agreed that

the presentation be noted.

NO ACTION

4 ITEMS FOR DECISION

4.1 ED/REG/013 ULSTER BAR CORNER LICENCING AGREEMENT

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members the approval of a two-year extension to the licence agreement between the Council and the Department for Communities (DfC) for Ulster Bar Corner in Antrim.

2. Introduction/Background

In July 2022, a design was approved for the regeneration of the vacant Ulster Bar Corner site in Antrim Town.

The Council, working with the DfC secured £365,000 towards the redevelopment work (£170,000 from DfC and £195,000 from the Council).

In addition to this, a two-year licence agreement was signed between the Council and DfC to take ownership of the site for this period, until a final decision regarding any future development could take place.

3. Previous Decision of Council

In July 2022, the Council approved the proposed redevelopment scheme for Ulster Bar Corner at a cost of £365,000.

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

The period of the initial licence agreement had now ended and the Department now wished to extend this agreement for another two years until 31st October 2026 in order to allow adequate time to properly consult and plan the future of the site. The extension agreement was circulated and contained the same terms and conditions as the original agreement.

5. Financial Position/Implication

There were no new financial implications to the Council in relation to this.

In response to a Member's query, the Deputy Director of Regeneration and Infrastructure advised that DfC had no fixed plans for the site at this point.

Proposed by Councillor Mallon

Seconded by Alderman Cosgrove and agreed that

the extension of the Licence Agreement for Ulster Bar Corner in Antrim until 31st October 2026 and authorisation for the Chief Executive to sign the agreement on behalf of the Council be approved.

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

Councillor Ward left the Chamber during Item 4.2

4.2 ED/ED/284 CORPORATE MEMBERSHIPS 2025

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to request Members' approval for two Corporate Memberships in 2025; a renewal of the Council's annual membership of the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and a new request regarding membership of the Women in Business NI.

2. Introduction/Background

The Council had been a Corporate Member of the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce since 2017. The Council's alliance with the NI Chamber complimented the commission of the new economic development strategy for the Borough and alignment with the needs and expectations of Borough businesses. Other benefits of membership included;

- Connection through the Chamber network, including Chambers Ireland and British Chambers of Commerce
- Priority access to NI Chamber's signature events
- Personal invitations to high level networking, in Camera events and policy roundtables
- Potential to speak and/or host NI Chamber events
- Access to 110 + events per year with circa 7.8k delegates to connect with; these include general and regional networking; business support and international themed events
- Profile raising
- A copy of Ambition magazine and access to, and inclusion in, the Annual Member Directory

Corporate membership of Women in Business NI was a new proposal, which would allow the Council to prevail of the following benefits;

- Could be utilised as an employee perk and included within the employee benefits package
- Employee access to an individual dashboard, enabling them to view and register for upcoming events and Member news
- Connection through the Member Directory
- Promotion of the Council and its programmes across the WIB network
- Discounted rates on Centre of Learning development programmes, available both online and in person
- Monthly free online industry events, topical webinars and in person networking opportunities
- Discounts to all conferences and Awards including the Voices of Leadership Conference, Women in Tech Conference, All-Island Female Entrepreneurs' Conference and the Chair's Lunch

3. Previous Decision of Council

2024 Membership of the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce, at a cost of £3000 +VAT, was agreed by the Our Prosperity Outcome Delivery Group in their December 2023 meeting.

No previous decisions had been taken with regards to Corporate Membership of Women in Business.

4. Financial Implication

In a slight increase on previous years, the cost of this year's Corporate Membership of the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce would be £3,150 + VAT (£3,780 inc).

Annual Corporate Membership of Women in Business was £2,000 + VAT as the Council is a large employer with more than 500 employees – all employees were welcome to enjoy the benefits, membership was not exclusive to women.

These costs would be met from within existing Economic Development budgets.

Proposed by Alderman Cosgrove

Seconded by Councillor Webb and agreed that

- (a) the renewed annual membership of the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce at a cost of £3,150 (excluding VAT) be approved.**
- (b) the Annual membership of Women In Business Northern Ireland at a cost of £2,000 (excluding VAT) be approved.**

ACTION BY: Tara McCormick, Executive Officer Economic Development

Councillor Ward returned to the Chamber during Item 4.3

4.3 **ED/ED/306 LONDON INVESTMENT EVENT 2025**

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek Members' approval for Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council to hold a showcase investment event in London. The event aimed to highlight the borough's achievements, promote its key industries (including transport and logistics, healthcare, advanced manufacturing), and attract investment following Council's prestigious recognition as Overall Council of the Year 2024 for Service Delivery by the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE).

2. Introduction/Background

Council's success in securing the Overall Council of the Year 2024 for Service Delivery by the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) had reinforced its position as a leading local authority in delivering excellence for

residents and businesses. This achievement highlighted the borough's ongoing commitment to innovation, economic growth, and public service.

The Council recognised the importance of leveraging this recognition to further enhance its reputation and attract investment. Hosting an event in London, a global economic and political hub, presented a strategic opportunity to:

- Showcase Council's success and forward-thinking approach.
- Highlight key industries and investment opportunities within the borough.
- Engage directly with potential investors and stakeholders, including representatives from UK Government, leading businesses, and policymakers.

3. Key Issues

The proposed event would focus on positioning Antrim and Newtownabbey as an attractive destination for investment, with key themes including:

- **Key Industries:** Promoting sectors such as advanced manufacturing, healthcare, transport & logistics and tourism.
- **Investment Opportunities:** Highlighting strategic development sites, business incentives, and the Council's commitment to economic development.
- **Borough Highlights:** Celebrating the borough's achievements, cultural heritage, and excellent infrastructure.

Proposed Format

- **Venue:** A prestigious London location to ensure high-profile attendance.
- **Guests:** Key representatives from the UK Government, leading business executives, and international investors.
- **Programme:** Presentations, panel discussions, networking opportunities, and exhibitions featuring local businesses.

