

Minutes of Special Meeting of the Development Committee of Mid Ulster District Council held on Tuesday 21 February 2017 in the Council Offices, Burn Road, Cookstown

Members Present	Councillor Molloy, Chair Councillors Burton (7.06 pm), Clarke (7.09 pm), Cuddy (7.04 pm), Doris, Elattar, Forde, McAleer, T Quinn, G Shiels, Wilson
Officers in Attendance	Mr McCreesh, Director of Business and Communities Mrs Gallagher, Project Officer Mrs Gilmour, Monitoring Officer Mrs McCullagh, Regeneration Manager Ms McKeown, Head of Economic Development Ms McIntyre, Programmes and Policy Officer Miss Thompson, Committee Services Officer
Others in Attendance	Agenda Item 4 – Cookstown Enterprise Centre Jim Eastwood Andrea McGuckin Agenda Item 5 – Global Education (NI) Ltd Janis Simpson-Mahoney Simon Eakin Agenda Item 6 – We are Digital Daryl Conway Niamh Taylor Boyle Agenda Item 7 – Workplace Enterprises Ltd Michelle Clarke Enda Daly

The meeting commenced at 7.01 pm.

SD001/17 Apologies

Councillor J Shiels.

SD002/17 Declaration of Interests

The Chair reminded members of their responsibility with regard to declarations of interest.

SD003/17 Chair's Business

None.

Deputations

SD004/17 Business Development Programme – Cookstown Enterprise Centre

Councillor Wilson declared an interest in this item.

Mr Eastwood and Ms McGuckin provided a powerpoint presentation in relation to the results achieved by the Business Development Programme which had been delivered by Cookstown Enterprise Centre and Associates. This had been commissioned by Mid Ulster District Council in April 2016 and was designed to increase the sustainability and competitiveness of 20 micro/SME's in the Mid Ulster Council area by December 2016 by providing one to one tailored mentoring assistance in 6 key business areas including: business planning, financial management, human resource management, marketing, quality standards and effective pricing. The presentation highlighted the key achievements of the programme by its completion in December 2016 against the targets set by the Council.

All the Programme targets were either achieved or exceeded, and the delivery agents highlighted the key achievements including 11 new jobs created, against a target of 4, and 80% of businesses have achieved a 5% (or more) increase in turnover (against a target of 5%) to the value of £816,781 (Dec 16) with a further £138,496 generated by those businesses that had an increase in turnover just under 5%; this results in a collective increase of £955,277.

The total economic impact achieved was therefore £1,175,757 equating to an economic return on investment of 43:1. Mr Eastwood also advised that the programme's economic impact was likely to increase as other participating businesses would potentially require more staff in the forthcoming months.

Mr Eastwood stated that Cookstown Enterprise Centre were delighted to have been part of this programme and with its performance. Feedback in relation to the programme included –

- More flexibility in future programmes
- More time needed for evaluation of programme impact
- More mentoring time

Mr Eastwood also took the opportunity to thank Council Officers for their assistance with the programme.

Councillor Cuddy entered the meeting at 7.04 pm, Councillor Burton entered the meeting at 7.06 pm and Councillor Clarke entered the meeting at 7.09 pm during the above presentation.

Councillor McAleer asked how businesses would have been made aware of this programme.

Mr Eastwood advised that the Council had required delivery agents to advertise the programme widely using numerous channels including newspapers, social media,

websites, e-shots to Council's and enterprise agencies' databases and business advisors.

In response to Councillor Forde's question regarding training for bookkeepers Ms McGuckin advised that financial management was one of the support areas of the programme and that mentoring in relation to cash flow of a business is important. It was advised that if this type of support was requested then advice could be given.

Mr Eastwood felt it was important for businesses to be able to access support when it was required and noted that there had been 85 expressions of interest shown in the programme with only 27 applications being returned and felt that the short timeframe for support was a big reason for this difference.

Ms McGuckin also stated that businesses can sometimes be put off by forms and felt that support for form filling would be helpful.

The Chair, Councillor Molloy asked if any feedback had been sought from the businesses who had shown an interest but did not return an application.

