



7 May 2026

Committee Chair: Councillor B Mallon
Committee Vice-Chair: Alderman M Cosgrove
Committee Members: Councillors – M Cooper, N Kelly, E McLaughlin,
M Ní Chonghaile, M Stewart and B Webb

Dear Member

MEETING OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Economic Development Committee will be held in the **Chamber, Mossley Mill** on **Tuesday 12 May 2026** at **6.30 pm**.

You are requested to attend.

Yours sincerely

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

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

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

For any queries, please contact Member Services:

Tel: 028 9448 1301

memberservices@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk

A G E N D A

1 APOLOGIES

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3 PRESENTATION

- 3.1 Advanced Manufacturing and Innovation Centre (AMIC) Factory of the Future - Update

4 ITEMS FOR DECISION

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3 PRESENTATION

3.1 ED/ED/165 ADVANCED MANUFACTURING AND INNOVATION CENTRE (AMIC) FACTORY OF THE FUTURE - UPDATE

1. Purpose

Representatives of the Advanced Manufacturing and Innovation Centre (AMIC) Factory of the Future at Global Point will attend the Committee meeting to present an update on the progress of the ALMIC project to date. Presentation to follow.

2. Recommendation

It is recommended that the presentation be noted.

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

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

REPORT ON BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING ON TUESDAY 12 MAY 2026

4 ITEMS FOR DECISION

4.1 ED/LMP/064 TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS WORKSHOPS 2026/2027

1. Purpose

The purpose of the report is to update members on the recent Transport and Logistics Workshops and seek approval to appoint Young Enterprise NI (YENI) to deliver Transport and Logistics Workshops for local primary and secondary schools in partnership with the Labour Market Partnership (LMP) in 2026/27.

2. Introduction/Background

Members are reminded that YENI is a charity that delivers a range of enterprise and financial education programmes to children and young people from all backgrounds, from one day masterclasses to year-long activities.

The Council and the LMP worked in partnership with YENI to deliver Transport and Logistics Masterclasses for school age residents in March 2026 to raise awareness of the wide variety of career opportunities and routes into the sector.

The highly successful and interactive workshops involved local industry speakers, demonstrations, a driving simulator and various vehicles used in the sector and was supported by 3 local businesses; Woodside Logistics, Henderson Group and Transport Training Services.

In total, 3 Transport and Logistics industry workshops took place with 248 primary 11 pupils from 12 primary schools and 55 secondary pupils from 4 secondary schools attending over the three days.

All teachers and students were surveyed following the event and feedback from both was very positive regarding the format and content of the event. Teachers agreed that the following workshop objectives were met:

- To have a better awareness of local career options and pathways
- To learn about the variety of careers and apprenticeships available in the industry
- To experience some of the skills required to work in the industry
- To develop team working skills
- To identify the importance of the industry to the community

Tuesday 10th and Wednesday 11th March 2026

School	Town
Ashgrove Primary School	Newtownabbey
Antrim Primary School	Antrim
Ballycraig Primary School	Antrim
Ballyhenry Primary School	Newtownabbey
Crumlin Integrated Primary School	Crumlin
Gaelscoil Eanna	Glengormley
Kilbride Primary School	Ballyclare
Loanends Primary School	Crumlin
Parkhall Primary School	Antrim
Round Tower Integrated Primary School,	Antrim
The Thompson Primary	Ballyrobert Ballyclare
Totals	11 Schools

Thursday 12th March 2026

School	Town	Student numbers
Edmund Rice College	Glengormley	17
Ballyclare Secondary School	Ballyclare	15
SEN School		
Jordanstown School	Newtownabbey	16
Rostulla School	Newtownabbey	7

A copy of the final report, prepared by YENI is (**enclosed**)

3. Previous Decision of Council

In May 2026, the Economic Development Committee agreed to work in partnership with YENI for the delivery of Transport & Logistics workshop, to include financial commitment from LMP and the Council.

4. Proposal

A proposal has been received from YENI (**enclosed**) to deliver the workshops again in March 2027. It is proposed that for £6,600 YENI will deliver the 2027 programme to include two workshops targeted at primary school students and one to post primary pupils. The workshops will be open to all primary, post primary and special educational needs schools across the Borough, and the recommendations following this year's event will be implemented for the 2027 workshop.

5. Financial Position/Implication

The overall cost for the 3 days is estimated to be a maximum of £14,000,

including YENI fee (£6,600), schools transport, hospitality and prizes.

The Labour Market Partnership is able to fund up to £6,000 and Council is asked to approve funding for the remaining cost up to £8,000. Allocation of this funding is provided for in the Economic Development budget for 2026/27.

6. Governance

Delivery of the workshops will be managed by the LMP in partnership with YENI. The LMP meets bi-monthly (six times per year) and is chaired by the Mayor. Minutes from LMP meetings are reported to the Economic Development Committee.

7. Recommendation

It is recommended that Members

- a) note the 2026 final report from YENI.**
- b) approve the YENI proposal as outlined at a cost of £6,600 and contribute up to £8,000 towards the total programme cost.**

Prepared by: Carrie Beck, Economic Development Officer

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

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

4.2 ED/ED/320 GLOBAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP WEEK 2026: YOUNG ENTERPRISE SCHOOLS MASTERCLASSES

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek approval to deliver Global Entrepreneurship Week activities and appoint Young Enterprise Northern Ireland as a delivery partner, including all associated expenditure

2. Introduction/Background

Members are reminded that Young Enterprise NI (YENI) is a charity that delivers a range of enterprise and financial education programmes to children and young people from all backgrounds from one day masterclasses to year-long activities.

YENI have submitted proposals to deliver a primary and secondary schools programme in November 2026 during Global Entrepreneurship Week (GEW) in partnership with the Council, which are **enclosed**.

GEW is a worldwide initiative which takes place each year and is used as a medium to enable organisations to raise the profile of entrepreneurship. As part of the week, YENI and Council's Economic Development Team will work in collaboration to deliver a series of workshops to primary, post primary and SEN schools across the Borough. The workshops will introduce the concept of entrepreneurship and using enterprise skills to realise entrepreneurial potential, as well as signpost to various elements of the NI entrepreneurship ecosystem to support business start-up including Go Succeed.

Extremely high demand each year for council GEW activities demonstrates the need for these types of interactive programmes in addressing entrepreneurial gaps within the education system and the necessity for embedding entrepreneurial skillsets within the Borough's youth populations to ensure future economic growth.

Members will be aware that all previous GEW activities have taken place in person, hosted in the Linen Suite in Mossley Mill. Typically, Council provide transportation to/from the event as well as light catering for staff and post-primary students. Feedback indicates that without Council contribution towards the travel, school attendance would be lower due to budget constraints within schools.

