



8 May 2025

Committee Chair: Councillor B Webb

Committee Vice-Chair: Councillor M Goodman

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

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 13 May 2025** at **6.45pm**.

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 6pm.**

**For any queries, please contact Member Services:**

Tel: 028 9448 1301

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## **A G E N D A**

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**REPORT ON BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING ON  
TUESDAY 13 MAY 2025**

**3 PRESENTATION**

**3.1 ED/LMP/001 LABOUR MARKET PARTNERSHIP UPDATE**

**1. Purpose**

**An update on the Labour Market Partnership will be presented at the meeting.**

**2. Recommendation**

**It is recommended that the presentation be noted.**

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

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

## 4 ITEMS FOR DECISION

### 4.1 PT/CI/068 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BUSINESS PLAN 2025/26

#### 1. Purpose

**The purpose of this report is to recommend to Members the approval of the Economic Development and Planning Business Plan 2025/26.**

#### 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 2025 the Council approved a strategic performance framework as part of the Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2025/26 (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 Plan is 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 the Economic Development and Planning Department is **enclosed** for approval.

#### 5. Financial Position/Implications

As agreed as part of the Council's rate setting process.

## 6. Governance

Progress reports on the Council's Directorate Business Plans 2025/26 will be reported quarterly to relevant Committees.

## 7. Recommendation

**It is recommended that the Economic Development and Planning Business Plan 2025/26 be approved.**

Prepared by: Allen Templeton, Performance Improvement Officer

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

## 4.2 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 2025 and to seek approval to undertake a procurement exercise for the Work Experience Programme 2026.**

### 2. Introduction/Background

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

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

The key aims of the pilot project were to:

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

The programme was shortlisted for Best Public/Private Partnership in the APSE awards 2024.

### 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

#### 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.

##### **Feedback from Pilot Phase**

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

[antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/workpluscelebrationevent](http://antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/workpluscelebrationevent)

##### **Delivery of Phase 2**

An open procurement exercise was undertaken for delivery of Phase 2, with Workplus Ltd being appointed in August 2024. Phase 2 has followed the model of the pilot phase linking schools and employers to meaningful work placement opportunities for young people across the Borough with built in flexibility to allow the participating schools to make the programme fit with their individual school's needs.

There have been a number of key enhancements to the programme, as a direct result of the feedback from last year:

- **Enhanced SEN school involvement** – the uptake of SEN placements in the pilot programme was greater than anticipated, and this has led to there being an enhanced focus on SEN schools and finding suitable placements in phase 2.
- **Year Group** – the pilot programme aimed to support pre-A-Level students i.e. those who are in the GCSE years before they make decisions on the next stage of the career or education. Some feedback indicated that the programme could be opened up to even younger year groups e.g. pre-GCSE to help with choices. As a result, phase 2 has allowed schools to decide the most suitable year group to be involved, based on their careers model.
- **Time of Year** – the pilot programme had a date set in March for work placements to take place, which was not suitable for a large number of schools due to their predefined timetables. In phase 2, a date has been agreed after consultation with schools for the placements to take place over a three-day period in June.
- **Dedicated Platform Developed by Workplus** – during the pilot phase, the platform upon which placements were managed was outsourced to a third party. Feedback indicated this platform wasn't user-friendly at times and this also meant that the matching of pupils to work placement opportunities still relied on teachers finding time to complete. In Phase 2, Workplus have developed a dedicated in-house platform, allowing for seamless processing of opportunities from businesses, profiles from students and the matching of students to placements, by the Workplus team. This more integrated approach takes away burden for teachers and allows a more streamline administrative process.



Delivery of phase 2 is currently underway, with placements scheduled to take place from 17-19 June 2025. A full update on the programme outcomes will be presented to Members at the September Economic Development Committee. A celebration event is planned for Phase 2 on Wednesday 25 June 2025. All Members will receive an invitation in due course.

The table below shows figures for the pilot programme and Phase 2 which is currently underway:

	<b>Pilot (2024)</b>	<b>Phase 2 (2025)</b>	<b>Change from 2024-2025</b>
<b>Mainstream schools participating</b>	2	5	↑
<b>SEN schools participating</b>	4	5	↑
<b>Businesses signed up</b>	28	38	↑
<b>Placement opportunities created (mainstream)</b>	91	100+	↑
<b>Placement opportunities created (SEN)</b>	30	70+	↑

The schools involved in the 2025 programme are:

- Abbey Community College
- Edmund Rice College
- Ballyclare High School
- Integrated College Glengormley
- Parkhall Integrated College
- Jordanstown Special School
- Rostulla Special School
- Riverside Special School
- Hillcroft Special School
- Thornfield Special School

Every SEN school in the Borough is taking part in the programme this year which given the recent reports on the challenges facing this cohort post school is very encouraging.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c86pvv6pzq3o>

Some of the businesses involved in the scheme include:

- Abbey Centre
- CDE Global
- CITB
- Contact Marketing
- Education Authority
- H&J Martin
- Jans Group
- McKeever Hotels
- Rabbit Hotel
- SAM
- The Hilton
- Translink
- Lidl
- Wrightbus

- W&G Baird
- Lloyds Banking Group

### **Work Experience 2026**

In order to maintain momentum for this pioneering programme and to be in a state of readiness for roll-out of the programme at the beginning of the new academic year in September 2025, a procurement process is required. Officers are requesting Members' approval to undertake this procurement exercise over the summer with a more detailed report on the outcomes of Phase 2, the costs of Phase 3, the potential contractor appointment, and the cocktail of funding to be presented in September 2025.

There are a number of funding mechanisms being explored including PEACEPLUS Funding which could co-fund the project and reduce the financial contribution from the Council going forward.

#### **5. Financial Position/Implication**

Below is the breakdown of the budget for the pilot programme and phase 2. It is anticipated that the costs would remain at the same level. This budget has been accounted for in the Economic Development budget for 2025/26. There are no new financial implications for the Council.

	<b>Pilot (2024)</b>	<b>Phase 2 (2025)</b>
Cost	£29,250	£29,950

#### **6. Governance**

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

#### **7. Recommendation**

**It is recommended that Members:**

- a) Note the update on the Phase 2 of the Work Experience Programme**
- b) Approve the undertaking of a procurement exercise for Phase 3 with a more detailed report and proposal around appointment and funding to be considered at the September Economic Development Committee.**

Prepared by: Jill Murray, Executive Office, Economic Development

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

Approved by: Majella McAllister, Director Economic Development and Planning

## 4.3 ED/ED/311 PEACEPLUS PROGRAMME

### 1. Purpose

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

### 2. Introduction/Background

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

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

### 3. Previous Decisions of Council

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

### 4. Key Issues

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

This programme has two main objectives:

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

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

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

The budget for this element of the programme is €730,000 which includes a proportion of costs for administration, management and staffing. To enable the Economic Development section to undertake this project additional temporary staff will be required. Further detail will be provided in due course.