Mr Eastwood advised that Cookstown Enterprise Centre had not sought feedback but that he felt micro businesses did not have time for form filling and that he believed this was one of the barriers to applications being submitted.

Councillor Burton declared an interest in this item.

Councillor Burton felt that the fact that 85 businesses had expressed an interest showed there was a need for the programme. The Councillor also felt that some small businesses did not have time to fill in forms whilst trying to run a businesses and felt there were lessons Council could take from this.

Mr Eastwood advised that it was easy to provide support to businesses when they had applied to the programme but the main difficulty was getting them to that stage. Mr Eastwood advised that the philosophy of Cookstown Enterprise Centre over its 25 years was to remove as many barriers as possible to those who wanted to become self-employed.

Councillor Wilson left the meeting at 7.27 pm.

In response to Councillor Clarke's question Mr Eastwood advised that he believed there was a gap in the market to provide financial mentoring.

The Chair, Councillor Molloy stated that the feedback was important to Council so that this could be taken into account when developing future initiatives.

Councillor McAleer asked that Councillors also be advised of future programmes so that they can make businesses aware.

Mr Eastwood advised he would encourage any further advertisement of programmes.

In response to Councillor G Shiels' question regarding failure rate of businesses Mr Eastwood advised that businesses in Mid Ulster enjoy a good level of support and have a better chance of succeeding.

Mr Eastwood and Ms McGuckin withdrew from the meeting at 7.32 pm.

SD005/17 Tender Programme – Global Education (NI) Ltd

Mrs Simpson Mahoney provided a powerpoint presentation in relation to the results achieved by the Mid Ulster Tender Programme which had been delivered by Global Education (NI) Ltd. This had been commissioned by Mid Ulster District Council in April 2016 and was designed to increase the tendering capacity of 20 micro/SME's in the Mid Ulster Council area by December 2016 by providing one to one tailored mentoring support.

The presentation highlighted the key achievements of the programme at its completion in December 2016 against the targets set by the Council.

All the Programme targets were either achieved or exceeded, and Mrs Simpson Mahoney highlighted the key achievements including 11 tenders won to the value of £2,044,500 (against Council's target of £800,000) stimulating the creation of 17.5 new jobs (against a target of 10), valued at £396,000, resulting in a total economic impact of £2,440,500 equating to a total economic return on investment of 90:1.

Ms Simpson-Mahoney also noted that some businesses were also waiting for the outcome of 11 tenders submitted to the value of £2,365,000 which had the potential to stimulate further job creation and could potentially result in a final return on investment for the Programme of 162:1.

Ms Simpson-Mahoney highlighted that three of the targets had been well exceeded and was very proud of this. Following on from earlier conversation, it was advised that 46 expressions of interest had been shown whilst 26 applications had been returned. Ms Simpson-Mahoney advised that application clinics had been held for this programme however there was not a big uptake for this and felt there can sometimes be a nervousness from businesses to commit to such programmes.

The Chair, Councillor Molloy stated that Ms Simpson-Mahoney could, quite rightly, be proud of the figures presented.

Councillor McAleer asked if businesses who were on the programme and had experienced mentoring to win new work would have come back a second time for support.

Ms Simpson-Mahoney advised that a couple of the businesses did come back a second time for support to win further tenders during the course of the programme.

In response to question from Director of Business and Communities, Ms Simpson-Mahoney advised of several businesses from different sectors who were involved with the programme.

Councillor Cuddy asked what the value of the largest tender won was.

Ms Simpson-Mahoney advised that one business won a tender to the value of almost one million.

The Chair, Councillor Molloy felt it was important for businesses to understand the tendering process and develop their capabilities as these procedures continue to become more scrutinised.

Ms Simpson-Mahoney was thanked for her presentation following which she withdrew from the meeting at 7.52 pm.

SD006/17 Online Programme – We Are Digital

Mr Conway provided a powerpoint presentation in relation to the results achieved by the Mid Ulster Online Programme which had been delivered by We Are Digital. This had been commissioned by Mid Ulster District Council in April 2016 and was designed to increase the online presence of 20 micro/SME's in the Mid Ulster Council area by December 2016 by providing one to one tailored mentoring.