Last year, Council welcomed 892 primary and post-primary students from 28 schools across the Borough over a 4-day period, with very positive feedback received from all those attending. The total cost for the delivery of the programme was £20,032, £15,086.85 of which was from approved Council budget with the remainder covered via the Go Succeed Community Outreach budget pot.

This year's proposal for delivery is detailed below.

Option 1, full proposal included within appendix 1 – Full in-person delivery, as has been the case in previous years.

4 x Primary Sessions, in-person focusing on supply chains, using the journey of apple juice from orchard to supermarket shelf as central theme

- 1) Supply chain story, branding and packaging, role of various businesses within the supply chain, co-hosted with a local business
- 2) Students challenged to design branding and packaging for a new juice carton, focused on sustainability
- 3) Students will take a juice carton template back to school, where they will complete their design as part of homework/art class activity
- 4) Schools will be invited to submit photographs of their completed designs, with a number of winning entries selected and prizes awarded.
- 5) Mayor to visit winning school

1x Post Primary Session, in-person event, where students will be challenged to design a new app linked to the Internet of Things within the Digital and Technology industry

Students will work collaboratively to -

- 1) Develop an innovative digital idea
- 2) Create a business concept
- 3) Consider marketing and financial elements
- 4) Hear from local businesses and business advisors around the entrepreneurial journey
- 5) Prepare a short presentation to pitch to the Mayor, local businesses and ED Officers

Associated budget –

Overall request - £20,000

YENI delivery - £5,200

Remaining indicative costs to be met from existing Economic Development Budget (estimate based on previous years):

Catering - £2,200

Transportation to/from Mossley Mill - £8,000

Prizes - £300

AV Equipment - £1,400

Ad Hoc (resources, interpreters) - £2,900

To mitigate against a number of external factors including increasing costs associated with bus hire, global fuel price hikes and high demand limiting a number of schools from attending, YENI have submitted an additional potential delivery model for 2026.

Option 2, full proposal included within appendix 2 –

Hybrid delivery approach, whereby primary sessions are delivered online and post-primary sessions in-person

- 1) 1x Primary Session – online event focusing on supply chains, using the journey Live Webinar – supply chain story, branding and packaging, role of various businesses within the supply chain, co-hosted with a local

- business
- 2) In-School Activity – students provided with resource pack and design their own juice carton packaging
 - 3) Competition Entry – schools submit designs for judging by the Mayor and ED Officers
 - 4) Celebration Event – hosted at Mossley Mill during GEW, winners announced (1x representative from each class attending) and participating schools celebrated of apple juice from orchard to supermarket shelf as central theme –

1x Post Primary Session – in-person event, where students will be challenged to design a new app linked to the Internet of Things within the Digital and Technology industry

Students will work collaboratively to -

- 1) Group work to develop an innovative digital idea
- 2) Create a business concept
- 3) Consider marketing and financial elements
- 4) Hear from local businesses around their entrepreneurial journey
- 5) Prepare a short presentation to pitch to the Mayor, local businesses and ED Officers

Associated budget –

Overall request - £14,000

YENI delivery - £5,800

Remaining indicative costs to be met from existing Economic Development Budget (estimate based on previous years):

Catering - £2,000

Transportation (Post-Primary only) - £1,500

Prizes – £300

Cartons – £1,000

AV Equipment - £800

Ad Hoc (resources, interpreters) - £2,600

Based on the options discussed above, Officers recommend proceeding with option 1, 'business as usual' approach. This is based on consistently positive feedback each year surrounding the value and importance of these events in plugging the entrepreneurial knowledge gaps within the education ecosystem. Feedback and reflection across other programmes also indicate that in-person sessions are more impactful than virtual sessions and drive positive outcomes.

3. Previous Decision of Council

The Council approved the delivery of Global Entrepreneurship Week activity and associated budget for the programme last year.

4. Financial Position/Implication

Financial provision for Global Entrepreneurship Week Events have been made within the Economic Development Budget and is based on previous year costs.

5. Recommendation

It is recommended that Members;

- a) Approve the delivery of Global Entrepreneurship Week Activities**
- b) Approve the appointment of YENI as a delivery partner**
- c) Proceed with option 1, 'business as usual' approach for delivery**

Prepared by: Matthew Mulligan, Economic Development Officer

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

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

4.3 ED/ED/306 INVEST ANTRIM AND NEWTOWNABBEY – UPDATE AND NEXT STEPS

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update Members on investment performance and opportunities arising following the London Investment Showcase and to seek approval for Officers to explore future activities.

2. Background

Members will recall the Council hosted an Investment Showcase Event in the House of Commons, London, 10 December 2025, to build on the success of securing the Overall Council of the Year 2024 and 2025 finalist for Service Delivery by the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) and to launch a new investment proposition branch “Invest Antrim Newtownabbey: AN Investment that Delivers”

The event was attended by more than 120 people, including host MPs Robin Swann, John Finucane and Sammy Wilson as well as a number of other elected officials and high profile guests including local business leaders, investors and developers, alongside officers from key UK government departments.

The showcase highlighted the Borough's strengths in connectivity, innovation, skills, and investment-ready sites, the Council's 'Call for Sites', alongside the scale of opportunity emerging through projects such as Belfast International Airport and the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC).

The Council recognises the importance of building on the momentum gained through the event and to continue to build brand awareness and enhance the Boroughs reputation as an attractive place to invest.

3. Previous Decision of Council

In January 2026 the Council noted the update regarding the event and approved associated action plan.

4. Post Event Investment Engagements & Updates

Following the Investment Showcase, the Council has maintained strong momentum through a series of high-level political and strategic engagement. This has included hosting the NI Affairs Committee to highlight the Borough's contribution to regional economic growth, discussions with the Department for Transport (DfT) in relation to airports and air freight, positioning the Borough within wider UK connectivity and infrastructure priorities.

The Council has also welcomed direct discussions with Deputy First Minister, Emma Little-Pengelly MLA, ensuring alignment with Executive priorities and continued political support and opportunities has strengthened the Borough's positioning within key growth sectors, while collaboration with Invest NI regarding the opportunity for an MRO is ongoing.

In parallel engagement has been progressing with aerospace and related sectoral opportunities locally.

Since the event in Westminster a number of major planning applications have been submitted to the Council:

- DHL have had a c£30m 140,000 sq ft distribution centre approved in March 2026 and have since submitted a full application for another 100,000 sq ft storage and distribution warehouse costing c£18m. Should a full application be approved, it would result in a total investment of c£48m and create c430 new jobs in the Borough.
- A full application has been submitted from James Latham Timber PLC for the erection of a warehouse building with ancillary office space that will, if approved, lead to a c£10m investment and bring 35 FTE jobs to the Borough.

