

<b>Report on</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Invest NI Letter of Offer - Gearing for Growth Programme</li> <li>2) Invest NI Letter of Offer - Transform Programme</li> <li>3) Renewal of Membership with NI Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>4) Celebration of Mid Ulster's New Business Starts</li> <li>5) Mid Ulster Village Spruce Up Scheme- Final Evaluation Report on Phase 2</li> <li>6) Magherafelt Town Centre Wi-Fi</li> <li>7) Brexit Working Group Terms of Reference</li> <li>8) Broadband Working Group Minutes</li> <li>9) Strategic Review of Council's Economic Development Online Services to Businesses</li> <li>10) Department of Finance re Rates Relief for Town Centre Businesses</li> <li>11) Department for Infrastructure re Sewerage Treatment Works</li> <li>12) Retail NI, Manufacturing NI and Hospitality Ulster - 'A New Deal for Northern Ireland'</li> <li>13) City/Growth Deals</li> </ol>
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	14 February 2019
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	Fiona McKeown, Head of Economic Development

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	To provide Members with an update on key activities as detailed below.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	<p><b>Invest NI Letter of Offer: Gearing for Growth Programme</b></p> <p>In May 2018, Members approved the submission of 4 applications from Council to the ERDF Investment for Growth and Jobs Programme for the delivery of 4 business support programmes (2018-22). This included a 'Gearing for Growth Programme', at a total cost of up to £407,100 with potential grant aid of 80%.</p> <p>The Gearing for Growth Programme seeks to deliver a range of supports in key business areas to stimulate the growth of 250 micro and small businesses which could demonstrate the capacity for job creation. The application sought to contribute towards the creation of 375 jobs by the completion of the Programme in December 2022. A Seminar was also included as part of the Programme and will be available to all micro and small businesses across Mid Ulster.</p>

2.2	<p><b>Invest NI Letter of Offer: Transform Programme</b></p> <p>In May 2018, Members approved the submission of 4 applications from Council to the ERDF Investment for Growth and Jobs Programme for the delivery of 4 business support programmes (2018-2022). This included a 'Transform Programme', at a total cost of up to £264,200 with potential grant aid of 80%.</p> <p>The Transform Programme application sought to build the capacity of 130 micro and small businesses by December 2022 through the provision of a detailed Business Review and up to 5 days' support and contribute to the creation of 195 jobs. A Seminar was included as part of the Programme and will be available to all micro and small businesses across Mid Ulster.</p>
2.3	<p><b>Renewal of Membership with Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce</b></p> <p>The Northern Ireland 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 two years.</p>
2.4	<p><b>Celebration of Mid Ulster Business Starts</b></p> <p>Officers, in conjunction with local enterprise partners, are organising an event on Tuesday 19 March 2019 which will provide a unique opportunity for Mid Ulster's new business starts who received assistance from the 'Go for It' Programme to showcase their products / services, and also to profile the support on offer from the 'Go for It' Programme to those considering self-employment.</p>
2.5	<p><b>Mid Ulster Village Spruce Up Scheme - Final Evaluation Report on Phase 2</b></p> <p>In March 2018, Council approval was granted to deliver Phase 2 (the reserve list) of Mid Ulster Village Spruce Up Scheme. The scheme offered businesses/commercial properties grant aid of up to 75% per property for eligible works, capped at £5,000 per property. The villages eligible to apply are based upon the proposed Mid Ulster Settlement Report as per the development of the Area Plan 'strategic settlement evaluation – position paper', with the additional village of Moygashel. In total, the delivery of Phase 2 of the scheme is £156,000 which is inclusive of the grant aid and the services of a Chartered Architect to manage the overall delivery of the scheme.</p>
2.6	<p><b>Magherafelt Town Centre Wi-Fi</b></p> <p>The provision of a free Wi-Fi service is in place across the five towns in the district. In Magherafelt free Wi-Fi was provided in 2013 within the town centre boundary of Magherafelt. This facility has been widely utilised by various clientele including businesses, visitors and students etc. The Wi-Fi project implemented a wireless network in the main retail core, providing web access for 'on the go' users.</p>
2.7	<p><b>Brexit Working Group</b></p> <p>At the Development Committee in September 2018, it was recommended that 10 Members be nominated to serve on the Brexit Working Group, based on the D'hondt system as follows; 10 Members – 5 SF, 2 DUP, 2 UUP, 1 SDLP. This recommendation was subsequently ratified by Council in September 2018 and Members were asked to forward their nominations to the Head of Economic Development by the end of September 2018.</p>