Objectives

- Enhance Council's reputation as a leading Council and investment destination.
- Attract new business opportunities and strengthen existing partnerships.
- Foster relationships with political stakeholders and policymakers.

The proposed event represented a unique opportunity for Council to capitalise on its success and showcase the borough as an attractive destination for investment. With strategic planning and Members' input, the event could deliver significant economic and reputational benefits for the borough.

4. Financial Position/Implication

The event would require appropriate budget provision in 2025/26 to cover the cost of event planning, venue hire, hospitality, promotional materials, travel, and accommodation for key participants.

Following an update from the Director of Economic Development and Planning regarding work being undertaken with colleagues from other Council areas and local businesses who had undertaken or participated in other similar Showcase events it was

Proposed by Alderman Cosgrove

Seconded by Alderman Magill and agreed that

a scoping exercise around the content of the event and how this might be delivered to maximum effect be carried out and a further report be brought back to a future Committee meeting.

ACTION BY: Chris Doyle, Investment Officer

4.4 ED/REG/085 TOWN CENTRE SHOPFRONTS (PHASE ONE) GRANTS AWARDS

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to update Members on the Urban Shop Frontage Scheme and to seek Members' approval to issue Letters of Offer to the latest tranche of businesses following successful completion of the internal approval process.

2. Introduction/Background

Members would recall that in September 2024, the Council was successful in securing £390,600 from the Department for Communities (DfC) towards an Urban Shop Frontage Scheme which was launched in two phases:

- Phase 1 - Ballyclare and Randalstown (launched July 2024); and
- Phase 2 - Glengormley, Crumlin and Antrim (launched October 2024).

The scheme, which was co-funded by the Council up to £390,600 provided a combined budget of £434,000. Grants were provided to businesses at an 80% intervention level with 20% contributed by the business or property owner.

This grant provided up to £4,999 towards eligible businesses and property owners to make physical improvements to the exterior of their business premises.

Supported by regular social media alerts, a series of workshops to support potential applicants noted below and a link on the Council website, Phase 2 closed on the 13th December 2024.

- Tuesday 22 October & 19 November – Space, Antrim
- Wednesday 23 October & 20 November - Crumlin Leisure Centre
- Thursday 24 October & 21 November - Lillian Bland Pavilion, Glengormley

<https://antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/business/support-for-businesses/proposed-town-centre-shopfront-improvement-scheme/>

3. Key Issues

Under Phase 1 of the Urban Shop Frontage Scheme, 81 applications were received. A further 59 applications had been received under Phase 2.

Applications were reviewed and verified by Council Officers and presented to the project assessment panel, comprised of Council Officers and representatives from DfC Urban Regeneration Team, the principal funder of the programme. The assessment panel considered three main elements:

- Need for the project – was the current shop front in need of repair/upgrade?
- Impact on streetscape –would the project have a positive impact on the overall appearance of the area?
- Value for Money – does the project represent value for money?

Once recommended by the assessment panel, the proposed grant awards are presented to the Project Board which consists of Council Officers, DfC, DEA Members for Ballyclare and Dunsilly and Members of the Ballyclare Chamber of Commerce and Randalstown Chamber of Commerce.

The most recent Project Board took place on 9 December 2024, and this report sought Members' approval to issue Letters of Offer to the applicants noted in Table 1 (below), following the completion of the internal approval process outlined above.

In addition, 11 applications from phase 1 were deemed unsuccessful due to ineligibility reasons, as detailed in Table 2 (below). A further batch of applications from phase 1 as well as new applications from phase 2 would be brought before Members in due course for consideration.

TABLE 1: TOWN CENTRE SHOPFRONT IMPROVEMENT AWARDS (Tranche 2)

No.	DEA	Business Name	LoO Amount
1	Ballyclare	The Office	£ 4,999.00
2	Ballyclare	Hope 365	£ 2,480.00
3	Ballyclare	The Secret Place	£ 2,636.00
4	Ballyclare	The Sportsman's Inn	£ 3,920.00
5	Ballyclare	Miskimmin Wealth	£ 4,999.00
6	Ballyclare	Mundell's Footwear	£ 1,812.00
7	Ballyclare	The Harmony Hub	£ 4,588.58
8	Ballyclare	Homestyle	£ 1,324.00
9	Ballyclare	Jenkins Butchers	£ 4,999.00
10	Ballyclare	Namaste	£ 4,999.00
11	Ballyclare	Strands Barbers	£ 4,200.00
12	Ballyclare	Henderson & Taylor FM Ltd	£ 2,396.00
13	Ballyclare	The Beautician Salon	£ 1,324.80
14	Ballyclare	Ashers	£ 1,192.00
15	Ballyclare	Joli	£ 2,963.50
16	Ballyclare	Brown's Coffee Co	£ 3,065.36

17	Ballyclare	Fig Design Co	£ 4,999.00
18	Ballyclare	Beauty by Clarissa	£ 4,896.00
19	Ballyclare	Links Counselling	£ 4,080.00
20	Ballyclare	B Craig & Co	£ 4,999.00
21	Ballyclare	S&J Irvine Funeral Directors	£ 4,560.00
22	Ballyclare	Autopoint	£4,999.00
23	Ballyclare	Woks Asian Kitchen	£1,728.00
		(Ballyclare) Total:	£ 82,159.24
24	Dunsilly	Elle Body and Beauty	£ 828.00
25	Dunsilly	Coffee Co & Robinson's Funeral Directors	£ 2,320.00
26	Dunsilly	Centurion	£ 4,710.36
27	Dunsilly	Robinson's Funeral Directors	£ 1,426.56
28	Dunsilly	Rover Coffee House	£ 4,999.00
29	Dunsilly	McManus Hardware	£ 2,560.00
		(Randalstown) Total:	£ 16,843.92
Total Grant Assistance (Phase 1, rolling):			£ 99,003.16

