

Report on	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Economic Recovery: Sub-Regional Development Funding from Invest NI 2. Renewal of Membership with NI Chamber of Commerce 2022 3. Mid Ulster Gift Card 4. Tourism Promotional Videos & Imagery 5. Hospital Roundabout, Dungannon 6. Town Centre Cleansing 7. Mid Ulster Business WhatsApp Platform 8. Cookstown Saturday Market
Date of Meeting	8 December 2021
Reporting Officer	Assistant Director of Economy, Tourism & Strategic Programmes

Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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>Economic Recovery: Sub-Regional Development Funding from Invest NI A new call has opened from Invest NI regarding an Economic Recovery: Sub-Regional Development Funding stream. Invest NI has now secured funds to support research to be undertaken by Councils, for the economic benefit of their sub-region.</p>
2.2	<p>Renewal of Membership with NI Chamber of Commerce 2022 The NI Chamber of Commerce and Industry has a business network with a membership circ. 1,200 businesses representing over 100,000 employees. Mid Ulster District Council has been a member for the last five years.</p>
2.3	<p>Mid Ulster Gift Card The new Mid Ulster Gift Card was officially launched by the Council Chairman on Monday 8 November 2021. The Gift Card aims to lock-in additional money for participating businesses in the District, encourage local spend and increase footfall in our local towns and villages. All businesses across Mid Ulster are</p>

	<p>eligible to join the scheme free of charge. The public can only redeem their Gift Cards in participating businesses who have joined the scheme.</p>
2.4	<p>Tourism Promotional Videos & Imagery Mid Ulster District Council wishes to develop a bank of tourism video materials and still photography focusing on the district's tourism experiences and walking product which can be used to target the domestic, national and international visitors.</p>
2.5	<p>Hospital Roundabout, Dungannon The hospital roundabout in Dungannon is located on the A29, a key arterial route. The roundabout is in need of a refresh for next spring/summer. The current structures on the roundabout have been in place for some time and requires works to help elevate it to a similar quality to the Cookstown and Magherafelt roundabouts.</p>
2.6	<p>Town Centre Cleansing It has been several years since the last time Council employed the services of a company to power wash the paving and remove the chewing gum, to visually enhance the streetscape of our town centres.</p>
2.7	<p>Mid Ulster Business WhatsApp Platform Many local businesses are struggling to adapt and keep abreast of current information in this ever increasing digital world and the Covid19 pandemic has only served to accelerate this further. The businesses in our towns and villages are witnessing a further decline in footfall, so in a bid to support local traders Council officers wish to explore opportunities to create an instantaneous messaging service between Council and our business base via an online platform through the development of a "Business Whats App Online Service" which can provide a number of services.</p>
2.8	<p>Cookstown Saturday Market For 400 years now the weekly Saturday market has graced Cookstown town centre. Mid Ulster District Council purchased the Market Rights in April 2021, with the aspiration to revitalise and reinvigorate the market.</p>
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>Economic Recovery: Sub-Regional Development Funding from Invest NI This funding opportunity has been secured by Invest NI and focuses on research to identify possible future interventions, either collaboratively across Councils or at an individual Council level, which could be implemented from 2022-26 (subject to budget availability) to ensure economic recovery is inclusive and regionally balanced.</p> <p>The window of opportunity to avail of the funding was extremely short with the funding call opening on 3rd November and closing on 19th November 2021, hence providing insufficient time to bring a report to Committee to advise of potential projects worthy of submission.</p>

The funding guidance advises that all funding must be spent by 28 February 2022, with the funds to be draw-down by 31 March 2022. Invest NI has advised that £20,000 is likely to be the level of funding provided towards each successful project.

Mid Ulster Council submitted **one bid** to develop a 'Mid Ulster Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (2022-2026)' as detailed at '*Point a*' below, and are also **partners to four further collaborative bids** as detailed at '*Point b*' below.