5. Next Steps

Farnborough International Airshow

The Farnborough International Airshow (FIA) is hosted in Farnborough, Hampshire, a long-established centre for aerospace research, development and innovation. The FIA has been hosted in the Town from 1948. Officers suggest attendance at the event offers a real opportunity to advance economic development objectives. From an investment attraction perspective, the event provides a platform to promote "Invest AN: An Investment that Delivers", previously launched in the House of Commons late last year and therefore promoting the Borough as a competitive location for key sectors with ample land availability and world class connectivity, showcasing regional strengths.

It is envisaged that the attending party would consist of the Chair and Vice of ED Committee or their nominees along with 3 appropriate Officers.

Whilst the event runs for five days, the advice is that the first three days (20 Jul – 22 Jul) would be more constructive for a local authority. With this considered ticket costs are:

Trade Visitor Pass (3 days) - £189 per attendee (£945)

Return Flights - estimated £200 per attendee (£1,000)

Accommodation – estimated £800 per attendee (£4,000)

Total estimated costs for 5 attendees - £5,945

Officers are also undertaking ongoing engagement with the UK Government's Department for Transport particularly regarding airports and air freight, reflecting the strategic importance of these sectors within the Borough

and supporting wider connectivity and economic growth objectives.

Follow-up Event to Westminster Showcase

Officers are exploring the opportunity to host a follow-up event to the Westminster Showcase event. Hosted locally and with a target of being held approximately 6 months since Westminster Showcase, the event would provide a platform to update stakeholders on progress arising from the Investment Showcase whilst creating further opportunities for engagement and ensuring continued visibility of the new *Invest Antrim Newtownabbey* brand. It is anticipated that, much like the Westminster event, target invitees will include representatives from the investment and development industry, major local investors and businesses as well as commercial agents and relevant representative bodies.

The programme will be further developed subject to Committee approval, however, it is currently anticipated that the event will comprise updates on the key areas discussed at Westminster, including:

- An update from the Council on the Local Development Plan Call for sites process
- An update on major planning application decisions and submissions since the initial event
- An opportunity for confirmed recent investors / developers to the Borough with a dedicated speaking slot or panel discussion
- An update from AMIC
- A look ahead to future investment opportunities in the Borough and key milestones regarding the LDP process

Subject to final plans and venue it is anticipated that the total cost for this event will be up to £12,000.

Invest Antrim Newtownabbey - Brand Promotion in BIA

Since the development of the new brand and refreshment of the Council's investment proposition officers have been exploring opportunities to further promote the brand as an investment destination.

Following discussions with Belfast International Airport and opportunity has emerged to secure prominent advertisement space. The proposed activity involves a three-month advertising presence at Belfast International Airport at a total cost of £3,500. This includes prominent advertising space within both international and domestic arrivals areas, alongside a 10-second video displayed in the baggage reclaim area (enclosed).

The campaign will ensure brand visibility within the airport and provide a Council presence at a key Borough gateway. Production and installation of all advertising materials will be managed by the airport.

6. Financial Implications

All costs will be met from the existing economic development budgets.

7. Recommendation

It is recommended that Members approve:

- a) **The delivery of a follow up event to the 2025 Investment Showcase at a costs of up to £12,000**
- b) **Attendance at the Farnborough International Airshow as outlined**
- c) **Promotion of the *Invest Antrim Newtownabbey* Brand at Belfast International airport as outlined, at a cost of £3,500**

Prepared by: Stewart McCormack, Investment Officer

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

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

4.4 ED/ED/313 LOCAL ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP (LEP) UPDATE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to:

- a) Update Members on the progress of the Antrim and Newtownabbey Local Economic Partnership (LEP) and
- b) Seek approval of 7 Business Digitisation Grants and 3 Technical Assistance Grants.

2. Introduction/Background

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

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

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

The Department has indicated that, for Antrim and Newtownabbey, up to £956,000 per year will be allocated, meaning a total fund of £2,868,000 across the three years with a Resource Grant not exceeding £956,000 and Capital Grant not exceeding £1,912,000. This remains the joint lowest allocation across Northern Ireland.

The Council received a Letter of Offer from the Department of Economy (DfE) on 13 January 2026. This was reviewed, signed and returned on **29 January 2026**.

Spend for Year 1 consisted of salaries only (£54,080.97), given the reduced timeframe for delivery. DfE have approved the rollover of any underspend in Year 1 into the remaining programme allocation.

3. Previous Decision of Council

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

In January 2025 Members agreed the Membership of the LEP including all eight members of the Economic Development Committee; and agreed the recruitment of temporary staff to service the LEP using associated funding. In May 2025, members formally approved the proposed action plan and delegated the necessary authority to progress the Letter of Offer (LoO) and Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), enabling the next stages of implementation to proceed in line with agreed governance arrangements with the Department for the Economy.

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

In November 2025, following a Stakeholder meeting the LEP Action Plan for Year 1 was formally agreed and finalised along with Terms of Reference and signed Memorandum of Understanding. These were submitted to DfE on 9th December.

Letter of Offer from the Department of Economy (DfE) received on 13 January 2026. This was reviewed, signed and returned on 29 January 2026.

Action Plan for Years 2 and 3 submitted on 20 March 2026 following approval from stakeholder group.

4. Update

Total programme allocation: **£2,868,000 to 31 March 2028**. Budget allocation comprises a Resource Grant not exceeding **£956,000** and a Capital Grant not exceeding **£1,912,000**, to be delivered across the three-year period.

The projected Year 1 expenditure was £88,831.97. Actual expenditure of £54,080.97 reflects staffing with the remaining £34,751.00 carried forward into Year 2 in accordance with programme delivery profiling.

Action Plan – Update

The following programmes are now launched:

Business Digitisation Programme

- Launched on 19 January 2026.
- Call 1 – 19 January to 6 March 2026
- Call 2 – 24 March to 1 May 2026.
- Provides £1,000–£5,000 grants at an 80% intervention rate to support improvements in productivity and digital capability.
- 43 Expressions of Interest and 9 full applications have been assessed. Two Letters of Offer issued and a further seven ready to be issued which has shown a strong demand given the short time this programme has been live.

Officers have assessed 7 further applications and are satisfied that all conditions for funding have been met. Therefore, approval is sought to issue Letters of Offer to the following businesses:

Applications for approval		
Business	Description	Amount to be awarded
Devine Design	Graphic design and merchandise printing agency	£5,000.00
Newtownabbey Eats	Food delivery business utilising local independent restaurants, cafés, and takeaways	£4,889.51
Rea Sawmills Ltd	Timber manufacturing business	£3,014.39
Kitchens Direct NI Ltd	Kitchens and Bedrooms manufacturer and installer	£3,624.59
NI Counselling	Private counselling and psychotherapy organisation for adults	£5,000.00
MH Motors	Automotive retailer specialising in used vehicles	£2,856.65
365 Security	Fire protection and electronic security systems	£4,699.00
Total:		£29,084.14

Approval of the above grants would result in expenditure of **£38,143.42** against the Year 2 Digitisation Programme budget of £100,000, leaving **£61,856.58** available for the remainder of the financial year.

