

Report on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Mid Ulster Business Marketing Grant Scheme 2) Mid Ulster Gift Card Programme 3) DfC Revitalisation Scheme 2021/2022 – Coalisland Town Centre 4) Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland – Consultation 5) 4C Ur Future Live Careers Event 6) Request for Ministerial Meeting to discuss the new Rural Affairs Policy Framework
Date of Meeting	7 July 2021
Reporting Officer	Head of Economic Development

Is this report restricted for confidential business? If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	Yes	
	No	X

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To provide Members with an update on key activities as detailed below.
2.0	Background
2.1	<p>Mid Ulster Business Marketing Grant Scheme Council agreed in May 2021 to fund a new Business Marketing Grant Scheme to support Mid Ulster businesses as they recover from the pandemic.</p>
2.2	<p>Mid Ulster Gift Card Programme Council agreed in April 2021, as part of Mid Ulster's Town Recovery Plan, to fund the development and rollout of a new Mid Ulster Gift Card Scheme. Officers are commencing a procurement process which will hopefully result in being able to select a suitable organisation to manage and deliver the district wide scheme.</p>
2.3	<p>DfC Revitalisation Scheme 2021/2022 – Coalisland Town Centre Department for Communities (DfC) has scheduled a Revitalisation scheme for Coalisland Town Centre, following the completion of the Public Realm Scheme, up to the value of £250,000. Based on a successful application, DfC will provide 100% funding for eligible activities and projects must be completed by 31st March 2022.</p>
2.4	Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland - Consultation

<p>2.5</p>	<p>The Department for the Economy (DfE) has launched a consultation paper for a new Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland: ‘Skills for a 10x Economy’. ‘Skills for a 10X Economy’ is DfE’s strategy to support more people to improve their job prospects and fulfil their economic potential.</p> <p>4C Ur Future Live Careers Event 4C Ur Future is a not-for-profit community interest company who exists to inspire, inform and help young people become the best version of themselves.</p> <p>Building on very successful 2019 ‘proof of concept’ pilot events for 1,200 Year 9 pupils, 4C Ur Future intend to build a Career Portal and Digital Engagement Platform that is free to schools and registered users, and which every Year 9 pupil and Careers Teacher in NI can benefit from. The organisation aims to roll out a series of pilot 4C Ur Future Live regional careers events across Council areas during June 2022 to enable as many 13 year old children as possible to gain insights into their future career opportunities before making GCSE choices.</p> <p>A proposal for Council to host a 4C Ur Future Live event in the Mid Ulster area in June 2022 was discussed at the Development Committee meeting in June 2021 and it was agreed to bring back a further report in July 2021 to advise whether all 13 year old pupils in Mid Ulster’s post primary schools could participate in the event.</p>
<p>2.6</p>	<p>Request for Ministerial meeting to discuss the new Rural Affairs Policy Framework A request was issued on 2nd June 2021 to the Agriculture Minister Edwin Poots from the former Council Chair to meet with a delegation from Council to discuss progress with the new Rural Affairs Policy Framework. This was in response to concerns raised by members of the Development Committee regarding progress with the new Policy Framework.</p>
<p>3.0</p>	<p>Main Report</p>
<p>3.1</p>	<p>Mid Ulster Business Marketing Grant Scheme Council agreed in May 2021 at the Development Committee and subsequent Council Meeting to allocate a total budget of £250,000 towards the development and rollout of a Mid Ulster Business Marketing Grant Scheme to local businesses in the area.</p> <p>Eligible businesses in Mid Ulster will have the opportunity to apply for a discretionary grant at 100% funding, capped at £300 per business, towards eligible marketing revenue activities. Extensive promotion of the scheme will happen towards the end of July 2021, through the local press, Council website and social channels, Business Directory E-Zine and Department Databases etc. The Scheme is anticipated to open to applications from businesses at the start of August 2021.</p>
<p>3.2</p>	<p>Mid Ulster Gift Card Programme Tender submissions will go live for this scheme very shortly via the E-TendersNI web portal. It is requested that once the procurement process is completed and</p>

tenders evaluated, that delegated authority is granted to Council's Chief Executive to award the contract to the successful tenderer to allow work to commence on the Mid Ulster Gift Card Programme over the summer months. A tender report will be brought to Committee in September 2021 to update Members.