2.8	<p><b>Broadband Working Group</b> A new Mid Ulster Broadband Working Group has been established to deal with all matters related to improving Broadband provision in the Mid Ulster area.</p>
2.9	<p><b>Strategic Review of Council's Economic Development Online Services to Businesses</b> In 2017/2018 a scoping study was completed by OLI (Outside Looking In) of economic development online services. The scoping study contained a range of recommendations for consideration to improve online services to businesses.</p>
2.10	<p><b>Department of Finance re Rates Relief for Town Centre Businesses</b> At the Development Committee in December 2018, it was recommended that Council write to the Permanent Secretary for Finance and ask if there is any intention to bring in rates relief for town centre businesses, similar to the model in England, Scotland and Wales, recently announced by the Chancellor.</p>
2.11	<p><b>Department for Infrastructure re Water and Sewerage Issues</b> At the Development Committee in December 2018, it was recommended that Council write to the Permanent Secretary for the Department for Infrastructure and ask that a meeting be arranged with Council representatives to discuss concerns regarding funding initiatives regarding water and sewerage.</p>
2.12	<p><b>Retail NI, Manufacturing NI and Hospitality Ulster - A New Deal for Northern Ireland</b> Correspondence received in the form of a joint letter from the CEO's of Retail NI, Manufacturing NI and Hospitality Ulster, dated 17 December 2018, enclosing report entitled 'A New Deal for Northern Ireland' available at <a href="https://bit.ly/2B9Cf21">https://bit.ly/2B9Cf21</a></p>
2.13	<p><b>City/Growth Deals</b> At the January 2019 meeting, Members were advised that research being undertaken by the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre was nearing completion and the Report would be presented to a future meeting of the Committee, when finalised.</p>
3.0	<p><b>Main Report</b></p>
3.1	<p><b>Invest NI Letter of Offer - Gearing for Growth Programme</b> Invest NI has approved Council's application (at a slightly reduced figure) and issued a Letter of Offer to Council for 80% (ie, £316,160) of the total value of £395,200.</p> <p>The Programme's performance indicators outlined in the Letter of Offer (<b>Appendix 1</b>) include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Council will use all reasonable endeavours to create at least 250 jobs by November 2023</li> <li>▪ Council will use all reasonable endeavours to generate at least 25 quality referrals to Invest NI</li> </ul> <p>Due to the Programme's value it will be advertised in the OJEU and, as required by Invest NI, the procurement process will be managed by the Central Procurement Directorate (CPD), who will provide advice and guidance to Council Officers during the process.</p>

### 3.2 Invest NI Letter of Offer - Transform Programme

Invest NI has approved the Council's application (at a slightly reduced figure), with enhanced targets of 160 businesses to be supported and 230 jobs to be created, and issued a Letter of Offer to Council for 80% (ie, £210,400) of the new total value of £263,000.

The Programme's performance indicators outlined in the Letter of Offer (**Appendix 2**) include:

- Council will use all reasonable endeavours to create at least 230 jobs by November 2023
- Council will use all reasonable endeavours to generate at least 15 quality referrals to Invest NI

Due to the Programme's value it will be advertised in the OJEU and, as required by Invest NI, the procurement process will be managed by the Central Procurement Directorate (CPD), who will provide advice and guidance to Council Officers during the process.

In summary, the value of Letters of Offer now received for the four business programmes to be delivered by Council by December 2022, with match funding from Invest NI and ERDF are as follows:

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Total Programme Cost (100%)</b>	<b>Council Funding (20%)</b>	<b>ERDF / Invest NI Funding (80%)</b>
Tender Ready	261,200	52,240	208,960
Digital First	268,500	53,700	214,800
Gearing for Growth	395,200	79,040	316,160
Transform	263,000	52,600	210,400
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,187,900</b>	<b>£237,580</b>	<b>£950,320</b>

**This suite of business programmes valued at £1,187,900 will provide a support package to 690 micro/small businesses throughout Mid Ulster until 2022.**

### 3.3 Renewal of Membership with Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce

Membership renewal is now due (**Appendix 3**) for the period of January 2019 – December 2019 at a cost of £2,500+Vat.