The next steps in the process are:

- The development of a detailed action plan for the 'Our Future Borough' elements of the programme supported by the business case for the whole PEACEPLUS Programme.
- Establishment of a Service Level Agreement between the PEACEPLUS Partnership and the Economic Development section.
- Establishment of monthly departmental working groups; and
- Recruitment of temporary programme management staff.

The final action plan for the 'Our Future' element will be presented to Members at the September Economic Development Committee.

#### 5. Financial Position/Implication

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

#### 6. Governance

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

#### 7. Recommendation

**It is recommended that Members note the update on the 'Our Future' element of the PEACEPLUS Programme and provide delegated authority to officers to:**

- a) Enter into the SLA with the PEACEPLUS Partnership once this has been finalised with SEUPB.**
- b) Recruit temporary staff as required to support the implementation of the programme.**

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

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

#### **4.4 ED/ED/299 GLOBAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP WEEK 2025: 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 at a cost of £5,600. Approval is also sought for £9,400 expenditure for Global Entrepreneurship Week Activities from the Economic Development Budget**

##### **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.

A proposal has been received from YENI to deliver a primary and secondary schools programme in November 2025 during Global Entrepreneurship Week in partnership with the Council (**enclosed**).

Global Entrepreneurship Week 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.

The masterclasses will link with Go Succeed, promoting entrepreneurship via community outreach demonstrating the support and opportunities available for entrepreneurs through the service.

In 2024, the programme took place from 11-14 November and delivered 6 masterclasses to 819 school pupils from 21 local primary and post primary schools in the Borough.

##### **Anticipated Outputs**

- A minimum of 16 schools taking part in the Programme to include: A minimum of 5 post primary schools
- A minimum of 11 primary schools

##### **Primary Schools**

- Delivery of a minimum of 4 supply chain workshops
- A minimum of 350 pupils participating
- Each student will design new branding for their juice carton through the supply chain workshops

##### **Post Primary Schools**

- Delivery of 1 digital industry masterclass
- A minimum of 60 pupils participating

- A minimum of 8 new app designs generated through the workshop

### **Reporting**

- A final report detailing the programme results against anticipated outputs and if appropriate recommendations for future programmes

### 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 has been made in the Economic Development Budget and is based on the previous year cost.

Cost Breakdown:

- **Young Enterprise Delivery Costs- £5,600**

Delivery of 4x Supply Chain Workshops (Primary Session) - £3,600

Delivery of 1x Industry Masterclass (Post Primary Session) - £2,000

*Should there be high demand for these workshops, YENI can facilitate additional workshops at a fee of £800 per day.*

YENI will provide the following within the above delivery cost;

- Management of recruitment of the schools
- Management of the schools' attendance at the event
- Designing of workshop content and materials
- Provide staff resources to provide and deliver the workshops
- Provide a final report detailing the programme results against anticipated outputs and if appropriate recommendations for future programmes

Remaining indicative costs to be met from existing Economic Development Budget:

- Catering – £2,400
- Bus Hire- £5,000
- AV equipment hire - £1,000
- Prizes- £300
- Trophies - £250
- Photographer - £100
- Ad-hoc spend (translator, additional prizes, etc) - £350

### 5. Recommendation

**It is recommended that Members approve:**

#### **a) The delivery of Global Entrepreneurship Week Activities**

- b) The appointment of YENI as a delivery partner at a cost of £5,600**
- c) The approval of £9,400 expenditure for Global Entrepreneurship Week Activities from the Economic Development Budget**

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

## 4.5 ED/ED/198 WORKSPACE DEVELOPMENT FUND - LEDCOM

### 1. Purpose

**The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval for a Letter of Variation for a 12-month extension to LEDCOM's letter of offer for its project to refurbish and repurpose Foundry House Ballyclare.**

### 2. Introduction/Background

Members will be aware that on 29 March 2021 the Council established a Workspace Development Fund to support the development and delivery of a complementary network of modern, accessible, fit for purpose accommodation to meet the needs of businesses, aligned with the Council and Levelling Up Funded workspace projects in Glengormley and Antrim.

In November 2021 the Council agreed to provide LEDCOM (Local Economic Development Company), one of the Borough's three Local Enterprise Agencies that provides services from their Ballyclare location, with up to £200,200 to deliver a 7,800sq/ft. refurbishment and create 200 business start-ups with c.300 jobs to be created at Foundry House in Ballyclare. The project will also promote the Space branding, currently being adopted for the Antrim and Glengormley hubs.

### 3. Key Issues

Since receiving their Letter of Offer on 11 October 2022, having completed their acquisition of Foundry House, LEDCOM finalised their detailed workspace design and secured the necessary planning permission for the works. However, due to a range of factors including rising costs, LEDCOM has not yet commenced the delivery of the workspace project.

As a result of this delay LEDCOM requested a 12-month extension to the original letter of offer in order to enable delivery of their capital works programme, which was approved by the Economic Development Committee on 12 November 2024 culminating in an extension of their letter of offer until 30<sup>th</sup> September 2025.

The original project costs were estimated to be £265,000. To date LEDCOM have spent £65,000 to acquire the Foundry House site, which includes expenditure on general maintenance and repair costs. Through the Workspace Development Fund, the Council was originally committed to support 75% of the original project costs.

LEDCOM has appointed a Quantity Surveyor who has provided updated projected costs at an estimated £450,000 with the cost increase due primarily to the increases in construction and material costs since the original business case. The Council's contribution as it currently stands therefore would be 45% towards total project costs.

As a result of ongoing difficulties to respond to the increase in costs and subsequent funding shortfall LEDCOM is exploring other avenues for financial



support. There may be an opportunity for additional workspace funding to become available to LEDCOM through the Local Economic Partnership (LEP). This will be a separate application and assessment process and subject to an approved business case.

Members are therefore requested to consider, subject to the submission of an updated business case, an additional 12-month extension to the original letter of offer which would extend it until 30 September 2026, to enable the pursuit of additional funding and subsequent project delivery.

#### 4. Financial Position/Implication

There are no new financial implications at this time.

#### 5. Recommendation

**It is recommended that Members approve the letter of variation for a 12-month extension to LEDCOM's funding offer for the refurbishment and repurposing of Foundry House, Ballyclare subject to an updated business case from LEDCOM.**

Prepared by: Chris Doyle, Investment Officer

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

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

#### **4.6 ED/ED/195 VOL 3 LEVELLING UP FUND: LOCAL GROWTH CAPACITY SUPPORT PAYMENT 2024-25**

##### **1. Purpose**

**The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the expenditure of the Capacity and Capability grant payment of £60,000 received from the Ministry of Housing and Local Government in support of the Council's Levelling Up Funded projects in Antrim and Glengormley.**

##### **2. Key Issues**

Earlier this year the Council received correspondence from the Ministry of Housing and Local Government (**enclosed**) outlining that as a grant recipient of the Levelling Up Fund, the Council is eligible to receive a Capacity and Capability grant payment of £60,000. This payment is for the sole purpose of accelerating and unblocking the delivery of your LUF projects and help mitigate any issues impacting our LUF-funded projects.