Workspace Development – Technical Assistance

This Programme is currently open to Social Enterprises only. 3 full applications have been received and assessed to date, with Letters of Offer ready to be issued pending approval.

Applications for approval:

Business	Description	Amount Awarded
LEDCOM Ltd	External support to assess grow-on workspace demand and evaluate development sites such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market Demand & Stakeholder Consultation Report. • Site Options Appraisal & High-Level Cost Plan. 	£5,000.00

Mallusk Enterprise Park	Technical assistance needed to assess options and deliver a Strategic Outline Case, produce Architectural Capacity Layouts and provide an Independent Planning Feasibility report.	£10,000.00
Randalstown ARCHES Association	The grant will help fund Feasibility, Demand Validation, Financial Modelling and Technical/Compliance Review, needed to progress toward capital readiness.	£10,000.00
Total:		£25,000.00

Approval of the above grants would result in expenditure of £25,000 against the Year 2 Workspace Development Programme budget of £550,000. The Workspace Development Programme supports a broad and multi-stage programme of work, complementing the existing SPACE offering by enabling the creation and enhancement of workspace in areas with clear demand or limited existing provision.

Projects and Programmes Prepared for Launch / Ongoing Development

There are several other programmes and initiatives outlined in the Action Plan which officers are progressing and developing. These are outlined below:

Green for Business Programme

Final guidance and application documentation have been completed ahead of marketing and promotion.

Green Cluster Programme

Work has commenced with the Council and Invest NI to establish business clusters at Global Point, Nutts Corner, and Mallusk, focusing on energy related collaboration and efficiencies. A meeting with Invest NI has been scheduled for 23 April to discuss the progression of a Green Cluster at Global Point.

Go Global: Skills, Business and Connectivity

Engagement continues around AMIC-linked stakeholder activity, including skills and sectoral mapping across the borough.

Officers are working to prepare procurement documentation for specialist consultancy support for:

- Global Point Masterplan
- Business Improvement Techniques Programme (Accredited)
- Export Capability Support Programme

5. Financial Position/Implication

As outlined, Letter of Offer confirms a total programme allocation of **£2,868,000 to 31 March 2028**. Budget allocation comprises of a Resource Grant not exceeding £956,000 and a Capital Grant not exceeding £1,912,000, to be delivered across the three-year period. DfE has approved that any underspend can be rolled over into the next financial year.

6. Recommendation

It is recommended that Members note the update on the Local Economic Partnership and approve the grants, as outlined, to seven businesses in the Business Digitisation Programme and three Social Enterprises in the Technical Assistance Programme.

Prepared by: Conor Steele, Local Economic Partnership Officer

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

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

4.5 ED/ED/282 CCTV PROGRAMME GRANT AWARDS

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval for the issue of Letters of Offer to a further 3 business applicants under Phase 2 of the CCTV Scheme, to a maximum value of £4,001.75.

2. Introduction/Background

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

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

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

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

3. Previous Decision of Council

£49,635.43 was awarded in Phase 1 to 30 applicants.

At the 10 September 2024 meeting of the Economic Development Committee approval was granted for the launch of Phase 2 of the Business CCTV Scheme.

Phase 2 encompasses an open call approach and prioritises the PSNI's suggested areas at the application scoring stage, via a scoring matrix.

In subsequent meetings, Members of the Economic Development Committee have approved Letters of Offer for 26 businesses, totalling £46,315.17. This consists of:

Location	Number of Businesses	Value of grant approved
Antrim	14	£26,356.51
Glengormley	3	£5,789.16
Randalstown	2	£4,727.50
Newtownabbey	4	£7,240.00

Ballyclare	3	£2,202.00
TOTALS	26	£46,315.17

4. Key Issues for Consideration by Members

Phase 2 of the Scheme has proven as popular as the Phase 1 pilot and is fully subscribed six months after its launch. Engagement with the PSNI and assessment of the applicants' reasons for engagement has focused on CCTV's role as a deterrent of anti-social behaviour and in providing a sense of security for business staff and the wider community in the applicant's area.

Three further applications were received as follows, with grant assistance requested as below;

Town	Business	Grant requested
Antrim	Ace Group	£1,715.00
Ballyclare	ADA Tint	£1,800.00
Newtownabbey	Belfast Computer Repairs	£486.75
Total		£4,001.75

5. Financial Position/Implication

£49,000 was set aside for Phase 2 of the Business CCTV Programme and these three applications will take the total spend to £50,316.92. The additional £1,316.92 required can be made available from the current Economic Development budget.

Upon completion of Phase 2 a post-project evaluation of the scheme will be carried out working alongside the Council's Police Community Safety Partnership (PCSP) and the PSNI. The evaluation will consider outputs and outcomes against value for money and effectiveness. A further report will be provided for Members' information in due course.

6. Recommendation

It is recommended that Members approve the final three grants within Phase 2 of the Business CCTV Programme at a value of £4,001.75.

Prepared by: Tara McCormick, Executive Officer, Economic Development

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

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

4.6 ED/ED/264 WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAMME 2026

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the progress of the Work Experience Programme 2026 and to seek approval to undertake a review of the first three years of the Work Experience Programme.

2. Introduction/Background

Members will be aware that the Work Experience Programme launched with a pilot in 2023 and is now approaching the end of its third year of delivery.

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

3. Previous Decisions of Council

August 2023 – approval for Pilot Schools Work Placement Programme
June 2024 – approval for Phase 2 Work Experience Programme
Sept 2024 – approval of tender for Phase 2 Work Experience Programme
June 2025 – approval for 2025 Work Experience Programme
Sept 2025 – approval for appointment of delivery partner and revised format

4. Key Issues

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

The video developed as part of the 2025 programme can be viewed via the following link:

[Link to 2025 Programme Video](#)

Following the end of Work Experience 2025, an evaluation was undertaken together with the delivery partner, and some key learnings were identified:

- One of the biggest challenges of the programme has been finding an efficient way to align the programme with the work experience schedules of the mainstream schools, who all work differently from one another. This has created issues with engagement and non-attendance of pupils to work placements, which has a knock-on effect on employers.