(a) Mid Ulster Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (2022-2026) Bid

Mid Ulster District Council submitted a bid to develop a Mid Ulster Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (2022-2026) which seeks to baseline Mid Ulster's current economic situation and prepare a detailed socio-economic profile of the area taking into account the impact of Covid19 and EU Exit. It will also focus on carrying out an analysis of the district's key business sectors, and seeks to provide recommendations for a range of actions to support recovery and growth. If Council is awarded funding, there is a very tight timeframe to complete the work, hence the request to procure an organisation 'at risk'. The organisation would only be appointed if Council receives a funding offer from Invest NI. Delegated authority is also requested for the Chief Executive to sign and accept the letter of offer from Invest NI, if funding is awarded to this initiative, as this will allow work to commence with immediate effect.

(b) Collaborative Funding Bids

(i) Review of Agri-Food Producers and Markets

(bid led by Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council on behalf of the three Mid South West Councils).

This bid seeks to undertake sub regional research to review the agri - food sector to help shape and improve engagement and collaboration within the sector between producers and markets (ie, hospitality/tourism and retail sectors), and develop suitable supply chain linkages. It will also map the strategic funders for the agri-food sector to assist with resource requirements for Councils. Indicative bid value: £25,000.

(ii) Scoping New and Emerging Funding Opportunities

(bid led by Fermanagh and Omagh Council on behalf of the three Mid South West Councils)

The objective of this proposed bid is to further develop the opportunities for the MSW Region to identify and avail of funding streams aligned to the key priorities of the MSW Regional Economic Strategy. The research will take the form of a scoping study to identify the new funding landscape that is emerging following EU Exit and identify/assess emerging funding opportunities and the impact of loss of EU funding on our region/economy. The context of the research will be provided through the key priorities outlined in the Mid South West (MSW) Regional Economic Strategy, with findings tailored to the pre-identified

key objectives of MSW partners, within the strategy. Indicative bid value: £25,000

(iii) Revised Business Start-up Approach – Business Case Development and Resourcing Strategy
(bid led by Belfast City Council on behalf of the 11 Councils)

A study is currently underway to assess the financial, commissioning and operational implications of a new approach to delivering on Councils' statutory remit to support business start-up. Based on the outcomes of the business start research work being led by Belfast City Council (due Dec 2021), and subject to in-principle agreement across Councils and partners on the proposed methodology, a detailed business case and delivery plan is needed for the new model of working to consider, as a minimum, the management and governance arrangements, the resourcing strategy, the management of risk and review of commissioning options to ensure value for money. Indicative bid value: £20,000.

(iv) Place-based approaches to supporting economic development
(bid led by Derry City and Strabane District Council on behalf of the 11 Councils).

Government policy is increasingly recognising the important role of place-based approaches in supporting inclusive economic growth. Councils' direct statutory remit in the field of economic growth and regeneration is relatively limited in NI at present. However, they have a critical convening role to play through their community planning remit. This presents an opportunity to drive forward coherent place-based approaches that recognise the uniqueness of locations while developing flexible interventions to ensure alignment with regional and national policy interventions. This bid focuses on carrying out scoping research to help Councils and relevant government departments explore opportunities for creating a more effective approach to shaping and resourcing delivery of key economic development functions, while taking account of all relevant statutory and legislative obligations. Indicative bid value: £20,000.

Members will be updated on the progress of these bids at subsequent meetings.

3.2

Renewal of Membership with NI Chamber of Commerce 2022

Membership renewal to the NI Chamber of Commerce (refer to Appendix 1) is now due for the period January 2022 – December 2022 at a cost of £3,000 (plus vat). The benefits to Council of membership are:

- Being part of a global network, links to UK chamber and its business membership of circa 1,200 members.
- Actively represents members interests at the highest political levels
- Provides a quarterly magazine of current affairs

- Monthly newsletter update on what is happening in business in NI.
- Organises monthly business events throughout NI
- Hosting NI Chamber events in Mid Ulster – The most recent networking event was held on Hill Of The O'Neill on 8 November 2021 as part of Mid Ulster Enterprise Week, which attracted over 100 business representatives.