It is proposed that this funding is utilised to procure external advice and support to update the financial models in the business case for Glengormley and Antrim as well as on marketing and promotion, website development, market assessment and benchmarking, and wider promotional opportunities.

##### **3. Financial Position/Implication**

This grant payment is additional to the main Levelling Up grant received by Council and will reduce expenditure from Council budgets on the aforementioned promotional, marketing and market assessment activities.

##### **4. Recommendation**

**It is recommended that the expenditure of the Capacity and Capability grant payment of £60,000 as outlined be approved.**

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

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

#### 4.7 ED/REG/085 AWARDS UNDER TOWN CENTRE SHOPFRONTS (TRANCHE 5)

##### 1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to:

- Update Members on the Urban Shop Frontage Scheme and seek approval for the latest grant awards (Tranche 5),
- To clarify the ongoing funding arrangements with the Department for Communities, and
- To seek Members' approval to move to a Phase 3 call.

##### 2. Programme Update - Tranche 5 Recommended Awards

Members have been regularly updated with details of the shopfront improvement programme. This report covers Tranche 5, with an additional 6 applications presented for review and approval. Following a Project Board meeting on 15 April 2025, further grant awards of £14,299 are now brought before Committee for approval (Table 1, below).

<b>TABLE 1: Tranche 5 Awards</b>			
<b>Ref No</b>	<b>DEA</b>	<b>Name of Business</b>	<b>LoO Amount</b>
B010	Ballyclare	Abode	£ 1,200.00
		<b>(Ballyclare) Total:</b>	<b>£ 1,200.00</b>
R030	Dunsilly	Posh Closet	£ 1,680.00
		<b>(Randalstown) Total:</b>	<b>£ 1,680.00</b>
A024	Antrim	Maxine Tipping	£ 1,657.60
A025	Antrim	Antrim Therapy Centre	£ 3,552.80
		<b>(Antrim) Total:</b>	<b>£ 5,210.40</b>
G017	Glengormley	Jordan Hairdressing	£1,209.60
G018	Glengormley	Bean & Grape	£4,999.00
		<b>(Glengormley) Total:</b>	<b>£ 6,208.60</b>
		<b>Tranche 5 Total:</b>	<b>£ 14,299.00</b>
<b>Total Grant Assistance (Tranche 1):</b>			<b>£ 47,096.94</b>
<b>Total Grant Assistance (Tranche 2):</b>			<b>£ 99,003.16</b>
<b>Total Grant Assistance (Tranche 3):</b>			<b>£ 153,937.62</b>
<b>Total Grant Assistance (Tranche 4):</b>			<b>£ 58,544.25</b>
<b>Total Grant Assistance (Tranche 5):</b>			<b>£ 14,299.00</b>
<b>Rolling Programme Total, as at 15/4/2025:</b>			<b>£ 372,880.97</b>

In addition to the grants awarded to date, Members are advised that officers have begun to process claims from local businesses whose works have been completed.

##### 3. Programme Funding and DfC Letter of Variance

Members will recall that the Department for Communities extended a Letter of Offer to Council in July 2024 with a total project value of £434,000 (£390,600 DfC, £43,400 Council contribution) for the 2024/25 financial year.

Due to the tight programme timeframe, officers wrote to the Department to request an extension to the programme into the 2025/26 financial year in order to enable the full drawdown of funding to take place.

This Letter of Variance has been received and approval is sought to accept this offer and continue the roll-out of this programme into 2025/2026.

#### 4. Phase 3

To date, over £372,000 has been committed by the programme to businesses across the town centres. All town centres have been invited to apply in two separate phases. Phase 1: Ballyclare and Randalstown, Phase 2: Antrim, Crumlin and Glengormley.

Given that there is approximately £61,000 remaining in the programme budget, Officers are seeking permission to open a third and final phase of the programme. There are a number of considerations as follows:

- **Additional Funding** - £61,000 would enable the programme to support around 18 further businesses. The Department has indicated that additional funding could be secured to boost the Phase 3 budget but that this would need to be matched by an additional contribution from the Council. The total value of the programme cannot exceed £500,000 and therefore the department is indicating that up to an additional £30,000 could be made available if the Council were also willing to add an additional £30,000. This would take the programme budget to £494,000 and the Phase 3 budget to £121,000 which could support around 35 additional businesses. Members' approval is therefore requested to ring-fence up to a maximum of £30,000 from the Economic Development Budget for 2025/2026 to support any additional allocation that can be made toward the programme from the Department. This would mean the total programme budget would be £494,000 with £420,600 coming from DfC and £73,400 coming from the Council.
- **Scope of Phase 3** – each town has been engaged in the programme to date and approval is now sought to launch phase 3 of the programme as an open call to all eligible businesses and property owners across the five towns. However, given that this is the last round of funding available if the programme is oversubscribed, applications will be prioritised based on a number of criteria to ensure that the objectives of the programme are maximised. The proposed criteria will include (additional criteria may be added if required):
  - Applicants who did not proceed under Phase 1 or Phase 2, either through incomplete submissions, those that did not provide requested information in a timely manner, or had not previously applied to the programme;

- Business properties which have not come forward but are in a street or area with multiple applications, to maximise the local impact of the programme;
- Areas that are deemed to have been under-represented across the programme;
- Previously successful applicants under Phases 1 and 2 of the programme will not be eligible to re-apply.

Pending Members' approval, it is proposed to open a Phase 3 call in June 2025, with receipt of applications and processing over the summer.

## 5. Summary

Programme Summary Position – Tranches 1-4 (as at 15 April 2025):

<u>Towns</u>	<u>Grant Approvals</u>	<u>Ground Floor Units (Total)</u>	<u>% Ground Floor Approvals</u>	<u>Value (£)</u>	<u>Ave. Award Level (£)</u>
Ballyclare	39	131	29.8	124,445.18	3,190.90
Randalstown	22	86	25.6	73,772.12	3,353.28
Antrim	26	148	17.6	87,196.14	3,353.70
Crumlin	5	75	6.7	18,648.78	3,729.76
Glengormley	<u>20</u>	<u>129</u>	<u>15.5</u>	<u>68,818.75</u>	<u>3,440.94</u>
<u>Totals:</u>	<u>112</u>	<u>569</u>	<u>19.7</u>	<u>372,880.97</u>	<u>3,329.29</u>

## 6. Recommendations

**It is recommended that Members approve:**

- Approve the fifth tranche of awards with a value of £ 14,299.00 to a further 6 local businesses;**
- Approve receipt and signing of the Letter of Variance, dated 27 March 2025, extending the programme into the 2025/26 financial year;**
- Approve the extension of the programme to Phase 3 – to commence in June 2025 - and, in doing so, commit up to an additional £30,000 from the Economic Development budget to match any additional funds identified by the Department for Communities.**

Prepared by: Alastair Law, Regeneration Officer

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

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

## 4.8 ED/REG/088 TOWN CENTRE VACANCY AND DERELICTION UPDATE

### 1. Purpose

**The purpose of this report is to update Members on current town centre vacancy levels, to provide an overview of the process used to collect and monitor this data and to seek approval for the commissioning of a scoping study to inform future funded programmes.**

### 2. Introduction/Background

The vitality of town centres is crucial for the economic and social well-being of communities. However, many town centres are facing increasing challenges related to vacancy and dereliction. These issues not only impact the aesthetic appeal of urban areas but also have significant implications for local economies.