- Employers have found the programme invaluable to increase awareness of their business profile amongst young people and ignite interest in their business and industry.
- The engagement from SEN schools has demonstrated the need and value in driving work placements for SEN pupils. This has had the dual advantage of providing valuable insights into the working world for the pupils and built confidence in their ability to seek employment in the future but has also encouraged employers to consider their organisation's inclusivity capabilities.

Update on Work Experience 2026

An open procurement exercise was undertaken for delivery of the 2025 programme, with Workplus Ltd being appointed in September 2025.

To build upon the learnings outlined above and the feedback received from the schools involved and those not involved, some enhancements to the programme were made. These enhancements were aimed at maximising the efficiency, outcomes and value gained from the programme and to make it as straight forward as possible for young people, schools, and businesses to be involved.

The 2025/2026 programme was split into two separate but related strands of activity. Part 1 focussed on the work with mainstream schools and Part 2 focussed on the SEN sector.

- **Part 1: Empowerment of mainstream schools and employers to connect through showcasing of work placement opportunities** - a programme has been developed and is being delivered that enables mainstream schools and employers to connect effectively, with the purpose of increasing awareness and uptake of work placement opportunities. The process for both schools and employers has been designed to be as straightforward, accessible, and streamlined as possible, minimising administrative burden and maximising participation. Activities include the structured showcasing of placement offers and the facilitation of direct engagement between pupils and employers. Outcomes are anticipated to demonstrable increases in the number, diversity, and quality of work placement opportunities accessed by mainstream pupils.
- **Part 2: Delivery of SEN-Focused Employment Pathways** – A programme has been designed and is implementing a range of tailored, sector-based work experience opportunities for pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN), ensuring alignment with individual abilities, aspirations, and progression plans. Provision includes short, supported taster sessions, medium-term experiences, and extended, goal-driven placements, each underpinned by appropriate guidance and in-placement support. Outcomes shall include measurable improvements in pupils' workplace skills, confidence, and progression into further education, training, or employment.

The table below shows figures for the pilot programme and Phase 2, as well as current figures for the 2026 programme, showing strong improvements because of the revised delivery format:

	Pilot (2024)	Phase 2 (2025)	2026	Change from 2024-2025
Mainstream schools participating	2	5	7	↑
SEN schools participating	4	5	5	No change*
Businesses signed up	28	38	44	↑
Mainstream opportunities placed	37	38	33	↓
Placement opportunities created (mainstream)	91	100+	150	↑
Placement opportunities created (SEN)	30	70+	164	↑

*There are only five SEN schools in the Borough – maximum uptake.

Below is a table which outlines the schools who have participated in the programme, and how many pupils have, or are scheduled to, take part in placements:

Mainstream Schools

The table below shows each participating mainstream school and the number of approved placements (i.e. how many placements careers' teachers in each school have approved for their students from the overall pool available) and how many placements were taken up by students.

School	Number of Approved Placements	Number of Placed Students
Ballyclare High School	24	0
Integrated College Glengormley	22	19 (86%)
Parkhall Integrated College	20	14 (70%)
St Benedicts College	10	0
Ballyclare Secondary School	3*	0
Belfast High School	3	0
Abbey Community College	2*	0
Total	80	33 (37.5%)

* Some are still to be approved by teachers.

SEN Schools

All the SEN schools in the Borough participate fully in the programme in both the new student multi-day placements and the student insight days.

School	Students on Multi Day Placements	Students on Insight Days
Rosstulla	13	16
Riverside	3	8

School	Students on Multi Day Placements	Students on Insight Days
Thornfield	4	3
Jordanstown	5	19
Hillcroft	9	19
Total	34	65

In summary, over 334 work placement opportunities have been created for young people through the programme in 2025/2026. The majority of these, 197 placements (59%), have been taken by students. All placements offered to students from the SEN schools have been taken but 137 opportunities offered to mainstream students remain unfilled.

Whilst the number of work experience opportunities continues to grow for both mainstream and SEN, it is acknowledged that the number of those being taken by mainstream students continues to under-perform, 5 of the 7 mainstream schools that have chosen to participate in the programme have no pupils placed so far.

The participation of some large-scale business from within our Borough and beyond also indicates the credibility the programme has. Some of the businesses involved in the scheme include:

- Mivan
- Belfast International Airport
- Sensata Technologies
- Benchmark Bakery
- Lloyds Banking Group
- Education Authority
- Armstrongs Solicitors
- McKeever Hotels
- Movie House Cinemas
- Harland and Wolfe

The budget for the programme has been as follows:

	Pilot (2024)	Phase 2 (2025)	Phase 3 (2026)
Cost	£29,250	£29,950	£49,940

Looking Ahead to Work Experience 2027

Anecdotal and survey feedback across the programme, both from employers and schools is that the programme is positive and well received. This is particularly true of the SEN schools for whom the programme has provided an opportunity for their students to engage with the world of work in a safe and structured way.

However, having committed significant financial and staff resource to the implementation of the programme, it is the right time to conduct an independent review of the outputs and outcomes before planning of any future provision. Therefore, approval is sought for £4,500 from the Economic Development budget to commission a review of the programme with findings

and recommendations to be brought back to Economic Development Committee in September 2026.

5. Recommendation

It is recommended that Members

- a) Note the update on the Work Experience Programme 2026**
- b) Approve £4,500 from the Economic Development budget to undertake a review of the first three years of the Work Experience Programme.**

Prepared by: Jill Murray, Executive Officer, Economic Development

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

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

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

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval to award six grants under Call 5 of Phase 2 of the Out of Town Centre Shopfront Improvement Programme.

2. Introduction / Background

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

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

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

3. Applications Received

Members are advised that for the period 31 January 2026 – 27 March 2026, six applications were received and assessed by a panel of officers. The total value of grants recommended for approval is £20,165.60. Grant awards are set out in the table **enclosed**.

4. Financial Position

The overall programme budget for Phase 2 is £139,743.55. To date, £48,100.00 has been awarded. Should Members approve the six grant recommendations enclosed, the remaining programme budget would be £71,477.95.

A further call for applications opened on 28 March 2026 and will close on 31 July 2026.

5. Summary

This report makes six grant recommendations under Call 5 of Phase 2 of the Out of Town Centre Shopfront Improvement Programme.

6. Recommendation

It is recommended that Members approve the six grant awards totalling £20,165.60 to the successful applicants under Call 5 of Phase 2 of the Out of Town Centre Shopfront Improvement Programme.

Prepared by: Natasha Donald, Regeneration Officer

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

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

4.8 ED/REG/093 RETAIL AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE PROGRAMME

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the success of the 2025/26 pilot Visual Merchandising Programme and to seek approval for the delivery of an enhanced Retail and Customer Experience Programme, at a cost of £70,000, which has been accounted for within the Economic Development budget.