3.3

Mid Ulster Gift Card

Mid Ulster District Council wishes to continue our support to our local community by making available up to £5,000 of Mid Ulster Gift Cards available. The gift cards are redeemable in over 120 registered businesses across Mid Ulster which have joined the scheme and more companies continue to register every week. Gift Cards can be redeemed at any time throughout the year. Council is also encouraging our large employers to purchase Gift Cards this Christmas for their employees (instead of other gifts) and in so doing, support our local traders.

3.4

Tourism Promotional Videos & Imagery

These promotional tourism videos and imagery will be used in marketing campaigns during the forthcoming COVID-19 recovery phase but will offer flexibility to ensure that they can be used in the longer-term and offer real value for money and a clear return on investment.

The videos will enhance the tourism product in the Mid Ulster region as a must see visitor experience destination. This will be achieved using short, creative, natural and innovative clips. The aim of the video is to portray the accessible journey to Mid Ulster and the emotional, unique experience while falling in line with the Tourism NI 'Embrace the Giant Spirit' campaign. It will also enable the Council to share quality content with Tourism Ireland and Tourism NI to engage with and reach an audience beyond the Council's platforms. Approval is sought to invest up to £20,000 from Council's Economic Development budget towards this much needed initiative.

3.5

Hospital Roundabout, Dungannon

The Mid Ulster Towns Covid19 Recovery Plan (June 2020), identified the need for new planting/landscaping in our key towns. The Hospital Roundabout in Dungannon is situated at a key Gateway on the A29 and requires a facelift. Due to budget constraints in recent years it has been difficult to find funding to improve the visual appearance of the roundabout. Through interdepartmental working, the Economic Development and Technical Teams have come together to progress the first phase of the initiative which requires removal of the butterflies and some landscaping works.

It is anticipated the landscaping works can be progressed this financial year, and the economic development team seek approval to allocate a budget in the region of £20,000 to the Technical Team in 2021/22 to allow Phase 1 works to progress, subject to approval from Members.

3.6

Town Centre Cleansing

Within the Mid Ulster Towns Covid19 Recovery Plan (June 2020), it identified the need for additional Cleansing within our town centres. As our high streets emerge from the pandemic, Council continue to undertake a rigorous cleansing programme within our towns. This will visually enrich the look and feel of our town centres, making them more inviting spaces to visit. This will create civic pride and develop public confidence, encouraging the public to return to our high streets and support their local traders. The estimated budget to cleanse the streets of our 5 largest town centres is in the region of £15,000 and can be funded from the existing economic development budget.

3.7

Mid Ulster Business WhatsApp Platform

The WhatsApp Business Platform is in many ways like the Public WhatsApp messaging service that everyone is familiar with which provides instantaneous messaging, but has additional functionality.

The profile page in WhatsApp Business is significantly upgraded compared to the regular WhatsApp where you only have a cover photo, name and description. WhatsApp Business is specifically tailored to suit small and medium size businesses.

Council officers are keen to progress a new Mid Ulster WhatsApp for Business Platform and seek approval to obtain competitive quotations to employ the services of a suitable organisation to carry out a comprehensive scoping study at the outset of the assignment to determine the core What's App Business functions needed to fulfil requirements whilst adhering to GDPR guidelines. The scoping study will essentially inform how the App will be built and established in year 1. It is recommended there is an option to extend the assignment for up to another 2 years (1+1) to allow all the data to be checked and updated twice per annum and thus ensure the App is kept fresh and meets business needs.

It is recommended an economic development budget in the region of £25,000 is committed to this project over a 3 year period.

3.8

Cookstown Saturday Market

As Mid Ulster District Council now owns the Market Rights in Cookstown, it is an opportune time to take stock of the current Saturday Market and consider how it can be enhanced and developed.