The presentation highlighted the key achievements of the programme at its completion in December 2016 against the targets set by the Council.

Mr Conway advised that the Programme sought to develop a 'culture of digital' whereby local businesses could look beyond the Mid Ulster District to grow and develop their businesses by competing online.

All the Programme targets were either achieved or exceeded, and Mr Conway highlighted the key achievements including the creation of 9 new jobs valued at £156,000 (against Council's target of 3), and achieving an average increase of 17% in turnover valued at £526,000 (against a target of 5%).

These results equated to a total economic impact of £682,000 and return on investment of 31:1. Mr Conway also noted that participating businesses had the potential to create 10 additional jobs as a result of support provided by the Programme, by June 2018, which would potentially increase the return on investment to 40:1.

Ms Taylor also provided examples of the type and range of support provided to some businesses on the programme and the impact this achieved. .

Councillor McAleer spoke in relation to the fast turnover of the digital world and asked if businesses needed to continue their learning.

Mr Conway stated that training provided now can be outdated within six months and advised that businesses do need to continue their learning. Mr Conway advised that businesses taking part in the programme had been signposted to upcoming events being delivered and online resources.

Councillor Cuddy stated that it was great to see a past Dungannon Enterprise Centre employee doing well and now in their own business and thanked Mr Conway for his presentation and the important work being done.

Mr Conway and Ms Taylor were thanked for their presentation following which they withdrew from the meeting at 8.09 pm.

Councillor Cuddy left the meeting at 8.09 pm.

SD007/17 Social Enterprise Programme – Workplace Enterprises Ltd

Mr Day and Ms Clarke provided a powerpoint presentation in relation to the results achieved by the Mid Ulster Social Enterprise Programme which had been delivered by Workspace Enterprises Ltd. This had been commissioned by Mid Ulster District Council in April 2016 and was designed to provide a range of support for social enterprises at different stages of their development by December 2016 by providing one to one tailored support.

The presentation highlighted the key achievements of the programme at its completion in December 2016 against the targets set by the Council.

All the Programme targets were either achieved or exceeded, and Mr Daly highlighted the key achievements including the creation of 6 new jobs valued at £115,000 (against Council's target of 3), and achieving leverage of funding of £51,250 (against a target of £50,000).

These results equated to a total economic impact of £166,250 and a return on investment of 6:1. Mr Day also noted that, as direct result of the support provided, some enterprises had the potential to create 4 further part time jobs (to a value of £40,000) and lever funding of £700,000 by March 2018, which would increase the return on investment to 28:1.

Mr Daly stated that whilst the return on investment may not be as high as the other programmes presented tonight it was important for Members to realise the social impact the programme had made not just in terms of monetary value. Mr Daly stated that Mid Ulster District Council was one of the first Councils in Northern Ireland to deliver a Social Enterprise Programme and thanked Council Officers for their help.

In response to Councillor McAleer's question regarding signposting Ms Clarke advised that groups were provided with several avenues for further support and many were still contacting Workspace for advice and guidance.

The Chair, Councillor Molloy stated that whilst the figures presented may not be as dramatic as those presented throughout the evening, Members understood that social impact was difficult to quantify and that the benefits to the community were immeasurable.

Councillor Clarke stated that there were numerous groups in the District who were delivering for the community and expressed the importance of, and need for, a social enterprise programme to help such groups evolve for the future.

The Chair, Councillor Molloy stated that the committee recognised the importance of all the programmes presented tonight and the amount of effort put in by delivery agents and Council Officers. Councillor Molloy advised that Council will take on board the results of the programmes and comments made for future programmes.

The Director of Business and Communities stated that Mid Ulster District Council was the first Council to produce an Economic Development Strategy which identified key areas for growth. The Director advised that tonight was the result of hard work which could be built upon in future years. The Director thanked all those involved with the delivery of the programmes.

SD008/17 Duration of Meeting

The meeting was called for 7 pm and concluded at 8.26 pm.

CHAIR _____

DATE _____