Vacancy refers to the presence of unoccupied commercial properties, which can result from various factors such as economic downturns, shifts in consumer behaviour, and changes in the retail landscape. Dereliction, on the other hand, involves properties that have fallen into disrepair and neglect, often due to prolonged vacancy or lack of investment.

### 3. Key Issues

Town centre vacancy data is currently collected manually by the Regeneration Team on a quarterly basis, and only records ground floor commercial units, independent and chain stores. The process involves:

- Conducting on-the-ground site visits to manually record vacant commercial properties;
- Cross-referencing findings with commercial property listings and the Department for Communities vacancy data.

Monitoring vacancy levels in our town centres is essential to understanding the economic vitality of our towns; identifying emerging trends and informing strategic interventions to support regeneration and economic growth.

### **Current Vacancy Levels**

The average commercial ground floor town centre vacancy rate across the Borough (January 2025, Q4) was 12%.

<b>Town</b>	<b>Total No. of Ground Floor Units</b>	<b>Total No. Independent Businesses</b>	<b>Total No. Chain Businesses</b>	<b>Total No. of Vacant Units</b>	<b>Vacancy %</b>
Antrim (exc. Castle Mall)	148	115	18	15	10%
Ballyclare	131	97	19	15	11%
Crumlin	75	54	9	12	16%
Glengormley	129	84	33	12	9%

Randalstown	86	68	4	14	16%
<b>Total</b>	<b>569</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>12%</b>

Overall, our towns perform well against other benchmarks. The UK average is around 14%, however the Northern Ireland average is 22.4% (Source: DfC Town Centre Database 2024 (<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/town-centre-database>)). All the towns in the Borough are well below the NI average.

### **Future Data Collection & Technology**

Regeneration Officers are currently working with the Council's GIS Officer to improve how vacancy data is collected and monitored. Going forward, Esri's GIS platform will be used to streamline the process and improve the quality and accessibility of the data.

The new approach will offer several key benefits:

- Real-time field data collection using mobile devices, to facilitate more timely and accurate updates;
- Accurate spatial mapping of vacant units to visualise concentrations and identify emerging patterns;
- Trend tracking across specific areas and sectors;
- Interactive dashboards and visual reports for clearer insights;
- Potential to integrate with other key information, such as Land & Property Services (LPS)/Ordnance Survey NI (OSNI) data and internal Council datasets

This approach will help provide a more accurate and holistic view of town centre health and significantly strengthen Council's ability to monitor vacancy levels, identify emerging issues early, and plan targeted interventions that support the regeneration of our town centres.

In order to utilise the existing system additional Mobile Worker licences required for the Regeneration Officers. Approval is sought to purchase up to three additional licences to be used by the Economic Development Team. The current annual fee is £600 (excluding VAT), which can be covered within the 2025/26 Economic Development budget.

In addition to this Officers are working closely with Belfast City Council to explore the benefits of a new pilot programme being used to monitor vacancy using Artificial Intelligence (AI). This technology pulls information from multiple sources to provide a view on whether a property is being used for commercial purposes.

### **LPS and Rates Income**

Land and Property Services (LPS) are responsible for the monitoring of vacant property. A vacant non-domestic property is rates exempt for three months and then pays only 50% of the normal occupied amount. However, given the ever-changing nature of property and businesses opening and closing on a



daily basis, it is challenging to keep this information accessible and up to date.

Consequences may include many businesses continuing to pay a reduced rates bill as they have not been re-rated as an occupied premise. More accurate reporting on vacancy and the ability to share this between organisations should support additional rates raising activities.

### **Scoping Study and Market Research**

Members will be aware that the Department for Communities continues to hold the regeneration powers in Northern Ireland and that Councils deliver a large proportion of schemes on their behalf.

After many programmes based upon urban regeneration there is a renewed policy focus on vacant and derelict property in town centres and the mechanism that could be used to restore these properties into commercial use.

Given this, it would be the intention of Officers to explore the development of a funding programme aimed at addressing vacancy and dereliction in our town centres.

To that end, Officers are seeking Member approval to commission an innovative scoping study to build on the information we currently collect and to provide a framework to support a new vacancy and dereliction programme in the Borough. Whilst there is already a strong understanding of the extent and location of vacant properties, commissioning a scoping study would provide a valuable evidence base to inform this initiative. The study would include:

- Previous use, planning history and condition of the vacant property;
- An audit of the existing services and retail offer in the town and the gaps in provision;
- Consultation with businesses and residents to understand how the offer in the town could be improved;
- Market analysis to better understand what types of business activity e.g. retail, leisure, services, hospitality are attractive to the market given the population growth and demands in each town.

This scoping study will inform the design of a new grant programme for property owners, providing essential data to support future funding bids, should such opportunities become available. The findings will also help identify the most suitable uses for vacant units, guiding property owners on how best to refurbish and repurpose their spaces to align with market trends and community needs.

The scoping study is anticipated to cost around £25,000 and this will be met from the existing economic development budget in 2025/2026.

#### 4. Financial Position/Implication

The purchase of the Esri licences will cost up to £1,800 for three additional users and the scoping study will cost up to £25,000. These costs can both be met from the Economic Development budget for 2025/26.

#### 5. Recommendation

**It is recommended that Members:**

- a) Note the update on the vacancy levels across the Borough towns.**
- b) Approve the purchase of up to three additional mobile worker licences for the Esri platform at a maximum cost of £1,800 to be met through the Economic Development budget; and**
- c) Approve the commissioning of a scoping study and market research on the potential use of vacant property in town centres at a cost of £25,000 to be met through the Economic Development budget.**

Prepared by: Natasha Donald, Regeneration Officer

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

Approved by: Majella McAllister, Director Economic Development, Planning and Building Control

#### 4.9 ED/LMP/064 TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS WORKSHOPS 2025/2026

##### 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 2025/26.**

##### 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 2025 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 5 local businesses: Woodside Haulage, Diamond Trucks, Montgomery Transport Group, Henderson Group and Transport Training Services.

