

Report on	Sustainable NI - Renewal of annual subscription for 2021/22
Date of Meeting	13 th April 2021
Reporting Officer	Raymond Lowry Head of Technical Services

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

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To inform members of Sustainable NI's request for continued Council support for 2021/22 in the form of £5000 annual subscription fee.
2.0	Background
2.1	Sustainable NI (SNI) is a non-profit organisation which works with local authorities and others to advance sustainable development in Northern Ireland since 1998. To date, Sustainable NI has been financially supported by local authorities with additional funding from other government organisations such as the NI Housing Executive, NI Assembly and DAERA. MUDC have supported the work of Sustainable NI with an annual subscription fee of £5,000 for the last three years (April 2017 to March 2020) as approved by full Council on 23 November 2017.
2.2.	Sustainable NI has developed longstanding experience of the sustainable development agenda in Northern Ireland and has continuously worked over the years to provide professional advice on all aspects of sustainable development with expertise on a wide variety of issues including climate change/low carbon economy, green procurement, renewable energy/energy efficiency, waste minimisation/tackling plastics, sustainable transport and sustainable food programmes.
2.3	SNI has published a range of associated support materials and tool kits for officers'/members' guidance and reference. In recent years Sustainable NI has been instrumental in providing expert advice to local authorities on the legislative requirements needed to comply with the NI Sustainable Development Duty and to keep abreast on new environmental/sustainability developments and policies within NI, UK/Ireland and the wider global contexts.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Nichola Hughes, Executive Director of Sustainable NI wrote to MUDC's Chief Executive on 20 February 2021 to ask Council for the continuation of support for their work through a renewed subscription of £5,000 for the 2021/22 year (see Appendix 1). Details of SNI's past activities were provided in their Annual Report for 2019/20 (see Appendix 2).

3.2	<p>The letter lists SNI achievements 2019/20, which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing a new All Party Group on Climate Action with MLA and Councillor representation • Supporting Climate NI to establish the Local Government Climate Action Network • Delivering an event on sustainable food and training on climate change and corporate social responsibility • Organising four meetings of the Sustainable Development Forum • Ongoing policy work with and on behalf of councils and the wider public sector, including preparing a response to the Department's Environment Strategy Consultation • Establishing a new Tackling Plastic NI working group to support officers in their work to reduce plastic pollution • Ongoing technical and strategic support to officers as and when required
3.3	<p>For 2021/22 SNI have advised of a number of proposed changes with regards to their subscription terms, most importantly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership: The SD Forum will be for paying SNI members only. An annual fee of £5k paid by everyone, and everyone will receive the same level of support. • Resources: Minutes, presentations and resources to be shared on the Knowledge Hub from now on. Only full SNI members will have access to this site. • Payment terms: Subscription to be paid in full by close of Q1. Members that haven't paid their subscription will not benefit from the service. • Covid-19 implications: SNI has not furloughed staff and have advised that they don't intend to and emphasised that it's now more important than ever to keep sustainability high on the agenda, to ensure a green economic recovery from the crisis. • SNI's work plan for 2021/22 continues to focus on policy development, standardised Sustainability monitoring and reporting methodologies, and providing forums for officers and elected members to exchange information and good practice.
3.4	<p>The following services will be provided by SNI in 2021/22 (see Appendix 3):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist members in complying with the Sustainable Development Statutory Duty through development of a sustainability policy, screening and reporting tool • Provide ideas, advice and support to members to help meet sustainability and climate targets in the region

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage and maintain the Sustainable Development Forum and Tackling Plastic NI Working Group, to promote and share good practice among councils and public sector organisations • Act as secretariat for the regional All Party Group on Climate Action to foster understanding, awareness and good practice at elected member level and influence climate change policy decisions • Support members in phasing out single use plastics from their estate and operations by disseminating research, information, policy guidance and best practice • Promote greater understanding and awareness of sustainability and climate issues in member organisations through the provision of presentations and workshops, as and when required
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	Financial: £5,000 financial contribution to SNI
	Human: SNI's provision of services will facilitate & improve Council officers' work on a range of sustainability issues (e.g. climate change, tackling plastic) and save officers' time to obtain the relevant information.
	Risk Management: A withdrawal from membership to SNI Forum and joint sustainability initiatives could lead to MUDC being less well informed on sustainability agenda in NI and being excluded from publicity/awareness campaigns in conjunction with joint projects and network wide activities.
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications:
	Rural Needs Implications:
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	It is recommended that members give consideration to the continued support of Sustainable NI and make available a contribution of £5,000 for the subscription for the 2021/22 financial year.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
6.1	Appendix 1: Sustainable NI to CEO, dated 26 February 2021
6.2	Appendix 2: Sustainable NI Annual Report 2019-2020
6.3	Appendix 3: Sustainable NI membership support 2021-2022