TABLE 2: UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS

No.	DEA	Business Name	Reason for Refusal
1	Ballyclare	Window Films NI Ltd	Business not based at premises
2	Ballyclare	Cathay Square	Failed to respond
3	Ballyclare	Apollo Dry Cleaners	Failed to respond
4	Ballyclare	3 The Square	Ineligible
5	Ballyclare	3a The Square	Ineligible
6	Ballyclare	After Schools Club, McConnell's Yard	Failed on grounds of visual impact on Main Street
7	Ballyclare	47 Main Street	Ineligible (vacant unit)
8	Dunsilly	Beechgrove Interiors	Applicant declined to pursue.
9	Dunsilly	The Vintage Wine Merchants	Failed to respond
10	Dunsilly	29-31 Main Street/1-5 Moore's Lane	Failed to respond
11	Dunsilly	29-31 Main Street/1-5 Moore's Lane	Failed to respond

4. Financial Position/Implication

The Council had secured £390,600 from DfC towards the implementation of the Urban Shop Frontage Scheme. The Council must demonstrate a 10% match funding contribution, for which provision existed with the Economic Development 2024/25 budget.

5. Summary

To date, £47,096.94 had been awarded. This report sought to commit a further £99,003.16 taking the total committed to £146,100.10. This left a remaining budget of £244,499.90 for the remainder of phase 1 and phase 2.

The second tranche of businesses had been assessed through the Urban Shop Frontage scheme and had been recommended for approval. 29 businesses were included in tranche 2 with a value of £99,003.16. In addition, 11 applications had been unsuccessful.

Proposed by Alderman Cosgrove

Seconded by Councillor Ward and agreed that

the second tranche of awards under Phase 1 of the Urban Shop Frontage Scheme with a value of £99,003.16 across 29 local businesses be approved.

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

4.5 **ED/REG/081 TOWN CENTRE DATA COLLECTION**

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members the extension of the contract with Huq Industries for Town Centre Data Collection for 2025.

2. Introduction/Background

The Council's Economic Development Section currently had two contracts that provided town centre health check data e.g. footfall, traffic counters, vacancy etc.

- Ballyclare & Antrim – current provider Springboard
- Crumlin, Randalstown and Glengormley – current provider Huq Industries.

3. Key Issues

The Council's Economic Development Team recorded, monitored and used the data collected by the town centre health check devices on a daily basis. They were also used by other sections of the Council e.g. Tourism and Events.

Through the data we could monitor changes in footfall following events in the town centres, we could record the impact of scheme including public realm works etc. It also helped with calculating anticipated disruption if we had to close a car park, or a street/footpath as part of any regeneration works.

The data was also used to monitor the impact of programmes and projects completed in the Towns and used to support Post Project Evaluations.

The data was proactively shared with the Chambers of Commerce.

An example of the reports received was circulated.

There were currently two contracts in place. The utilisation different technologies to acquire the data and this was detailed in the table below.

Company	Towns Covered	Information Provided	Source of Information	Cost to Council
Springboard Ltd	Antrim Ballyclare	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Footfall (two locations in each town) by hour & day of the week. Average footfall and comparisons to other time periods and other similar regions.• Traffic (one location in each town) by hour and day of the week.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Two infra-red footfall sensors.• Two infra-red traffic sensors.	
Huq	Crumlin Glengormley Randalstown	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Footfall• Dwell Time• Visit Density• Daily visits• Visitor location	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cookie Data	

The equipment provided through the Springboard contract remained in place and was continuing to transmit data to the Council on a weekly basis. This would remain the case for the working life of the equipment and therefore no change was currently planned.

The initial agreement with Huq Industries was for two years. This was coming to an end and Officers were seeking Members' approval to extend the current contract with Huq for a period of 12 months at a cost of £[REDACTED] to be met through the existing Economic Development budget.

During the year an evaluation exercise would be undertaken to ensure the current arrangement continued to meet the needs of the Council and whether there were alternative technologies that could provide this data in a more cost-effective way.

4. Financial Position/Implication

[REDACTED] had been allocated within the current economic development budget to support this project.

5. Governance

The project would be managed by the Economic Development Department.

Proposed by Alderman Magill
Seconded by Councillor Webb and agreed that

a one-year extension to the contract with Huq Industries at a cost of [REDACTED] to be met through the Economic Development budget be approved. It was further agreed that a report would be brought back to a future Committee meeting with consideration given to the option for bringing this service in-house and information on how the data collected can be used across the Council.

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

4.6 ED/ED/308 MULTIPLY PROGRAMME LETTER OF OFFER

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek Members' approval to accept the updated Letter of Offer (circulated) from Department for the Economy (DfE) for the Multiply Programme following a recently updated spend profile.

2. Introduction/Background

Members would recall that the Multiply programme aimed to support the economic vision for a regionally balanced economy with good jobs and increased productivity by helping eligible adults improve their numeracy skills.

Spanning across a number of geographical areas in the Borough of Antrim and Newtownabbey, we would deliver a number of initiatives, reaching out to over 500 adults, these flexible and dynamic training initiatives on numeracy would endeavour to address skills and knowledge gaps within our community.

A programme update was outlined below:

- The Multiply Officer had successfully completed the procurement process for the nine planned Multiply Programme Initiatives.
- Two delivery partners, Sentinus and Workforce, had been appointed
- Initial monitoring meetings with both delivery partners and DfE were held in early December 2024.
- Delivery was now commenced with the first two initiatives, "Industry Upskilling in Retail and Hospitality" held on 11th and 12th December 2024.
- Remaining initiatives to be delivered starting Jan 2025 by both delivery partners.

3. Previous Decision of Council

The original Letter of Offer was approved by Members in April 2024.

4. Key Issues

Due to the response to the Council's approaches to market for 9 x Multiply Initiatives a revised spend was indicated to DfE. The updated Letter of Offer reflected this in a reduced amount of budget for ANBC Multiply Programme.

5. Financial Position/Implication

Updated Letter of Offer amounts to £224,668.00. The original amount was for £251,000.20.