Approval is sought from Members to procure the services of an experienced organisation to review, consult and develop a comprehensive and costed Market Action Plan to revitalize and reinvigorate Cookstown's Saturday Market, with funding in the region of £28,000 being assigned to this initiative from Council's economic development budget.

	<p>Other Considerations</p> <p>4.1 Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications</p> <p>Financial:</p> <p>Economic Recovery: Sub-Regional Development Funding from Invest NI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid Ulster Economic Growth and Recovery Plan 2022-26 Application has been submitted with a total cost of up to £25,000 (including expenses and excluding vat); the match funding contribution required from Council will depend on the Letter of Offer value from Invest NI – it is anticipated Council may have to commit in the region of £5,000 towards this initiative. • Four Collaborative Council Bids It is anticipated that Mid Ulster District Council will be required to make a match funding contribution to each of the following bids, details of match funding amounts will be provided once these are confirmed by the lead Council for each. The total match funding, if required, for all 4 initiatives is likely to be in the region of £10,000 and will be funded from within the existing economic development budget. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review of Agri-Food Producers and Markets (led by Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council on behalf of the three Mid South West Councils). Total indicative cost £25,000. ○ Scoping New and Emerging Funding Opportunities (led by Fermanagh and Omagh Council on behalf of the three Mid South West Councils). Total indicative cost £25,000. ○ Revised Business Start-up Approach – business case development and resourcing strategy (led by Belfast City Council on behalf of the 11 Councils). Total indicative cost £20,000. ○ Place-based approaches to supporting economic development (led by Derry City and Strabane District Council on behalf of the 11 Councils). Total indicative cost £20,000 <p>Renewal of Membership with NI Chamber of Commerce 2022 Commit £3,000 (plus Vat) from Council’s existing economic development budget towards Membership of NI Chamber of Commerce for 2022.</p> <p>Mid Ulster Gift Card Commit up to £5,000 towards purchase of Mid Ulster Gift Cards from Council’s existing Economic Development budget for distribution to local citizens.</p>
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	<p>Tourism Promotional Videos & Imagery Commit up to £20,000 towards tourism promotional videos/imagery from Council's existing Economic Development budget.</p> <p>Hospital Roundabout, Dungannon Commit in the region of £20,000 to the Technical Team to progress phase 1 works at the Hospital Roundabout, Dungannon from Council's existing Economic Development Budget.</p> <p>Town Centres Cleansing Commit in the region of £15,000 towards the cleansing of our 5 largest town centres from Council's existing Economic Development budget.</p> <p>Mid Ulster Business WhatsApp Platform Commit in the region of £25,000 towards the development of a new Mid Ulster Business WhatsApp Platform over a 3 year period from Council's Economic Development budget.</p> <p>Cookstown Saturday Market Commit in the region of £28,000 towards a Scoping Study and Comprehensive Action Plan to revitalize and reinvigorate Cookstown's Saturday Market.</p>
	<p>Human: Officer Time</p>
	<p>Risk Management:</p> <p>Economic Recovery: Sub-Regional Development Funding from Invest NI In order to complete the work within Invest NI's timescale (by 28 February 2022), on the Mid Ulster Economic Growth and Recovery Plan 2022-26, Council is seeking to procure an organisation on an 'at risk' basis, only proceeding to appoint the organisation upon acceptance of an Invest NI Letter of Offer. Whilst the level of funding from Invest NI has not yet been confirmed but in the event we are awarded funding, it is anticipated Council may have to contribute match funding, which may be in the region of £5,000.</p> <p>Similarly, as outlined previously, funding contributions from Mid Ulster Council may be required from each of the "Lead Councils" for the four Collaborative Council Bids. The level of partner funding will depend on the value of the Letters of Offer issued by Invest NI for these projects. If match funding is required, it is anticipated to be in the region of £10,000 for the 4 projects.</p>
<p>4.2</p>	<p>Screening & Impact Assessments</p> <p>Equality & Good Relations Implications:</p> <p>Rural Needs Implications:</p>