In total, 3 Transport and Logistics industry workshops took place with 263 primary 7 pupils from 12 primary schools and 68 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 11<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

School	Town	Number of Children
Gaelscoil Eanna	Glengormley	20
Greystone Primary School	Antrim	23
Groggan Primary School	Randalstown	18
Loanends Primary School	Crumlin	25
Maine Integrated Primary School	Randalstown	16
Mossley Primary School	Newtownabbey	31
Parkhall Primary School	Antrim	30
Round Tower Integrated Primary School,	Antrim	25

Rathcoole Primary School	Newtownabbey	11
St Comgall's Primary School	Antrim	24
St Joseph's Primary School	Crumlin	28
Tildarg Primary School	Ballyclare	10
Totals 12 Schools	Total	261

### **Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

School	Town	Student numbers
Parkhall Integrated College	Randalstown	13
Edmund Rice College	Glengormley	11
SEN School		
Thornfield House School	Newtownabbey	12
Jordanstown School	Newtownabbey	14
Rostulla School	Newtownabbey	5

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

### **3. Previous Decision of Council**

In September 2024, 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 2026. It is proposed that for £6,600 YENI will deliver the 2026 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 2026 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 2025/26

### **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 2025 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

#### 4.10 ED/ED/284 CITY NATION PLACE UK CONFERENCE 2025

##### 1. Purpose

**The purpose of this report is to seek approval for Members of the Economic Development Committee and appropriate Officers to attend the City Nation Place UK Conference 2025 in Glasgow.**

##### 2. Key Issues

The 7th Annual City Nation Place UK Conference is taking place in Glasgow on Wednesday 24th & Thursday 25th September 2025.

This two-day Placemaking Conference will bring together expertise and experience of place development and marketing from across the UK whilst providing an opportunity to learn from the activities that have taken place in Glasgow, which has seen four decades of growth through regeneration and inward investment.

The agenda includes

- An afternoon of placemaking presentations in key locations across the city;
- A Civic Reception hosted in the Glasgow City Chambers;
- A day of presentations, panel discussions, and round table collaboration towards shaping collaborative, place-led approaches to building and managing place reputation and growth

The Conference is of specific interest to the Council's Regeneration team due to its focus on place-led strategy, policy and branding. It is hoped that attendance at the conference will provide some examples of best practice that could help shape funding applications for urban regeneration money for our towns and urban spaces.

Attendees will benefit from expertise on making places more attractive for citizens, visitors and businesses, developing and leveraging tools to build civic pride, and developing more sustainable tourism and place economies.

Officers are therefore proposing attendance from interested Members of the Economic Development Committee, along with two appropriate Economic Development Officers.

##### 3. Financial Position/Implication

Until 31 May 2025, the Council can avail of a "Super Early bird" rate of £295 per person. Any further bookings after this date, until 18 July 2025, will cost £345 per person. The cost of the tickets will be met from within the 2025/2026 Economic Development budget.

Flights and other expenses will also be met through the existing budgets.

#### **4. Recommendation**

**It is recommended that the Committee approve the Council's attendance at the City Nation Place UK Conference in Glasgow on 24 and 25<sup>th</sup> September 2025 for Members of the Economic Development Committee and up to two officers from the Councils Economic Development Team, the costs of which will be met through the 2025/26 Economic Development Budget.**

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

#### **4.11 PBS/BC/003 VOL 2 STREET NAMING SUBMISSION – BALLYBENTRAGH ROAD, ANTRIM**

##### **1. Purpose**

**The purpose of this report is to recommend to Members a new street name for a development at Ballybentragh Road, Antrim.**

##### **2. Introduction/Background**

A development naming application was received from Britt Megahey on behalf of Ballybentragh Developments Ltd. regarding the naming of a residential development at Ballybentragh Road, Antrim. The development consists of 5 detached dwellings. The development names and developer's rationale have been submitted as outlined below, with the developer's application, location map and site plan **enclosed**.

1 – Bentragh Hall – Ballybentragh is the townland, and it would be desirable to keep the townland in the name.

2 – Bentragh Manor – Ballybentragh is the townland, and it would be desirable to keep the townland in the name.

3 – Ballybentragh Hall – Ballybentragh is the townland, and it would be desirable to keep the townland in the name.

Should the Council not wish to select one of the above names; the matter will be referred back to the developer via the Building Control section for further consideration.

##### **3. Recommendation**

**It is recommended that a name for the above development be approved.**

Prepared by: Liam McFadden, Principal Building Control Surveyor

Agreed by: Sharon Mossman, Deputy Director of Planning and Building Control

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



#### **4.12 PBS/BC/003 VOL 2 STREET NAMING SUBMISSION – ANTRIM ROAD, GLENGORMLEY**

##### **1. Purpose**

**The purpose of this report is to recommend to Members a new street name for a development at Antrim Road, Glengormley.**

##### **2. Introduction/Background**

A development naming application was received from Barry O'Donnell on behalf of McGirr Architects regarding the naming of a residential development at Antrim Road, Glengormley. The development consists of 63 apartments and 1 commercial unit. The development names and developer's rationale have been submitted as outlined below, with the developer's application, location map and site plan **enclosed**.

1 – The Ferbro Buildings – The new development proudly stands on the historic site of the original Ferbro Buildings – a well-known commercial landmark at the heart of Glengormley. Since the 1960s, the area has played a key role in the town's growth and identity. By reviving the Ferbro name, the development celebrates its rich heritage while creating an exciting new chapter for local businesses and the wider community. This connection to the past ensures a strong sense of place, making it instantly recognisable and meaningful to residents and visitors alike.

2 – Ferbro Court – As above

3 – Ferbro Mews – As above

Should the Council not wish to select one of the above names; the matter will be referred back to the developer via the Building Control section for further consideration.

##### **3. Recommendation**

**It is recommended that a name for the above development be approved.**

Prepared by: Liam McFadden, Principal Building Control Surveyor

Agreed by: Sharon Mossman, Deputy Director of Planning and Building Control

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

#### 4.13 ED/ED/284 COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING SUMMIT 2025

##### 1. Purpose

**The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval for attendance of an Elected Member, alongside a suitable Economic Development Officer, at the CWB Summit in Manchester on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2025, with an estimated cost of £105 per ticket along with flight costs and other expenses, to be met through the Economic Development budget.**

##### 2. Introduction/Background

On 3 July 2025, Manchester City Council will host the CWB Summit, a flagship event by CLES, the national organisation for local economies, for considering progressive economic approaches at local levels across the UK. This year, the summit will bring together local economic changemakers, place leaders, grassroots innovators and policymakers to explore how both community wealth building and changes in local democracy can open up opportunities for communities to own the future of their local economies.

##### 3. Previous Decision of Council

At OPODG in October 2023, Members approved attendance of one Elected Member and one officer to the 2023 CWB summit in Manchester.