6. Governance

Multiply Programme at ANBC would be delivered by two delivery partners, Sentinus and Workforce Training Services under management of the Multiply Officer (Economic Development Team) and associated reporting to the Council's Labour Market Partnership.

Proposed by Councillor Goodman
Seconded by Councillor Mallon and agreed that

the Letter of Offer from Department for the Economy (DfE) for the Multiply Programme be approved.

ACTION BY: James Martin, Multiply Officer

4.7 **ED/ED/302 LOCAL ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP UPDATE**

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to provide Members with an update on the initial engagement sessions of the Antrim and Newtownabbey Local Economic Partnership (LEP) and to seek Members' approval of the Membership of the LEP and the recruitment of appropriate staff.

2. Introduction/Background

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

Local Economic Partnerships were designed to:

- Bring together local economic stakeholders to reflect local needs and strengths, promoting collaborative working, and drive greater integration between local and central government economic initiatives.
- Identify actions and develop projects that align with the Sub-Regional Economic Plan, Council Economic Development Strategies and Invest NI Business Strategy. These would be developed with advice from DfE and Invest NI, and they should be appraised and scored/ ranked (where relevant) using a consistent and transparent methodology.
- Put in place effective monitoring and evaluation – this would be agreed dependent on the nature of the projects.

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

To support the delivery of these plans the Minister had proposed a £15m Regional Fund which would seek to address regional imbalance.

The Departmental timeline indicated the following schedule of activities:

November 2024 - Initial Setup

- Council appoint lead official/team.
- DfE would appoint a Strategic Advisor, and they would work alongside the relevant Invest NI Regional Office to support development of the LEP.
- DfE Regional Balance Unit/ Invest NI Regional Manager to meet lead Council official/team and agree proposed structure.
- Draft TOR for each LEP to be agreed by council and DfE/ INI based on chosen model. This would set out initial membership, initial decision-making process, and extent of DfE/INI role. DfE will provide template.
- Action planning phase started on agreement.

December 2024 - Action Planning

- LEP to have agreed core focus until end 26-27, e.g. productivity, economic inactivity etc. based on SREP evidence. Agreed with DfE/ Invest NI.
- LEP would decide how to choose actions to take forward – open call, private submissions, how to rank, appraise options etc. – DfE and Invest NI would advise.
- DfE would confirm funding level to each LEP. Fund management guidance would be provided to council secretariat.
- Project and Funding phase started on agreement.

January-March 2025 - Project and Funding

- LEP would identify actions.
- DfE/ Invest NI would work with LEP to identify projects that met their core focus.
- Projects and actions would be assessed based on LEP methodology agreed.

3. Previous Decision of Council

In November 2024 Members agreed to establish the Antrim and Newtownabbey Local Economic Partnership as a Working Group of the Economic Development Committee which would enable non-elected members to be involved but provide a direct reporting line to the parent Committee for decision-making purposes.

4. Key Issues

In December 2024 an initial meeting of the LEP was convened to discuss a

number of key areas detailed below.

- Membership:

The membership of the group to date had included all Elected Members from the Economic Development Committee, Senior Council Officers and external partners:

- Northern Regional College
- Antrim Enterprise Agency
- Mallusk Enterprise Park
- LEDCOM
- Invest NI
- DfE
- DfC
- Queen's University
- AMIC
- Ulster University
- Belfast International Airport

Following the Committee meeting in November and the initial meeting of the LEP in December a number of other members were proposed including:

- Transport Training Services Limited (TTS)
- Construction Industry Training Board (CITB)
- CAFRE
- DfI
- A representative from the Chambers of Commerce

The Membership of the group now needed to be confirmed to enable the action planning work to commence throughout Q1 2025, therefore approval was sought to extend the membership to formally include those additional organisations outlined above.

In addition, the Working Group was currently open to all members of the Economic Development Committee and consideration would be given to whether the Chair and Vice Chair of the Economic Development Committee would be sufficient representation and that the wider membership was not required at each LEP meeting.

- Funding and Recruitment:

In the announcement on the 1st October the Minister outlined a £15m fund spread across three financial years commencing on 1st April 2025. Each Council area in Northern Ireland would be granted an allocation to support their individual action plan.

Whilst the allocation for Antrim and Newtownabbey had not been confirmed officially, DfE had indicated that the Council's allotted funding would be in the region of £865,000 per year, meaning a total fund £2,595,000 across the three years. This was the lowest allocation across Northern Ireland.

The majority of the funding would be for operational expenditure on programmes and projects identified in the action plan, however the DfE had indicated that around £135,000 per year should be allocated to the administration of the programme and this would include the recruitment of additional staff. It was anticipated that all of the administration would be covered from this source and there was no anticipated additional cost to Council.

This report was seeking approval from Members to proceed on this basis and prepare documents for the recruitment of additional temporary staff resources to support the operation and delivery of the LEP.

- Initial Focus Areas:

The guidance from DfE had been clear the new interventions to be supported by the LEP could not duplicate existing provision e.g. GoSucceed, LMP, DTFF or the work done by Invest NI, however, it could be used to support the Council's existing programmes or projects that were 'at a state of readiness' if that was deemed relevant.

At the initial meeting in December the Working Group discussed a number of key thematic areas including:

- Workspace/Infrastructure development
- Advanced Manufacturing Cluster
- Investment attraction and Strategic Employment Locations and Planning
- Commercial vacancy and dereliction
- Community Wealth Building
- Sustainability / Carbon Reduction
- Productivity and Entrepreneurial activity

Subsequent meetings of the LEP would now work to prioritise these areas and develop a pipeline of achievable, realistic programmes and projects that could be delivered using the funding available.

5. Financial Position/Implication

No official confirmation had been received however DfE had indicated that the Council's allotted funding would be in the region of £865,000 per year, meaning a total fund £2,595,000 across the three years. This was the lowest allocation across Northern Ireland.