3.3 **DfC Revitalisation Scheme 2021/2022 – Coalisland Town Centre**

It is proposed that the following activities are included in an application to DfC to help revitalise Coalisland town centre following the completion of the public realm scheme;

a) Festive Lighting (Approx £80,000)

To maximize the visitor experience during the Christmas period and to complement the works done through the Public Realm Scheme, it is proposed that a reusable artificial Christmas tree and associated festive light motifs, including one for each of the 47 newly erected lampposts throughout the town, be included in the bid to DfC.

b) Developing a Town Brand and Purchase of Branded Merchandise (Approx £25,000)

Further to the completion of Coalisland Public Realm Scheme in Summer 2021, consultation with key town stakeholders has revealed a strong desire to create a new brand proposition for the town to strengthen its identity. It is proposed that the development of a new brand for Coalisland be included in the bid to DfC together with the purchase of a range of branded merchandise to distribute to businesses and shoppers.

c) Lineside Environmental Improvement Scheme (Approx £145,000)

With the new public realm scheme in Coalisland almost complete, and with other associated active travel scheme works taking place in the town, there remains further works to be carried out along the Coalisland Canal towpath and its environs to fully utilize this area's potential. The proposed project would link up the town centre with the soon to be redeveloped Gortgonis Recreation Centre. Along the towpath, it would seek to create a new entrance area and welcoming feature signage to Gortgonis Recreation Centre, carry out environmental works and create pedestrian rest areas with street furniture etc. The target area is located from the start of the towpath to Gortgonis entrance and as this area caters for much pedestrian footfall, these works would improve the overall public realm and encourage more people to use the route leading through to the town centre.

Broad cost estimates are included above for each scheme, but these are subject to procurement exercises being carried out, and costs may vary accordingly, however, the overall funding envelope of £250,000 will not be exceeded. An update on progress will be reported at a future Committee meeting.

3.4

Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland - Consultation

The Department for the Economy (DfE) has launched a consultation paper for a new Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland: 'Skills for a 10x Economy'. 'Skills for a 10X Economy' is DfE's strategy to support more people to improve their job prospects and fulfil their economic potential. The skills strategy outlines plans to focus on innovation by increasing further education qualifications in technical and

professional skills and rebalancing higher education towards Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM). The consultation document can be found at: <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/consultations/skills-strategy-northern-ireland-skills-10x-economy> and the closing date for responses is 19th August 2021.

As there will be no Committee meeting in August 2021, it is recommended that delegated authority be granted to the Chief Executive to approve the response and submit to DfE before the deadline of 19th August 2021.

3.5

4C Ur Future Live Careers Event

4C UR Future aims to run a series of regional “live” events in June 2022 across the eleven Council areas to enable approx. 7,500 13-year-olds gain insights into their future career opportunities before they make their GCSE choices, and to provide career inspiration based on each young person’s natural attributes and interests. Interactive games and work-based simulations will draw out and identify key strengths with a view to helping make better informed subject choices. Each pupil will receive a profile highlighting their strengths identified on the day and will be connected to suitable coaching and development activities following the event.

As reported at the Development Committee meeting in June 2021, 4C UR Future have identified the Mid Ulster Sports Arena, Cookstown as the most suitable venue in Mid Ulster. The event capacity is up to 750 pupils and caters for up to 7 schools in Mid Ulster. Based on an analysis of post primary school free school meals (*Source: Dept. for Education*) officers proposed to engage with the undernoted schools to determine their interest in participating in this pilot initiative. *Please note that Cookstown High School was added to ensure an even representation of post primary schools across the district:-

1. St. Joseph’s College, Coalisland
2. St. Patrick’s College, Dungannon
3. Integrated College, Dungannon
4. Sperrin Integrated College, Magherafelt
5. Magherafelt High School
6. Holy Trinity College, Cookstown
7. Cookstown High School*

Following consideration by Committee Members in June 2021, it was resolved that officers go back to 4C Ur Future to renegotiate the best package that can be offered for this year and next year to include all post primary schools in Mid Ulster, with an update being brought back to the July 2021 Committee meeting.