5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	<p>It is recommended that Members:</p> <p>5.1 Economic Recovery: Sub-Regional Development Funding from Invest NI</p> <p>5.1.1 Mid Ulster Economic Growth and Recovery Plan 2022-26</p> <p>(a) Retrospectively approve Council’s bid to Invest NI, totalling £25,000, to carry out a ‘Mid Ulster Economic Recovery and Growth Plan 2022-2026’ and commit funding in the region of £5,000 towards the initiative, if required, from Council’s economic development budget.</p> <p>(b) Approve Officers proceed to issue an Invitation to Quote on an ‘at risk’ basis to procure an organisation to undertake and complete all work by end of February / early March 2022 at a cost of up to £25,000 (including expenses and excluding vat).</p> <p>(c) In the event Council receives a funding offer from Invest NI, to approve delegated authority be awarded to the Chief Executive to accept the Letter of Offer and proceed immediately to appoint the successful organisation to carry out the assignment.</p> <p>5.1.2 Retrospectively approve Council’s participation in four additional Council Collaborative Bids, and approve a financial contribution towards these, in the region of £10,000, if required, from Council’s economic development budget. Final details on match funding requirements will be provided to Committee once confirmed by the Lead Councils, subject to the undernoted bids being successful in obtaining funding;</p> <p>(a) Review of Agri-Food Producers and Markets (led by Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council on behalf of the three Mid South West Councils).</p> <p>(b) Scoping New and Emerging Funding Opportunities (led by Fermanagh and Omagh District Council on behalf of the three Mid South West Councils).</p> <p>(c) Revised Business Start-up Approach – business case development and resourcing strategy (led by Belfast City Council on behalf of the 11 Councils).</p> <p>(d) Place-based approaches to supporting economic development (led by Derry City and Strabane District Council on behalf of the 11 Councils).</p>
5.2	<p>Renewal of Membership with NI Chamber of Commerce 2022</p> <p>Approve Corporate Membership of NI Chamber of Commerce costing £3,000+Vat for the period of 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2022.</p>

5.3	<p>Mid Ulster Gift Card Approve up to £5,000 from the economic development budget be used to purchase Mid Ulster Gift Cards this Christmas to benefit local citizens and distribute these through formal mechanisms with immediate effect.</p>
5.4	<p>Tourism Promotional Videos & Imagery Approve the development of a series of promotional tourism videos and imagery at a cost in the region of £20,000 (excluding Vat) from Council's existing economic development budget and permit officers to proceed immediately to seek competitive quotations for same.</p>
5.5	<p>Hospital Roundabout, Dungannon Approve that initial landscaping works be commissioned at the Hospital Roundabout, Dungannon to give this Gateway feature a much needed facelift. It is anticipated that this phase of the works will cost in the region of £20,000 and be funded from Council's economic development budget in 2021/22 to allow the Technical Services Team to initiate work on the scheme.</p>
5.6	<p>Town Centres Cleansing Approve to procure and appoint a suitable company to undertake a deep cleanse of our 5 largest town centres, at a cost of approx. £15,000 from the existing Economic Development budget.</p>
5.7	<p>Mid Ulster Business WhatsApp Platform Approve to procure and appoint a suitable company to undertake the development of a new Mid Ulster Business WhatsApp Platform, costing in the region of £25,000 over a 3 year period (1+1+1) with funding from Council's economic development budget.</p>
5.8	<p>Cookstown Saturday Market Approve to procure and appoint a suitable company to conduct a Scoping Study and Comprehensive Action Plan to revitalize Cookstown's Saturday Market, costing in the region of £28,000 to be funded from Council's economic development budget.</p>
6.0	<p>Documents Attached & References</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 – NI Chamber of Commerce Membership Invoice for 2022</p>