The Department had indicated that around £135,000 per year should be allocated to the administration of the programme and this would include the recruitment of additional staff. It was anticipated that all of the administration would be covered from this source and there was no anticipated additional cost to Council.

The Director of Economic Development and Planning provided clarification regarding the representation on the Local Economic Partnership, the reporting structure and the task and finish groups.

Proposed by Councillor Mallon
Seconded by Alderman Magill and agreed that

- a) **The final Membership of the Antrim and Newtownabbey Local Economic Partnership as outlined be approved with the Council membership amended to include all 8 Committee Members and that this be communicated to the Department.**
- b) **The recruitment of temporary staff as appropriate to support the operation of the LEP be approved and that a report be brought back regarding the breakdown of administration/management costs taking into account the time required from Director level down.**

ACTION BY: Steven Norris, Deputy Director of Regeneration and Infrastructure and Michael McKenna, Deputy Director of Investment and Business Development

5. ITEMS FOR NOTING

5.1 ED/ED/309 JAMES KANE FOUNDATION

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to update Members regarding a request for Council participation in an application for grant funding to the James Kane Foundation.

2. Introduction/Background

The James Kane Foundation was an independent charity, focusing on two themes:

- Enabling STEM related education and career opportunities
- Enabling students to make the correct choices between employment/career and higher-level education pathways.

The Foundation supported applications for funding that aligned with the above pathways and were for projects which would progress and facilitate education and career opportunities.

Workplus were an organisation who helped employers grow their own future talent, supporting employers as they worked together to better connect with schools, collaborated on work experience and apprenticeship recruitment and delivered social value. Workplus were currently delivering the Council's Work Experience programme.

3. Key Issues

Workplus were in the process of submitting an application to the James Kane Foundation for grant funding for an Apprenticeship project which would improve collaboration and information sharing between employers and schools with a key emphasis on supporting improved access to apprenticeships in the Borough.

This would be achieved by providing a single access platform for improved information sharing and communication supporting an enhanced pipeline of apprentices and apprentice-ready businesses. Full details of the proposal were circulated. It was anticipated that the project would be undertaken between February 2025 and September 2025.

Workplus had approached the Council to request its participation as partner in their application. Their intention was to develop a prototype platform with a cluster of schools and employers in Antrim and Newtownabbey under the existing school-employer partnership which was facilitated by the Council and its Labour Market Partnership.

There was no financial commitment requested from the Council and the only requirement, should the application be successful, would be a small element of facilitation with the school-employer partnership which was already in place through the Labour Market Partnership.

It was envisaged that a successful outcome to this project would be beneficial to the Borough by improving access to apprenticeships of all types within the Borough and by further enhancing the school/employer partnership which would have long term benefits in terms of employability, career pipeline and apprenticeships.

4. Financial Position/Implication

There would be no financial implication for the Council. Should the Workplus application be successful the project would be fully funded.

Proposed by Councillor Goodman

Seconded by Councillor Webb and agreed that

the report regarding Council's inclusion as a partner in the grant funding application to the James Kane Foundation by Workplus be noted.

NO ACTION

5.2 **ED/REG/083 OUT OF TOWN CENTRE SHOPFRONT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME PHASE ONE UPDATE**

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to provide Members with a progress update on Phase One of the Out of Town Centre Shopfront Improvement Programme.

2. Introduction/Background

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

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

3. Previous Decision of Council

In January 2023, the Council agreed to open an Expression of Interest process for a Shopfront Improvement Programme in the Macedon and Threemilewater DEAs. Following this process, in July 2023 the Council approved a programme budget of £250,000 for the Shopfront Improvement Programme. It was agreed that the programme would be implemented in stages, and businesses in Abbots Cross, Hillview, Monkstown and Carnmoney Village, be invited to submit an application under Phase One.

Under this Phase, each eligible property could apply for a grant of up to £5,000, at a grant rate of 80%.

4. Programme Update

The Programme opened for applications in October 2023 and closed 31 January 2024. Under Phase One of the programme, 29 applications were received, with 28 deemed eligible. A total of £75,256.45 had been awarded. The table below provides a breakdown of applications and grants awarded.

Business Name	Grant Award
<u>Abbots Cross</u>	
Kingsbridge Optician and Hearing Care	£1,108.00
Used Clothing	£3,695.54
Well Pharmacy	£5,000.00
Eva's Café	£3,695.54
Tropical Tan	£5,000.00
Jolos Hairdressing	£3,695.54
Nanny Plum's Bakery and Deli	£3,695.54

<u>Carmmoney Village</u>	
Manna	£5,000.00
Jego Hairdressing / Jackie's Barbershop	£3,509.76
Hill Tavern Bar	£4,066.66
Ashers Carmmoney	£5,000.00
Dean Samuel	£3,462.72
You Health and Wellness	£5,000.00
<u>Hillview Avenue</u>	
Classic Carpets and Beds	£3,600.00
Elite Nails + Beauty	£5,000.00
<u>Monkstown</u>	
The Butchers	£0.00
Active Feet	£907.16
Andrews Opticians	£728.82

Comfort First	£1,112.08
Turkish Barbers	£651.65
Ashers Monkstown	£608.00
Ten Coffee	£651.65
Sunbed Studio	£805.98
Mauds Moments	£634.50
Toto	£1,243.27
Eclipz	£1,268.99
Maloneys Chips	£592.00
Monkstown Community Forum	£5,000.00
Monkstown Village Initiative	£523.03
Total	£75,256.45

To date, four businesses had completed their works - 1 in Hillview Avenue, and 3 in Carnmoney Village. The remaining 24 businesses were due to complete all proposed works by 28 February 2025.

Proposed by Alderman Ross

Seconded by Alderman Magill and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

5.3 ED/DI/002 ASK MENTORING PROGRAMME BUDGET UPDATE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to provide an update to Members on the status of the ASK Mentoring programme and to share details on the ongoing development of the programme for local businesses.