2. Background

Members will be aware that the Council has successfully operated a shopfront improvement scheme since 2024, which enhanced the external appearance of shopfronts across the Borough's five town centres. Feedback from participating businesses indicated a need for additional support in relation to window displays and the internal presentation of their stores.

Therefore, in 2025, Members approved the pilot Visual Merchandising Programme. The programme successfully supported businesses across the five town centres through the Christmas and Spring seasonal campaigns, which combined bespoke masterclasses, one-to-one mentoring and seasonal window display kits and installations. A total of 46 window displays were created, with some businesses contributing multiple displays. In total, 26 businesses participated across both campaigns, with 20 in the Christmas phase and 17 in the Spring/Summer phase. Several businesses participated in both campaigns, demonstrating strong engagement with the programme.

Masterclasses covered a range of topics designed to enhance store presentation, customer experience and digital presence, including:

- Visual Merchandising
- Customer Experience
- Commercial Interior Design & Layout
- Bespoke In-Store Event Design & Planning
- Creative Marketing Ideas to Increase Footfall (in-store and online)
- Bespoke Digital Marketing Planning

The programme also supported the use of Embrace Your Town branding within participating businesses, helping to strengthen the visual identity of our town centres and create a more coordinated seasonal offer.

Overall, the programme equipped businesses with practical skills to improve store presentation, deliver impactful seasonal displays and strengthen promotional activity both in-store and online.

3. Proposed 2026/27 Programme

Building on the success of the 2025/26 pilot programme, it is proposed that the programme be expanded and renamed the Retail and Customer Experience Programme to reflect its wider focus on customer experience,

digital engagement and store presentation. The enhanced programme will continue to support seasonal window displays and one-to-one mentoring while expanding digital training, customer experience development and integration of the Embrace Your Town brand, creating a more cohesive and engaging town centre experience.

The proposed programme will aim to support 25 businesses and will include a grant element of up to £2,000 per business, with a maximum intervention rate of 75%. Grants will support investment in in-store equipment and display improvements that enhance store layout, window displays and overall customer experience. Only businesses recommended by the programme consultant following mentoring sessions will be eligible, ensuring support is targeted to those ready to implement improvements.

These enhancements aim to make the programme more impactful, providing tangible benefits to businesses, strengthening town centre cohesion, and supporting increased footfall, customer engagement and sales.

4. Financial Position/Implication

A total budget of £70,000 is proposed for this programme and has been included within the Economic Development budget.

5. Governance

All elements of the programme will be procured and administered in line with the Council's procurement and financial procedures.

6. Recommendation

It is recommended that Members:

- a) Note the success of the 2025/26 pilot Visual Merchandising Programme.**
- b) Approve £70,000 from the Economic Development budget for the delivery of a Retail and Customer Experience Programme as outlined.**

Prepared by: Natasha Donald, Regeneration Officer

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

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

4.9 ED/ED/092 EVENING ECONOMY PROGRAMME

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the delivery of an Evening Economy grant programme, with a budget of £60,000 which has been accounted for in the Economic Development budget.

2. Background

A vibrant and sustainable evening economy is a key component of a thriving local economy. It contributes significantly to employment, business turnover, and the overall vitality, safety and attractiveness of town centres outside of traditional daytime hours. A strong evening economy also supports wider regeneration objectives by increasing dwell time, encouraging repeat visits, and creating more active and animated urban environments.

The hospitality sector is central to the success of the evening economy. However, feedback from the Economic Development Business Survey and ongoing engagement with local businesses indicates that many operators face challenges in sustaining profitable evening trade. These challenges include changing consumer behaviour, increased operating costs (particularly energy and staffing), and growing competition from alternative leisure and at-home consumption options.

As a result, many businesses report reduced evening footfall and shorter trading hours, which can have a negative impact on town centre vibrancy and perceptions of safety and activity after dark. There is therefore a clear need for targeted intervention to support businesses in enhancing their evening offer, attracting new audiences, and encouraging people to remain in or return to town centres during evening hours.

While there is appetite among businesses to innovate, barriers such as financial risk, limited staffing capacity, and lack of specialist expertise can restrict their ability to develop and test new concepts. Without support, many businesses are unlikely to invest in new evening-focused initiatives.

In 2022, the Council delivered a programme in partnership with Tourism NI which supported the development of a series of events and experiences. While this initiative was successful in driving participation and business engagement, it also demonstrated the potential for structured programmes to stimulate activity beyond daytime hours. Several participating businesses continued to deliver evening-focused initiatives beyond the programme period, highlighting the longer-term benefits of targeted support. However, with the withdrawal of TNI funding and other priorities for the Economic Development Department a similar scheme has not been implemented since that time.

There is now an opportunity to deliver a more focused intervention that directly addresses evening economy challenges and supports sustainable change in trading patterns.

3. Programme Overview

The proposed Evening Economy Grant Programme will support hospitality businesses across the Borough to develop, extend and enhance their evening trading offer. The primary objective is to increase evening footfall, extend dwell time, and contribute to a more vibrant and active town centre environment after 5pm.

The programme will encourage businesses to introduce new or enhanced evening concepts that incentivise customers to visit and stay longer during evening hours. While activity may include themed nights or entertainment, the core focus will be on strengthening the commercial viability and attractiveness of evening trading.

Examples of eligible activity may include:

- Extended evening opening with enhanced offerings
- Food and beverage concepts designed specifically for evening audiences
- Collaborative initiatives between neighbouring businesses to create evening clusters
- Programming that encourages midweek evening footfall
- Initiatives aimed at diversifying the evening customer base

A key feature of the programme will be structured support delivered by an appointed consultant. Each participating business will receive mandatory one-to-one technical assistance to develop, refine and implement their evening economy proposal. This will ensure that concepts are commercially viable, targeted, and aligned with broader town centre objectives.

Financial support will be provided through grants of up to £1,500 per business, at a 100% intervention rate, supporting up to 25 businesses. This approach reduces the financial risk associated with trialling new ideas and enables businesses to test and refine their evening offer in a controlled and supported manner.

In addition to business support, the programme will include a coordinated marketing campaign aimed at:

- Promoting the Borough as an evening destination
- Increasing awareness of participating businesses
- Driving footfall and participation during evening hours
- Encouraging behaviour change among residents and visitors

The programme will align with existing Council initiatives, including the Retail and Customer Experience Programme, and Embrace Your Town branding. This alignment will ensure a cohesive approach to place development while strengthening the identity and appeal of town centres as evening destinations.

4. Financial Position

A total budget of £60,000 is proposed for this programme and has been included within the Economic Development budget.

5. Governance

All elements of the programme will be procured and administered in line with the Council's procurement and financial procedures.