##### 4. Key Issues

The event will present opportunities to hear from a range of speakers who will inspire and promote fresh ideas as to how the economies of places work and to reflect upon where the private and charity sectors fit when building economic justice in places and communities. Topics will include:

- **Wellbeing economies:** how local governance can prioritise future generations and sustainable economic strategies.
- **People-powered policymaking:** Strengthening relationships between grassroots organisations, local and combined authorities and other anchor institutions.
- **Community wealth building in action:** Exploring new ways to drive inclusive and fair economic change.

##### 5. Summary

The CWB summit will be held on 3 July 2025 at Manchester Metropolitan University following the success of the 2023 CWB Summit, which was also in Manchester. The theme of this year's event is 'Fairer Economies, Stronger Communities'. The event runs from 9am-430pm, with an individual ticket costing £105.

##### 6. Recommendation

**It is recommended that attendance of an Elected Member, alongside a suitable Economic Development Officer, at the CWB Summit in Manchester on**

**3 July 2025, with an estimated cost of £105 per ticket along with flight costs and other expenses, to be met through the Economic Development budget be approved.**

Prepared by: Jill Murray, Executive Officer

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

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

#### 4.14 ED/ED/293 GREEN FOR BUSINESS PROGRAMME EVALUATION

##### 1. Purpose

**The purpose of this report is to provide members with an overview of the evaluation of the 2024/25 Green for Business Pilot Programme and seek approval for the continued delivery of a redesigned Green for Business Programme in 2025/26.**

##### 2. Introduction/Background

Members are reminded that the delivery of a pilot net zero business support, the Green for Business Programme was approved by the Economic Committee and ratified by Full Council in September 2024.

Officers developed the pilot programme to support local businesses to combat the growing pressures in relation to sustainability commitments alongside the need to remain competitive and commercially successful in the face of growing energy, sustainability and net zero challenges.

Members will be aware that the UK Government signed up to the Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Targeted Amendment) Order 2019, that aims to ensure the UK reduces its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 100% from 1990 levels by 2050; and that the Northern Ireland Assembly declared a climate change emergency in February 2020.

The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 (Act) sets a target of at least 100% reduction in net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050. This act includes an interim target of at least a 48% reduction in net emissions by 2030.

In June 2024 DfE published 'Low Carbon/Net Zero Sectoral Action Plan' which recognises the positive components to be realised for the Northern Ireland industry as businesses seek to decarbonise across the commercial landscape. The report recognises the opportunities for business to grow as they work toward net zero targets. Following on from this, in March 2025, the Department have launched the Energy Strategy Action Plan that sets out four strategic priorities for progressing the Strategy for 2025.

##### 3. Green for Business Pilot Programme Evaluation 2024/25

The Council partnered with Carbonfit, local qualified chartered low carbon consultants, to deliver a programme of work to support businesses providing a range of interventions including:

- Access to their online intelligence carbon reporting software
- Development of a carbon reduction plan
- Attainment of a carbon reduction certificate
- Development of a carbon Assessment
- Support with managing utility costs vs kwh tracking
- Development of a decarbonisation roadmap

Carbonfit specialise in carbon calculations using data analysis calculations that are DESNZ approved in line with ISO14064 methodologies, carbon legislation and risk management as well as energy modelling that enabled them to frame company specific data against globally recognised standards to give a meaningful benchmark for their base year. The CarbonFit Programme evaluation is **enclosed**.

Council received 27 Expression of interests from businesses throughout the borough, resulting in 23 progressing to receive technical assistance:

<b>Company Name</b>	<b>Sector</b>
Randalstown Arches	Charity
W S Dennison	Transport & Logistics
Golden Popcorn	Manufacturing
4-11 Afterschool Club	Training & Education
Greenview Group	Construction
Ping Group	Transport & Logistics
Secret Stash Yarn Shop	Retail
ESF	Manufacturing
Mallusk Enterprise Park	Charity
Ecopart NI	Retail
FB Smyth & Co	Construction
Gordon Estates Management	Professional Services
CD Group	Transport & Logistics
Railway Fryer	Food & Drink
Sustainable Blooms	Agriculture
RTU	Construction
GES	Manufacturing
Safeguarding	Services
Specsavers	Retail
Training services NI	Training & Education
TTS	Training & Education

Carbonfit provided bespoke guidance including a carbon reduction plan for each business and a roadmap to attain net zero credentials to a broad spectrum of businesses ranging from advanced manufacturing, corporate services, transport & logistics and food & drinks industries.

At its inception, the Pilot Programme had a target to enlist 150 businesses to access essential tools and expert guidance. However, despite rigorous promotion, a targeted social media campaign and two business breakfast events the programme was unable to recruit as many businesses as anticipated, with 23 successfully on-boarded by the end of the pilot.

It is however important to note that the Green for Business Programme compares favourably to other Net Zero programmes being delivered by local government. For example, the Mid South West Economic Engine's "MSW Net Zero Support" programme, delivered in collaboration with three Northern

Ireland councils, has had 40 participants over the past 12 months, averaging 13 per council area.

Feedback from those business that participated in the programme has been very positive, however, it has been a challenge to convert initial interest from other businesses to full programme participation. It is considered that one factor in this lack of conversion to programme participation is the absence of any capital grant scheme to support delivery of interventions recommended in the Sustainability Action Plans.

#### 4. Learnings & Next Steps

Following delivery of the Green for Business Pilot Programme, the evaluation recommendations and officers' learnings, it is proposed that an enhanced Green for Business Programme is developed and procured for delivery in 2025/26 that will include:

- Continued and enhanced technical assistance
- An additional Green Transition Fund to support delivery of capital interventions
- Refined messaging and promotion to appeal to potential participants

#### 5. Green for Business 2025/26

It is proposed that the Green for Business 2025/26 programme comprises of two core components:

##### Component 1 - Technical assistance

Businesses who receive technical assistance will receive:

- Enhanced bespoke carbon reduction action plan (scope 1 & 2)
- Carbon Footprint Certificate
- Carbon Assessment
- Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi) Compliant Net Zero Pledge
- Access to carbon accounting software

Businesses which have availed of technical assistance through the Pilot Programme received an initial action plan outlining key recommendations. However, to effectively guide future capital investments a more extensive analysis is required to help inform how grant funding can support their decarbonisation journey. It is proposed that this new output is incorporated into the 2025/26 programme.

##### Component 2 - Green Transition Fund

It is proposed to include financial assistance in the form of grant funding to help businesses deliver the recommendations outlined in their carbon reduction action plan. Upon completion of Component 1, businesses will become eligible to access Component 2. It is anticipated that a grant element to the programme will also increase the overall participation on the Programme.

This transition fund will seek to provide up to 70% of capital costs and range from £5,000 up to £20,000. It is proposed that applicants will submit an Expression of Interest and if deemed eligible they will then be invited to make a full application with details and justification for their project.