2. Introduction/Background

The ASK Mentor programme was originally launched by the Council in 2013 with the aim of offering start-ups and SME businesses the opportunity to receive free one-to-one mentoring from an industry expert. It focused on addressing specific needs for businesses in the Borough and was designed to deliver quick and immediate support. The programme had been revived and updated numerous times since its inception. In the current incarnation, eligible business applicants were allocated a maximum of 10 hours mentoring.

3. Previous Decision of Council

In December 2023 Members approved the continuation of the ASK Programme for the remainder of 2023/24, with provision made in the 2024/2025 estimates at a cost of £30,000.

4. Programme to Date

Since the launch of the new programme in July 2024 33 businesses had requested ASK Mentoring support; these are detailed below:

Business Name	Business Sector	Specialism
Spring & Airbrake Irl Ltd	Retail	Big Data and Analytics
Valor N.I.	Health & Life Sciences	Legal (and Market Research)
AI Services (NI) Ltd	Agriculture	Smart Technologies and IoT (and Blockchain)
Patterson's Butcher	Food & Drink	Smart Technologies and IoT
AFCO ELECTRICAL WHOLESALE LTD	Wholesale	Digital Transformation Strategy
Randalstown Pharmacies Ltd	Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering	Digital Transformation Strategy
Diamond Discounts	Food & Drink	Referred to Go Succeed
Antrim School of Music CIC	Arts & Creative Industries	Marketing for Merchandising + Sustainability
ADVANCED NI Scaffolding Ltd	Construction	Digital Transformation Strategy
Ross Companies	Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering	Digital Transformation Strategy
Goudy Engineering	Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering	Marketing & Sales
Janine Dempster Artist	Arts & Creative Industries	Marketing & Sales
A Digital Next	Information & Communication Technology	Marketing & Sales + Digital Transformation Strategy
Glassies	Domestic & Personal Services	Application Withdrawn
The Bed Shop NI Ltd	Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering	Marketing & Sales
Inspired Business Consultancy	Financial, Professional & Business Services	Application Withdrawn
Opticare Opticians and Audiocare Hearing	Retail	Legal
Richard Atkinson & Co Ltd	Manufacturing / Production	Digital Transformation Strategy
Kaleidoscope	Health & Life Sciences	Marketing & Sales
SafeGuarding Solutions	Financial, Professional & Business	Marketing & Sales + Finance
BluRobin	Retail	Marketing & Sales
Stagforge	Design and Manufacture of Luxury BBQs	Marketing & Sales
Training Solutions NI	Education	Artificial Intelligence
Colourwired Elements	Health & Life Sciences	Social Enterprise
Label space.co.uk	Retail	Marketing & Sales
Savvy & Shine	Wholesale	Marketing & Sales

SFBlueprint	Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering	Marketing & Sales
Elliots Silks Ltd	Arts & Creative Industries	Digital Transformation Strategy
DIY4U	Retail	Import/Exporting
Antrim Tree Services	Arboriculture/ Tree services	Application Withdrawn
SAMUEL JOHNSTON LIMITED	Retail	Project Management
CMASS Ltd	Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering	Marketing & Sales
Secret Stash Yarn Shop	Arts & Creative Industries	Marketing & Sales

Previously 5 businesses elected to use ASK Mentoring support for assistance with the Digital Transformation Flexible Fund (DTFF) application process – each of these businesses were successful in their applications and received DTFF funding. With Call 4 of DTFF launching in March 2025 Officers anticipated businesses to avail of the ASK Mentoring support again to assist with their applications.

39% of businesses had requested Marketing & Sales mentoring, while 21% had elected to utilise Digital Transformation Strategy under their 10 hours mentoring.

5. Financial Position/Implication

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

Currently (as of December 2024) £21,000 of the budget was forecasted as being spent– which leaves £9,000 remaining for further mentoring.

6. Governance

The initiative was being managed by the Digital Innovation section of Economic Development.

Proposed by Alderman Cosgrove

Seconded by Councillor Goodman and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

5.4 **ED/ED/279 GO SUCCEED UPDATE**

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to update Members on Go Succeed activities at the approach of the end of the financial year.

2. Introduction/Background

As Members would be aware, Go Succeed launched in November 2023 and was a new go-to source for expert business advice led by all 11 local councils across Northern Ireland. The programme offered a flexible service to both entrepreneurs and already established businesses within the Borough through its 4 primary pillars; Engage, Foundation, Growth and Scaling via one-to-one mentoring, specialist masterclasses, peer support networks and access to grant aid.

Members would recall that Engage and Foundation ("Get Started") elements of the programme were delivered by Enterprise Northern Ireland. The Council was partnered with Mid and East Antrim Borough Council for the Growth and Scaling components, which was being delivered by Mallusk Enterprise Park and Deirdre Fitzpatrick & Associates.

3. Mentoring

As mentioned above, mentoring support through the service was delivered via 4 primary pillars. When an applicant applied to the programme, Economic Development Officers would select the most appropriate support pillar based on their application.

- Engage – Volume Starts/Entrepreneurs (up to 5.5 hours mentoring)
- Foundation – Higher Value Starts/Newly Established (up to 11 hours mentoring)
- Growth – Existing Businesses (up to 21 hours mentoring)
- Scaling – Those who could go on and generate at least £1m in revenue after 3 years (up to 30 hours mentoring)

From the programme launch up to 30th November 2024, 861 entrepreneurs and established businesses across the Borough made applications to the service.

See below overview of enquiry numbers, diagnostics completed and diagnostic completion targets for each pillar up to 30th November 2024. Delivery towards these targets would continue up to 31st March 2025.

Pillar	Enquiries	Diagnostics Completed	Diagnostic Completion Target
Engage	486	345	87% (on track)
Foundation	109	74	66% (on track)
Growth	263	196	82% (on track)
Scaling	3	2	100% (complete)

Please note these targets were for diagnostics completed over an 18-month delivery period (23/24 and 24/25).