6. Recommendation

It is recommended that members approve the delivery of the Evening Economy grant programme with a budget of £60,000

Prepared by: Hannah McVeigh, Regeneration Officer

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

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

4.10 PT/CI/073 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE BUSINESS PLAN 2026/27

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to recommend to Members to approve the Economic Development Directorate Business Plan 2026/27.

2. Background

Part 12 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 puts in place a framework to support the continuous improvement of Council services.

Specifically, the duties in the Act relate to Section 84(1), 85(2) and 85(9) whereby the Council has a statutory duty to make arrangements to:

- Secure continuous improvement.
- Secure achievement of its improvement objectives; and
- Exercise its functions so that any Departmental specified standards are met.

3. Previous Decision of Council

In January 2026 the Council approved a strategic performance framework as part of the Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2026/27 (draft for consultation).

4. Business Planning

Business planning plays a vital role in the Council's performance management and delivery processes. It offers a more efficient and cohesive approach to monitoring and evaluating performance while improving overall visibility.

The purpose of the Directorate Business Plans are to:

- Demonstrate how each of the Directorates are supporting and achieving Council's priorities.
- Provide a clear sense of purpose of the Directorate and the challenges it faces.
- Illustrate how it is aligning its resources to meet the challenges ahead.
- Measure performance and hold ourselves to account to ensure we deliver for the Council and its residents.

The business plan for Economic Development is **enclosed** for approval.

5. Governance

Progress reports on the Council's Directorate Business Plans 2026/27 will be reported quarterly to CLT and biannually to relevant Committees.

6. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Economic Development Directorate Business Plans 2026/27 be approved.

Prepared by: Allen Templeton, Performance Improvement Officer

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

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

4.11 ED/DI/005 ASK MENTORING CAPITAL GRANT PROGRAMME EXTENSION

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update members on the delivery of the pilot ASK Capital Grant programme, seek approval for a 12-month extension and approval for the grant awards as outlined in this report.

2. Introduction/Background

Members will recall that in 2024 the Council relaunched the ASK Business Mentoring Programme and then subsequently, on the back of feedback from the businesses, launched a pilot ASK Capital Grant in September 2025. The purpose of the £1,500 grant is to enable businesses to implement mentor-led recommendations to improve/enhance their business operation.

3. Programme Performance (FY25/26)

The 2025 programme including the capital grant element was launched in November 2025 with an initial budget of £45,000.

To date:

- 72 businesses have applied for ASK Mentoring Support
 - 36 requests for help with Sales and Marketing
 - 27 requests for help with Digital Infrastructure and Strategy
 - 9 requests for help with Innovation and Product Development
- 35 businesses have completed their 10 hours of free mentoring support with 37 in progress.

Of the 35 businesses that have completed their mentoring 33 have subsequently applied to the Council for the new ASK Capital Grant.

Seven of these applications passed assessment and Letters of Offer were issued before the end of the financial year in order that the expenditure could be accrued. Retrospective approval is now sought from Members for these seven grant awards.

Business Name	DEA	Grant Amount
Define Media Company	ANTRIM	£1,076.80
Hyde Park Environmental	ANTRIM	£1,500.00
H2o Swimming Academy	ANTRIM	£1,500.00
Cyberprint LTD	MACEDON	£1,500.00
Richard Atkinson and Company Ltd	AIRPORT	£1,500.00
Hawthorne Fine Boxes Ltd	GLENGORMLEY URBAN	£1,114.21
Crafty Little Linguists	GLENGORMLEY URBAN	£1,461.44
Total		£9,652.45

Off the remaining applications, five have now passed assessment and approval is sought to issue Letters of Offer to these businesses from the 2026/27 budget.

Business Name	DEA	Grant Amount
Pretty Polished	GLENGORMLEY URBAN	£1,500.00
WJ Blair Accident Repairs Ltd	BALLYCLARE	£1,344.00
Crumlin Travel	AIRPORT	£1,500.00
SO Aesthetics NI	AIRPORT	£1,500.00
Devine Design	ANTRIM	£1,500.00
Total		£7,344.00

The remaining 21 grant applications are currently being reviewed by officers, a list of those businesses is included below. Subject to final checks being completed approval is sought to issue Letters of Offer to those who pass the assessment and complete the final paperwork up to the a maximum of £1,500 per business and a total commitment of £31,500.

Business Name	DEA
Sam Allen Art	AIRPORT
Logan Decorating	AIRPORT
Blue Ocean Developments Ltd	ANTRIM
Savvy & Shine Ltd	ANTRIM
Julie A Robinson Optometrists	ANTRIM
Tiyga Health	ANTRIM
Claire Badger Podiatry	ANTRIM
Eos Community Consulting CIC	ANTRIM
Gary Cobain Building contractors	BALLYCLARE
Karma Hair Design	BALLYCLARE
Sub Side	BALLYCLARE
The Mortgage Shop Ballyclare	BALLYCLARE
Blair and Boyd Estate Management	DUNSILLY
Moneyvart Ceramics	DUNSILLY
TDR Academy	DUNSILLY
JG Aesthetics	GLENGORMLEY URBAN
Crafty Little Linguists	GLENGORMLEY URBAN
Vine Haugh Ceramics	GLENGORMLEY URBAN
MM Cleaning	MACEDON
Joan Henderson Education Mentor	THREE MILE WATER
Newtownabbey Self Storage	THREE MILE WATER

4. Future Provision

Applications for mentoring continue to come through to the team. At the time of reporting:

- 37 businesses are currently undertaking mentoring support with an assigned ASK Mentor

- A further 10 requests for ASK mentoring support have been received by the team since the beginning of April 2026.

Whilst Member approval for the Mentoring Element of the programme has been granted on a 3-year basis, the pilot capital grant element requires further approval.

Approval is now sought to extend the ASK Capital Grant Programme for a further 12 months until March 2027 with an enhanced budget of £75,000. This request has been accounted for in the Economic Development Budget for 2026/2027.

5. Equality and/or Rural Screening Requirements

The programme has been screened and does not require a full EQIA or Rural Proofing assessment at this time.

6. Summary

The ASK Mentoring and Capital Grant Programme continues to perform well and as a result Member approval is sought for the continuation of the capital grant element for 2026/2027.

7. Recommendation

It is recommended that Members

- a) Note the update on the ASK Programme**
- b) Approve a further 12-month extension of the Capital Grant element with a budget of £75,000**
- c) Approve the seven retrospective grant awards to be accrued into 2025/26 and the 26 grant awards for 2026/27 subject to final assessment by Officers**

Prepared by: Roddy O'Flaherty, Digital Innovation Officer

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

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

5 ITEMS FOR NOTING

5.1 FI/FIN/4 BUDGET REPORT – PERIOD 12 APRIL 2025 TO MARCH 2026

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the financial performance for the Economic Development Committee for Period 12 April 2025 to March 2026.