Officers have since held several meetings with the 4C Ur Future organisers to consider all possible options to increase participation to all post primary schools in Mid Ulster. This included exploring the provision of additional funding to allow 4C Ur Future to deliver more events in Mid Ulster. However, 4C UR Future have advised that the proposed 11 pilot events in June **2022** (1 in each Council area) are already “at-scale”, targeting 7,500 young people and there is no scope at this juncture to add additional events in 2022.

It is however, their ambition to scale the 4C Ur Future Live Careers Event into an annual event capable of reaching every Year 9 pupil in NI in **2023**. However, this will be subject to successfully delivering the pilot events in June 2022, widening their volunteer base and securing additional investment. It is important to note that 200 volunteers are required to deliver each of the Live events.

Officers also requested that the organisers allow flexibility in pupil numbers, and instead of insisting that the 750 pupils participate only from 7 schools, that this be widened to allow 750 pupils to attend from all post primary schools in Mid Ulster, by offering each of them 30-40 pupil places. 4C Ur Future advised that this was not possible either as they want to ensure that multiple quality experiences can be delivered successfully to entire year groups of pupils in each of 7 schools during this “pilot phase”.

In these recent discussions with 4C UR Future staff, it also emerged that additional financial support from Council would be required, should Council choose to host a Live event in June 2022. A budget of £6,500 is required (instead of £3,500) to cover the costs of hosting the event, including venue hire for 2 days, supplying lunch for the 200 volunteers and the provision of a PA System, tables, chairs and partitions.

Our lengthy discussions have now concluded with the event organisers. They have advised officers they are unable to renegotiate the original pilot proposal issued to Council to hold a 4C Ur Future Live Careers Event in June 2022. As highlighted above, they still want to recruit 7 post primary schools to attract 750 year 9 pupils in Mid Ulster in June 2022, in order to remain consistent with the approach they are taking in all the other 10 district council areas in the pilot year. As noted earlier, in June 2023, they are willing to extend the project to include all year 9 pupils in post primary schools in Mid Ulster (and indeed NI), subject to funding.

Based on this most recent update, Members are asked to consider choosing one of the following options;

Option 1 –

- (a) To fund the 4C Ur Future Pilot Event in Mid Ulster in June 2022 at a cost of £6,500 (excl Vat), allowing up to 750 pupils to participate from 7 post primary schools in Mid Ulster and ask the Organisers to select the schools.
- (b) In so doing, then formally accept and sign the Partnership Agreement on Appendix 1 for the June 2022 event, subject to legal team’s review.
- (c) Then in future, in June 2023, Council could consider funding a larger 4C Ur Future Careers Event to include year 9 pupils from all post primary schools in Mid Ulster.

Option 2 –

3.6	<p>(a) Not to fund the 4C Ur Future Event in Mid Ulster in June 2022, but reconsider funding the event in June 2023, when year 9 pupils from all post primary schools in Mid Ulster be invited to participate.</p> <p>Request for Ministerial meeting to discuss the new Rural Affairs Policy Framework Further to the letter issued from the former Council Chair seeking a meeting with Minister Poots (Appendix 2) to discuss the new Rural Affairs Policy Framework, a reply has been received from the Minister (Appendix 3).</p> <p>The Minister has signposted Council to meet with one of his officials, Mr Gareth Evans, referring in the letter to an earlier meeting which took place on 2nd June 2021 between DAERA officials and Council officers during which a discussion on the Rural Affairs Policy Framework took place.</p> <p>Notwithstanding the discussions between DAERA officials and Council officers, in light of the concerns raised by Members of the Development Committee in May 2021 on this matter, it may be considered prudent to pursue a strategic level meeting at Ministerial level given the importance of the Rural Policy Framework to the continued growth of Mid Ulster’s rural economy.</p>
	<p>Other Considerations</p>
4.1	<p>Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications</p> <p>Financial:</p> <p>Mid Ulster Business Marketing Grant Scheme Total Budget : £250,000 £150,000 - Economic Development budget (agreed Dev. Committee – May 2021) Further £100,000 from Council (agreed at Council Meeting – May 2021)</p> <p>Mid Ulster Gift Card Programme £57,000 has been allocated from Economic Development budget.</p> <p>DfC Revitalisation Scheme 2021/2022 – Coalisland Town Centre Based on a successful application to DfC, 100% funding is likely to be provided from DfC, totalling £250,000. No Council match funding is needed.</p> <p>4C Ur Future Live Careers Event A budget of up to £6,500 would be needed from Economic Development towards the June 2022 event.</p> <p>Human:</p> <p>Mid Ulster Marketing Grant Scheme Officers time</p> <p>Mid Ulster Gift Card Programme Officers time</p>