4. Grants

The Go Succeed Grant was open to those who were currently receiving/had received support through the Foundation, Growth or Scaling pillars of the service. Applicants must be actively trading and have completed at least 50% of their allocated mentoring hours to eligible for an application pack.

The grant could fund up to 70% of costs for capital and/or revenue items up to a maximum grant of £4,000. The organisation must have provided their own funding for the remaining balance. Applicants would receive their initial 80% instalment on return of signed Letter of Offer, with the final 20% released upon satisfactory claim check (receipts/invoices, bank statements and completed monitoring form).

Grants were awarded on a competitive, first come first serve basis until the budget allocation for the year (£296,461) had been depleted. In December, the Council put a pause on issuing additional Grant Application packs, as we approached the allocated budget for the 24/25 Financial Year.

To date, the Council had issued 53 Letter of Offers for the Go Succeed Grant, valued at £171,609 (a complete list of businesses in receipt of Letters of Offer was circulated). There was a large pipeline of Grants, which would be assessed and issued with Letter of Offer, if successful, before the end of March 2025, utilising the remainder of the grant budget.

5. Peer Support Networks

Go Succeed Peer Support Networks were spaces for like-minded entrepreneurs and established businesses to provide mutual support, encouragement and assistance. These networks were designed to be vital platforms for businesses to connect and gain insights from similar sector and role models within their industry.

a) ANBC Social Enterprise Peer Support Network

Launched in September 2024, the network was created to support Social Enterprises within the Borough. An initial launch event took place in The Old Courthouse, Antrim, where members of the group engaged with valuable support organisations and connected with one another. The network currently had 11 members.

A key feature of this network was that it was shaped by the needs and requirements of its members. At the end of each second, feedback was taken from attendees which was used to determine the theme of the next session.

Sessions to date;

- 1- Launch Event – Social Enterprise Support Organisations and Networking
- 2- Social Enterprise Governance – Unlocking the Secrets to Sustainable Success within your SE
- 3- Unlock the Power of AI for your SE

b) ANBC & MEA DTFF Peer Support Network

Due to launch in January, this Peer Support Network would work to build awareness and provide a pathway for Go Succeed clients to access support through the Digital Transformation Flexible Fund.

The initial session would serve as an introduction to the fund, with an overview of the benefits it could bring to your organisation. This would be followed by a further 3 sessions, which would include best practice/case study visits and an exploration of Digital Transformation Plans.

5. Masterclasses

Delivered by industry experts, the Go Succeed Masterclasses acted as a supplementary support to the mentoring.

Although each Council area delivered their own masterclasses, any individual could attend any workshop across Northern Ireland.

To date, Antrim and Newtownabbey had delivered workshops in various areas-

Google Lunchtime Learning Series

- 1) Being Found Online by Google Searchers (30th April)
- 2) Growing Your Online Reputation (14th May)
- 3) Identifying Trends on Google and Using Them to Your Advantage (28th May)

Canva Lunchtime Learning Series

- 1) The Marketing Magic of Canva (30th July)
- 2) Canva Video Marketing (12th August)
- 3) Canva AI for Bulk Design (27th August)

Business Essentials Series

- 1) HR Recruitment & Selection (22nd October)
- 2) An Introduction to AI and How It Can Help Your Business (28th October)
- 3) Finance: How to Access It (25th November)

Upcoming masterclasses

- 1) Cyber Security (13th January)
- 2) An Introduction to Artificial Intelligence (28th January)
- 3) How to Market Your Business to Get Impact (17th February)
- 4) Unlock the Power of Google for Your Business (25th February)

6. Community Outreach

The Community Outreach component was a mechanism within the service which worked to build awareness of support available through the programme. As part of Community Outreach works, Officers would typically attend events and promote the spectrum of support the service offers.

To date, the Council had delivered Community Outreach works using a combination of delivering specific Go Succeed events, as well as attending and supporting events hosted by others.

The Council's target for Community Outreach during 24/25 was to engage with 907 individuals – this target had been exceeded, with 1,232 individuals reached to date.

Some of the Community Outreach events were listed below -

- Business Health & Wellbeing Event, MEP
- Supporting SE Networking Event, NRC
- Invest NI Analysis Workshop
- Monkstown Boxing Club Community Job Fair
- NRC Innovation Camp
- NRC Freshers Fair
- ANBC Social Enterprise PSN
- Valley Leisure Centre Jobs Fair
- Women Connect, Ballyclare
- Catalyst Role Models Event
- Go Succeed Ultimate Pitch
- Laying the Foundations
- School Global Entrepreneurship Week
- The Ultimate Pitch

8. Previous Decision of Council

Approval for the delivery of Go Succeed and associated activities in October 2023.

9. Financial Position/Implication

The Council had previously agreed to match-fund the Programme estimated at £77,347 in 2023-24 and £77,347 in 2024-25, provision for which had been made in the Economic Development budget.

Proposed by Alderman Magill

Seconded by Alderman Cosgrove and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

5.5 ED/LMP/055 LABOUR MARKET PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to update Members on the 'Turning the Curve' exercise, reconfirming and setting out objectives and outcomes of local labour market indicators for the Labour Market Partnership Action Plans 2025-26 and 2026-27.

2. Introduction/Background

Members would be aware of the Labour Market Partnership (LMP), the aim of which was to improve labour market conditions by working through coordinated, collaborative, multi-agency partnerships, achieving regional objectives whilst being flexible to meet the needs presented by localised conditions and helping to connect employers with employees.

The Department for Communities (DfC) had advised LMPs to submit two-year Action Plans for the years 2025-26 and 2026-27 and a refreshed Strategic Assessment. To inform strategic priorities for the next Action Plans, a 'Turning the Curve' exercise was undertaken by Morrow Gilchrist Associates to examine the targets of indicators and themes within the Borough's local labour market with the Partnership on Wednesday 27 November 2024.