2. Introduction/Background

As agreed, quarterly budget reports will be presented to the relevant Committee. All financial reports will be available to all Members. The budget report for Period 12 does not include adjustments required to arrive at the final financial position of the Council for the 2025/26 financial year. These adjustments include final accruals of expenditure incurred and grants and debts invoiced after 31 March 2026, contributions to or from reserves, and prepayments of expenditure and income. The final financial position for the year shall be presented to the Audit and Risk Committee in June 2026.

3. Summary

As at period 12:

The Economic Development and Planning Directorate has a favourable variance of £455k, or 19.1%, against the budgeted financial performance for the period.

A report on the financial performance, employee costs, highest areas of expenditure and income, and the financial performance by Head of Service is **enclosed** for Members' information.

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

4. Recommendation

It is recommended that the report be noted.

Prepared by: Richard Murray, Head of Finance

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

5.2 ED/ED/279 GO SUCCEED FY25/26 DELIVERY UPDATE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update Members on key Go Succeed activities and progress for Financial Year 25/26

2. Introduction/Background

As members will be aware, Go Succeed is the go-to source of expert business advice provided through collaboration by all 11 local councils. The programme offers a flexible service to both entrepreneurs and already established businesses within the Borough through its 4 pillars; Engage, Foundation, Growth and Scaling via one-to-one mentoring, specialist masterclasses, peer support networks and access to grant aid.

Mentoring

When an applicant applies to the programme, Officers will select the most appropriate support pillar based on their application.

Once allocated to a pillar, delivery partners will organise a one hour 'diagnostic' session to determine the specific needs of the applicant which best supports business development and growth plans. Mentors are then allocated based on the outcome of diagnostic meeting.

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 can go on and generate at least £1m in revenue after 3 years (up to 30 hours mentoring)

From April 25 – March 26, total of 516 individuals and local businesses were supported with Go Succeed Mentoring (a breakdown of this has been included within appendix).

Under Part 12 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, councils have a statutory duty to set objectives for improvement, which includes job creation and business support target. Replacing the former Go for It programme, Go Succeed contributes towards the statutory target of creating jobs through start-up activities.

During FY25/26, ANBC achieved 218% of target its statutory target for job creation through start-up activities as detailed below. *Please note these figures are subject to final monitoring and verification checks by PMO and Council Officers*

Statutory Target

Statutory Target	Annual Target	Delivery	% towards target
Jobs created through start-up activity	80	175.2	218%

Recruitment for mentoring across all pillars performed over target. This was supported by on-going programme marketing campaigns (online and localised case study billboards) and outreach activities. Actual delivery of mentoring hours was generally in-line with targets with natural drop-offs due to inability to drawdown on hours within programme timeframe or for personal reasons. See full breakdown of targets and delivery **enclosed**.

Grants

In FY25/26, the Go Succeed Grant was open to those who completed at least 60% of their allocated mentoring hours through the **Foundation, Growth** or **Scaling** pillars of the service. Applications were invited through open calls and assessed via a competitive process.

The grant could fund up to 50% of eligible capital costs, to a maximum of £3,000. Grant payments were made retrospectively, upon submission of claim form, proof of payment and supporting documentation.

ANBC issued a total of 68 grant offers to local SMEs, at a total of £154,157.59. Total claimed value against offer was £128,843.57 supporting 63 businesses. See breakdown of grant delivery enclosed.

ANBC surpassed initial target for grant delivery of £113,845, supporting 38 businesses and were able to access additional budget to support a further 30 local businesses.

Peer Support Networks

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

During the financial year, ANBC delivered 2 successful PSNs, with sessions including networking opportunities, best practice visits and thematic sessions tackling skill gaps. Each network was shaped around the needs of the members.

- 1) ANBC Social Enterprise Peer Support Network – Growth
- 2) ANBC Health, Wellbeing and Beauty Professionals Peer Support Network – Engage and Foundation

Masterclasses

Delivered by industry experts, the Go Succeed Masterclasses act as a supplementary support to the mentoring, working to address entrepreneurial and business skill gaps. ANBC delivered 11 workshops, both online and in-person, with high demand for social media marketing and AI focused sessions.

Community Outreach

Community Outreach is a mechanism which works to build awareness of support available through the service. As part of Community Outreach works, Officers will typically attend events and promote the spectrum of support the service offers.

For FY 25/26, ANBC had an annual Community Outreach target of reaching 548 individuals along with an attributed budget of £16,394. Community Outreach delivery for the year surpassed this target, with **2002 individuals reached**. The team engaged in a range of outreach activities which include roadshow events, attendance at job fairs, school's events, merchandise orders and online social media marketing.

Economically Inactive (Get Started in Business)

In addition to the core Go Succeed service, a targeted initiative was introduced this year to support Economically Inactive individuals to explore entrepreneurship. The aim of this support was to create a pathway for participants that increased the visibility and accessibility of early enterprise activity, to then progress to Go Succeed. Following a procurement exercise, Venture Folk were appointed to deliver this targeted support.

Support through Get Started in Business included-

- Outreach and Engagement
- Ideation and Exploration Sessions
- One-to-One Mentoring
- £750 funding to support start up

This support proved highly successful, with 32 economically inactive individuals engaged throughout the support. This included 7 through one-to-one mentoring support, resulting in the creation of 4 businesses. A full breakdown of targets and outcomes has been enclosed.

ANBC in collaboration with Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, co-hosted a Business without Barriers Event at the Dunsilly Hotel in March 2025. The event was designed to support individuals with disabilities and long-term health conditions to explore self-employment. A total of 34 individuals from both council areas attended this session, all of which provided extremely positive feedback.

If this type of support cannot be included in future Go Succeed delivery due to budget constraints, ED officers will explore other opportunities to deliver similar initiatives.

3 Previous Decision of Council

The Council previously agreed to participate in Go Succeed in October 2023. Council committed to contributing up to £154,694 towards participation in the 2025/26 programme.

4 Financial Position/Implication

The Council has previously agreed to match-fund the Programme estimated at £154,694 in 25/26, provision for which has been made in the Economic Development budget.

5 Recommendation

It is recommended that the report be noted.

Prepared by: Matthew Mulligan, Economic Development Officer

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

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

5.3 ED/ED/284 STRATEGIC PLANNING APPLICATIONS OVERVIEW

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update Members regarding Major Strategic Planning Applications and for Members to note current Planning Application Notices (**enclosed**).

2. Recommendation

It is recommended that Members note the Major Strategic Planning Application Overview as outlined.

Prepared by: Kathryn Bradley, Business Support Planning & Economic Development

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

6 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

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