	<p>DfC Revitalisation Scheme 2021/2022 – Coalisland Town Centre Officers time</p> <hr/> <p>Risk Management: Mid Ulster Business Marketing Grant Scheme Urgency of delivery to meet business needs following reopening from Covid 19.</p> <p>Mid Ulster Gift Card Programme Urgency for delivery to support businesses across the District following reopening from Covid 19.</p> <p>DfC Revitalisation Scheme 2021/2022 – Coalisland Town Centre Urgency of delivery to meet funding deadlines.</p>
<p>4.2</p>	<p>Screening & Impact Assessments</p> <hr/> <p>Equality & Good Relations Implications:</p> <p>Mid Ulster Business Marketing Grant Scheme Equality Screening has been completed.</p> <p>Mid Ulster Gift Card Programme Equality Screening has been completed.</p> <p>DfC Revitalisation Scheme 2021/2022 – Coalisland Town Centre Equality Screening to be completed.</p> <hr/> <p>Rural Needs Implications:</p> <p>Mid Ulster Business Marketing Grant Scheme Rural Needs has been completed.</p> <p>Mid Ulster Gift Card Programme Rural Needs has been completed</p> <p>DfC Revitalisation Scheme 2021/2022 – Coalisland Town Centre Rural Needs to be completed.</p>
<p>5.0</p>	<p>Recommendation(s)</p>
<p>5.1</p>	<p>It is recommended that Members;</p> <p>Mid Ulster Business Marketing Grant Scheme Approve that the Chief Executive be awarded delegated authority to sign and issue letters of offer to businesses, up to a maximum of £300 per company, following the completion of eligibility checks on business applications received. This will allow funds to be disseminated to businesses at the earliest opportunity. A</p>

list of approved projects will be brought to Committee for noting in September 2021.

5.2 Mid Ulster Gift Card Programme

Approve that the Chief Executive be awarded delegated authority to appoint the successful tenderer following the procurement exercise which will allow work to commence over the summer months. A full report on the tender process will be brought to Committee in September 2021 to update Members.

5.3 DfC Revitalisation Scheme 2021/2022 – Coalisland Town Centre

(i) **Approve** an application be submitted to DfC for Revitalisation Funding in 2021/2022 for the following schemes;

- Festive Lighting
- Developing a Town Brand and Purchase of Branded Merchandise
- Lineside Environmental Improvement Scheme

(ii) **Approve** that delegated authority be granted to the Chief Executive to accept a Letter of Offer from Department of Communities (DfC) for the Revitalisation Project, subject to Council's application being approved.

(iii) **Approve** that the appropriate tender/quotation exercises be commenced, upon receipt of a letter of offer from DfC, to enable works to commence as early as possible as the schemes need to be completed by March 2022.

A full report on the tender process will be brought to a future Committee Meeting to update Members.

5.4 Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland - Consultation

Approve delegated authority be granted to the Chief Executive to approve Council's Skills Strategy consultation response and submit the response to DfE by 19th August 2021. The draft consultation response will be furnished to Members information at the September 2021 Committee Meeting.

5.5 4C Ur Future Live Careers Event

Note update and progress by choosing Option 1 or Option 2 in the report.

5.6 Request for Ministerial meeting to discuss the new Rural Affairs Policy Framework

That a further request be issued to the DAERA Minister, Mr Poots, acknowledging the update meeting held between DAERA officials and Council staff, but seeking a further strategic level meeting with the Minister and a member delegation from Council to discuss the Rural Affairs Policy Framework, given its importance to Mid Ulster's rural economy.

6.0	Documents Attached & References
	Appendix 1 - Partnership Agreement 4C Ur Future Appendix 2 – MUDC Request to Meet Minister Poots, DAERA – 2.6.21 Appendix 3 – Response from Minister Poots, DAERA – 18.6.21