## 6. Finance

The Pilot Programme was delivered at a rate of £150 per business, excluding costs for the delivery of engagement events and promotion activities. As currently drafted in the LEP Action Plan (Agenda Item 4.8) Component 1 and 2 of the Green for Business Programme 2025/26 is proposed to be funded through the Local Enterprise Partnership at a rate of £250 per business, with the increase to account for enhanced advice regarding future capital interventions.

There remains a gap for some participants of the Pilot Programme that wish to obtain additional guidance on capital spend as part of their Net Zero Journey. It is proposed that this need is met via the Council's Ask Programme with associated costs met from the existing Economic Development Budget. The Ask Programme currently has a number of sustainability specialists listed as mentors, however, a further exercise can be undertaken to appoint additional sustainability / Net Zero expertise to the Ask Mentor list.

## 7. Recommendation

**It is recommended that Members:**

- a) note the evaluation of the 2024/25 Pilot Programme;**
- b) approve delivery of the Green for Business Programme in 2025/26;**
- c) approve the addition of Sustainability / Net Zero expertise to Council's Ask Programme.**

Prepared by: Chris Doyle & Stewart McCormack, Investment Officers

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

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

## 5 ITEMS FOR NOTING

### 5.1 ED/ED/279 GO SUCCEED UPDATE

#### 1. Purpose

**The purpose of this report is to update Members on Go Succeed programme delivery for Financial Year 2024/25 and planned delivery for 2025/26.**

#### 2. Introduction/Background

As Members will be aware, Go Succeed launched in November 2023 and is a new go-to source for expert business advice delivered by all 11 local councils across Northern Ireland. The programme offers 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.

Belfast City Council (BCC), the Council leading the service on behalf of all Councils, established a Project Management Office (PMO) to support the delivery of the programme, contract management and the administering of funding.

#### **2024/25 Delivery**

##### **Mentoring**

Mentoring support through the service is delivered via 4 primary pillars. When an applicant applies to the programme, Economic Development Officers will 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 can go on and generate at least £1m in revenue after 3 years (up to 30 hours mentoring)

From the beginning of the programme (November 2023), up to the 31 March 2025 recruitment for each pillar is as below.

<b>Pillar</b>	<b>18 Month Target</b>	<b>Actual Recruited</b>
Engage	397	455
Foundation	57	107
Growth	240	248
Scaling	20 (regional target)	3

##### **Grants**

The Go Succeed Grant was open to those receiving support through the Foundation, Growth or Scaling pillars of the service. Applicants had to be actively trading and have completed at least 50% of their allocated



mentoring hours to be eligible for an application pack. Grants were awarded on a competitive basis and were subject to budget availability.

During the 24/25 Financial Year, **90 businesses** from across the Borough were supported with up to £4,000 in grant aid to support their business growth and development. The total value of Letter of Offer awarded to these businesses was **£294,070.26** which greatly exceeded the target of awarding 72 businesses with £252,721 in grant aid. Due to high demand, the Council was able to access further funds to support an additional 18 businesses.

It is anticipated that a further grant call will open at the beginning of May, with an initial budget of £113,846. Further calls may be announced subject to the availability of additional funds.

### **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. ANBC established two growth PSNs for local businesses during 24/25.

#### **1. ANBC Social Enterprise Peer Support Network**

Launched in September 2024, the network was created to support Social Enterprises within the Borough. The network had 11 members, all of which were social enterprises.

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

##### **Sessions:**

- 1- Launch Event – Social Enterprise Support Organisations and Networking
- 2- Social Enterprise Governance
- 3- Unlock the Power of AI for your Social Enterprise
- 4- A Practical Guide to Using AI in your Social Enterprise

Officers are currently exploring opportunities for continuing to engage with this group, providing further support beyond the Peer Support Network

#### **2. ANBC & MEA DTFF Peer Support Network**

Open to both ANBC and Mid and East Antrim (MEA) businesses, the purpose of this Peer Support Network was to build awareness and provide a pathway for Go Succeed clients to access support through the Digital Transformation Flexible Fund.

##### **Sessions:**

- 1- What is Digital Transformation

- 2- Identifying Support for Small Businesses Wishing to Digitise
- 3- Site Visit (NRC)
- 4- Integrating AI into Your Business

## 2025/26 Delivery

Members will recall that BCC had been engaging with the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) on behalf of all the Councils, to seek a 12-month extension to the programme. In February, PMO received confirmation from UKSPF of continued funding into the 2025/26 Financial Period. The total value of the award is to be £7 million revenue and £2.2 capital (£9.2 million).

With a slightly reduced budget, PMO developed a funding application which sought to minimise any impact on the client experience and benefitted from the input of all 11 councils on the best approach to delivery over the extension period.

The Go Succeed Programme for 2025/26 will have some key adjustments as a result of the reduced budget, including.

- A more coordinated approach to Community Outreach with a mixture of both regional and local delivery
- Targeted support for Economically Inactive (EI) Groups is included this year
- Engage Targets maintained, Foundation Targets Reduced
- Growth and Scaling Targets maintained
- Masterclasses and Peer Support Networks reduced and streamlined
- Grant Programme amendments – open/close calls, 50% grant rate, 100 retrospective spend, capital funding only

	<b>24/25 Delivery</b>	<b>25/26 Delivery</b>
<b>Community Outreach</b>	<b>£30,000</b> allocation for local delivery	<b>£16,364</b> allocation for local delivery / <b>£13,636</b> allocation for regional delivery
<b>Economically Inactive Support</b>	No targeted support	<b>£18,419</b> allocation to support Economically Inactive Groups
<b>Engage and Foundation Target</b>	<b>264 participants</b> engaged across all Engage Activities  <b>60 participants</b> engaged across all 'Foundation' activities	<b>265 participants</b> engaged across all Engage Activities  <b>41 participants</b> engaged across all Foundation activities
<b>Growth and Scaling Target</b>	<b>120 participants</b> engaged across all Growth Activities  <b>20 enterprises</b> engaged across all Scaling Activities (Regional Target)	<b>120 participants</b> engaged across all Growth activities  <b>20 enterprises</b> engaged across all Scaling Activities (Regional Target)

<b>Grant Programme</b>	<b>£252,271</b> budget allocation, supporting <b>72 businesses</b>  Rolling Grant  70% Grant Rate / 30% business match funding  80% upfront payment, 20% payment upon submission of claim (proof of payment/monitoring form)	<b>£113,846.15</b> budget allocation, supporting <b>38 businesses</b> (potential for additional fund allocation)  Open/Closed calls  50% Grant Rate / 50% business match funding  100% retrospective payment, paid upon submission of claim (proof of payment/monitoring form)
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### 3. Previous Decision of Council

The Council previously agreed to participate in Go Succeed in October 2023. Council committed up to £80,000 to participate in the 2025/26 programme.

### 4. Financial Position/Implication

The Council has previously agreed to match-fund the Programme estimated at up to £80,000, provision for which has been made in the Economic Development budget.