The following was agreed and incorporated into Council's draft Action Plan (circulated):

- % of Working Age Economic Inactivity Rate Excluding Students: The original target of 15.7% by 2027 had been achieved, and was currently sitting at 15.3%. It was proposed to keep the Economic Inactivity Rate under 15%.
- Claimant Count Annual Averages: In October 2024, the claimant count rose to 2555 from 2200 in 2023. It was agreed to keep the Claimant Count under 3000.
- % of Working Age with No Qualifications: The original target as outlined in the LMP Strategic Assessment 2024-27 was 6%. The Partnership agreed to raise this to 7%, due to how this data can fluctuate.
- # of All Persons Median Wage (£): The Strategic Assessment set a target to reach £29,412, and in 2024, the current Median Wage of residents in Antrim and Newtownabbey sat at £29,359, due to rise of minimum living wage. The Partnership proposed to keep this target the same.
- Employment Rate by disability status, ages 16-64, 2022: In 2022 Antrim and Newtownabbey had an employment rate of 50.8% for people with disabilities. The Partnership opted to keep the 2027 target rate of 54% the same given the good progress being made toward it.

3. Previous Decision of Council

At a meeting of Full Council on 29 April 2024, the LMP Action Plan 2024/25 was approved along with agreement for Officers to proceed with project delivery.

4. Governance

The Partnership met bi-monthly (6 times per year) and was Chaired by the Mayor. Minutes from LMP meetings were reported to the Economic Development Committee.

Proposed by Councillor Ward
Seconded by Alderman Cosgrove and agreed that

the agreement of targets as set by the Partnership an incorporated into the draft 2025/26 Action Plan be noted.

NO ACTION

5.6 ED/REG/087 TOWN CENTRE MARKETING CAMPAIGN UPDATE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to provide Members with an update on the Embrace Your Town marketing campaign.

2. Introduction/Background

In February 2024, the Council secured £20,236.50 of funding from the Department for Communities (DfC) to deliver a town centre marketing campaign. The 'Embrace Your Town' campaign was developed, which aimed to promote the Borough's five town centres, and highlight the diverse range of businesses in our town centres and encourage both residents and visitors to embrace what they had to offer.

A sample of the materials generated to support the campaign was circulated.

The initial campaign featured:

- Six promotional videos showcasing each town's business offering (links below)
 - Overall video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Xyfo3oNTcA>
 - Ballyclare: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pydtgz_u1SY
 - Randalstown: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nPzM8CXhKV8>
 - Glengormley: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZ6nrx3b-UE>
 - Crumlin: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9HG7nvnycys>
 - Antrim: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M_xg5o8_APc
- The videos were complemented with print advertising, media/press releases and promotional shopping bags.
- A total of 55 local businesses were highlighted in the videos, which garnered over 80,000 views and achieved an average engagement rate of 9%, far exceeding the typical government rate of 1.6%-2.4%.

3. Programme Update

In October 2024, Officers submitted a further funding bid of £50,000 to DfC for a targeted Christmas 2024 and Spring 2025 digital marketing campaign. The campaign aimed to enhance public awareness of the hospitality and retail offerings within our town centres through digital, radio, and print marketing. It also sought to build on the momentum of the 'Embrace Your Town' initiative by increasing brand recognition, reinforcing the campaign message, and encouraged residents to rediscover and support their local towns.

The Christmas campaign featured:

- Six promotional videos
 - <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1FQzRdfRZk/>
 - Ballyclare - <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/15WVCPTXVN/>
 - Glengormley - <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/151xELWHxe/>
 - Randalstown - <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/19m6j9S6SU/>
 - Antrim - <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/18KMrWNVKi/>
 - Crumlin - <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/154TNVQsGd/>
- Print advertising
- Radio advertising
- Local influencers showcasing how each of our towns was the perfect destination for festive shopping.

Over 50 local businesses were highlighted in the Christmas campaign. At the time of writing this report, the campaign had received over 25.5k impressions (the number of times content has entered a user screen), achieving an organic post engagement rate of 3.19%, which exceeds the typical government benchmark.

A procurement exercise would be undertaken in January 2025, to appoint a marketing agency to manage and execute the spring campaign. Businesses would be invited to express their interest to participate in the campaign.

4. Financial Position/Implications

The Council had secured grant funding of £50,000 from DfC. The Council must demonstrate a 10% match funding contribution, for which provision existed with the Economic Development 24/25 budget.

Proposed by Councillor Ward

Seconded by Councillor Goodman and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

5.7 **ED/ED/284 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BUSINESS PLAN 2024/25**

1. Purpose

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

2. Introduction/Background

In June 2024, Members of the Economic Development Committee noted a presentation on the Economic Development Business Plan for 2024/ 2025. The report (circulated) provided an update on performance against the Business Plan Performance Indicators for noting.

Proposed by Councillor Ward
Seconded by Alderman Ross and agreed that

the Business Plan Progress Performance report be noted.

NO ACTION

5.8 ED/ED/284 QUARTER 3 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to provide an update on Economic Development's performance against the agreed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) at the end of quarter 3 of the current financial year.

2. Update

The Economic Development department provided quarterly progress reports against departmental KPIs.

Economic Development was in a very strong position going into quarter 4 of the current financial year, with five out of six active KPIs achieved by the end of quarter 3. Achieving these KPIs at quarter 3 had involved a wide range of dedicated activity, including: securing over £750k in regeneration grant funding, assisting 260 unemployed people into work via Labour Market Partnership activity and engaging with over 500 businesses.

A detailed update on KPI performance had been circulated.

Proposed by Councillor Ward
Seconded by Councillor Goodman and agreed that

the Economic Development's positive performance and robust current standing going into the final financial quarter of the year be noted.

NO ACTION

5.9 ED/ED/284 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN UPDATE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to update Members on the delivery of the Economic Development Action Plan. A copy of the plan was circulated, with relevant updates since the last Committee meeting highlighted in red.

Proposed by Councillor Goodman
Seconded by Alderman Magill and agreed that

the Economic Development Action Plan be noted.

NO ACTION

There being no further Committee business, the Chairperson thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting concluded at 8.05 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.