### 5. Recommendation

**It is recommended that the update on Go Succeed programme delivery for the Financial Year 2024/25 and planned delivery for 2025/26 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

## 5.2 ED/ED/308 MULTIPLY PROGRAMME SUMMARY

### 1. Purpose

**The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an overview of the Multiply Programme, following its finalisation in March 2025.**

### 2. Introduction/Background

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council's (ANBC) Multiply Programme, funded by the Department for the Economy (DfE), successfully concluded on 31st March 2025. This initiative fully utilised its allocated funding of £274K and met its participation target by engaging over 500 residents across the Borough. The programme was designed to enhance numeracy skills among adults through a range of non-accredited, community-based education initiatives.

The programme was delivered in collaboration with two delivery partners, Workforce Training Services and Sentinus, leveraging various venues throughout the borough to facilitate learning. A total of eight tailored initiatives were implemented, each designed to address specific needs within the community. These initiatives provided accessible, flexible, and dynamic numeracy training opportunities, ensuring that participants could improve their skills in a manner that best suited their individual circumstances.

### 3. Previous Decision of Council

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

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

Numeracy proficiency is vital for both personal and professional success. Research conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) underscores the direct correlation between improved numeracy skills and reductions in unemployment and low wages, contributing to overall economic growth. The Multiply Programme recognised the urgent need for a flexible, community-centred approach to addressing the numeracy gap among adults, ultimately fostering a numerate society capable of adapting to the demands of the modern world.

The Multiply Programme comprised the following eight initiatives, each targeting specific community groups and skills gaps:

Intervention	Initiative	Target number of participants	Achieved number of participants
Bring Your Grown Up	Numeracy Workshops	120	120
Counting on You – Industry Upskilling	Retail & Hospitality	70	70
Engaging Mature Learners	Lifelong Learning	60	60
MSOL	Numeracy Workshops	20	20
Numeracy Boot Camps	Community Organisations	40	40
Numeracy Boot Camps	Entrepreneurs & Businesses	40	40
Numeracy Boot Camps	Accounting for You	120	120
Numeracy Boot Camps	Disability	12	12
Total		482	482

Eligibility criteria for participation in the programme was open to adults aged 19 and above residing in the Borough of Antrim and Newtownabbey who had not attained a GCSE grade C or above in mathematics.

Programme Benefits Participants of the ANBC Multiply Programme benefitted from:

- Flexible Learning Options: Courses designed to fit around participants' busy schedules.
- Supportive Environment: A welcoming and inclusive learning atmosphere.
- Skilled Instructors: Experienced tutors delivering engaging and practical numeracy education.

5. Financial Position/Implication

Note programme finished 31.03.2025 and associated LoO's fully utilised.

6. Governance

Programme funded and governed by DfE, through Letters of Offer, with programme updates provided to the Labour Market Partnership (LMP).

7. Recommendation

**It is recommended that the overview of the Multiply Programme and end date of 31 March 2025 be noted.**

Prepared by: James Martin, Multiply 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 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT KPI REPORT 2024/25

### 1. Purpose

**The purpose of this report is to provide an update on Economic Development's performance against the agreed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) at the end of financial year 2024/25.**

### 2. Update

The Economic Development section provides quarterly progress reports against KPIs. This report summarises the performance against these KPIs for financial year 2024/25.

The Economic Development service has performed well throughout financial year 2024/25, exceeding targets for all 8 KPIs.

Some key performance highlights include:

- The breadth of Economic Development's commitment to working with local businesses is demonstrated by the number of businesses engaging with Council's suite of programmes and events. The Economic Development team surpassed this target by 64%, with 784 businesses engaging with its wide range of programmes and events.
- The Go Succeed Programme and Labour Market Partnership assisted 362 businesses to develop/ expand their operations, exceeding this target by 45%.
- The Regeneration Team surpassed the target of securing £0.5m in regeneration grant funding by 63%, securing £798,600 this financial year alone. This grant funding sits across various schemes which will aid local businesses, including Town Centre Marketing (£50k), Town Centre Shop Front Improvement Programme (£390.6k) and Small Areas Revitalisation Programme (£358k). Furthermore, an application for regeneration grant funding of £240k towards a Town Centre Street Furniture Scheme is currently being progressed.
- The Labour Market Partnership activity has outperformed the KPI by 55%, assisting 271 unemployed people into work through Partnership activity.

In addition to the activities outlined above, the Economic Development section has provided other interventions across a range of programmes not explicitly measured by the KPIs. This includes, but is not limited to, over £290k of Go Succeed business grants awarded, Living Over the Shops Scheme, Digital Transformation Flexible Fund, Rural Business Development Grant Scheme, Green for Business programme and the Multiply programme.

Please see **enclosed** for a detailed update on KPI performance.

### **3. Recommendation**

**It is recommended that the Economic Development service performance during the financial year 2024/25 be noted.**

Prepared by: Rebecca Courtney, Business Analyst

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

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



## 5.4 ED/ED/292 RURAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT GRANT (TRPSI)

### 1. Purpose

**The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update and overview of the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme 2024-25, funded by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs through the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Programme.**

### 2. Introduction/Background

Members will recall that during financial years 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23, the Council administered a Rural Business Development Grant on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) through the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Programme (TRPSI).

The key aim of the Scheme is to provide small capital grants of up to £4,999 to support micro-businesses located in rural areas with under 5,000 population to invest in new equipment or capital items. The objective of the fund is to enable the businesses to remain sustainable or to grow. The maximum grant-funding rate, as determined by the Department, is 50%, with 50% match-funding provided by participating businesses.

### 3. Previous Decision of Council

Members approved the delivery of the RBDGS 2024-25 at the Council meeting on 29 July 2024.

Members approved the RBDGS awards subject to satisfactory eligibility checks, successful application and DAERA budget allocation at the Council meeting on 16 December 2024.

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

As determined by DAERA, the scheme was open for applications from 16 October until 08 November 2024, with a programme completion date of 14 March 2025. All claims were to be submitted via the DAERA portal by 31 March 2025. By the submission deadline, 24 applications were submitted, 3 of which were ineligible, 1 withdrew and 4 failed at assessment stage. This resulted in the issuing of 16 Letters of Offer. A detailed breakdown of grant awards is **enclosed**.

### 5. Financial Position/Implication

There is no direct financial contribution made by the Council to this programme.

The administration budget allocated to Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council based on 24 submitted applications; to administer, promote and deliver the programme is a total value of £8,131.44. This is calculated at a cost of £338.81 per application received by the Council. 90% of this payment

has been received by the Council, and the remaining 10% will be paid in April 2026, upon the submission of data collected from each successful business. This survey will be commissioned by each Council for their respective Council area. The survey and budget will be managed by the Economic Development Team.

## **6. Recommendation**

**It is recommended that the grant awards administered to rural businesses as listed in the enclosure by the Economic Development Team on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs through the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Programme be noted.**

Prepared by: Carly Long, Business Development Project Officer

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

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