*The benefits for the Council are:*

- Chamber has a global network, links into UK Chamber & its business membership of circ. 1200 businesses.
- Actively represents members' interests at the highest political level
- Provides a quarterly magazine of current business affairs
- Monthly newsletter update on what's happening in business in NI
- Organises monthly Business events throughout NI

*Benefits specific to Mid Ulster during 2018/19:*

- Editorial promoting Mid Ulster Skills Forum included in Spring 2018 edition of Chamber's 'Ambition' magazine.
- Chamber held a successful networking business event at the Hill of The O'Neill, Dungannon on 6 June 2018. There were over 90 businesses from across NI represented.
- MUDC attended Heathrow Business Summit (NI) event on 20 June 2018.

Heathrow had collaborated with NI Chamber to deliver this in Northern Ireland. Post event there has been ongoing engagement with all Councils to grow a network of SMEs and provide the local SMEs with an opportunity to connect and trade face-to-face with Heathrow's supply chain, forging links with some of the UK's largest organisations.

- Chamber has been a regular source for information, advice and support when needed throughout the year, eg, brexit, skills, etc.

3.4

#### **Celebration of Mid Ulster's Business Starts**

Mid Ulster is currently the most entrepreneurial region in NI. It is essential that we support our new business starts and encourage others to consider self-employment as a viable career option. To this end, Mid Ulster District Council in association with the local enterprise agency network will host a 'Celebration Event' to showcase a cross section of Mid Ulster's recent business starts. In addition to this, providers will be on-hand to lend practical support to those considering setting up a new business and of course promote the free services available on Council's 'Go for It' Programme.

The event will take place on *Tuesday 19 March 2019 from 3pm – 8pm in the Burnavon Theatre, Burn Road, Cookstown*. Event arrangements are being worked up and further details will be circulated to Members when finalised.

3.5

#### **Mid Ulster Village Spruce Up Scheme - Final Evaluation Report on Phase 2**

To receive Final Evaluation Report on Mid Ulster Village Spruce Up Scheme Phase 2 (Reserve List) (**Appendix 4**)

3.6

#### **Magherafelt Town Centre Wi-Fi**

The infrastructure for the provision of a free Wi-Fi Service has been in-situ in Magherafelt town centre for a period of five years. It is now an opportune time to review and upgrade the provision of a free Wi-Fi service in Magherafelt town centre.

Quotations are being sought to appoint a company to review, deliver, implement and provide on-going management for a period of 5 years from suitably qualified suppliers. A budget of up to £25,000 has been earmarked for the project from within Council's economic development budget.

3.7

#### **Brexit Working Group**

In September 2018, Council agreed to establish a Brexit Working Group and nominations be sought for 10 Members to serve on the Group, based on the D'Hondt system, which equates to the following membership from each party (5 SF, 2 DUP, 2 UUP, 1 SDLP). Nominations were received as follows;

##### **SF**

Cllr C Elatter  
Cllr M Gillespie  
Cllr S McGuigan  
Cllr S McPeake  
Cllr D Molloy

##### **DUP**

Cllr P McLean  
Cllr W Robinson

**UUP**

Cllr W Cuddy  
Cllr T Wilson

**SDLP**

Cllr M Kearney

The new Mid Ulster Brexit Working Group met for the first time on Monday 26 November 2018. A Terms of Reference for the group was agreed by those present at the meeting, and is attached on **Appendix 5**, and approval is sought for same.

Members of the Development Committee will be kept updated on progress, by sharing the minutes of meetings from the Brexit Working Group.

3.8

**Broadband Working Group**

Initial meetings have taken place of the Broadband Working Group on Monday 10 September 2018 and Thursday 18 October 2018. Minutes of the meetings are attached for information on **Appendices 6 and 7**.

3.9

**Strategic Review of Council's Economic Development Online Services to Businesses**

Work is well advanced with the Communications team in creating a new section on Council's website to make it more engaging, user friendly and meet customer needs. Costings have been obtained for professional support for this work and provision of £15,000 has been made in the economic development budget in the 2018/19 financial year to complete the project by 31 March 2019.

3.10

**Department of Finance re Rates Relief for Town Centre Businesses**

As requested at a previous meeting, Council has written to the Permanent Secretary, Department of Finance to ask if there is any intention to bring in rates relief for town centre businesses, similar to the model in England, Scotland and Wales, recently announced by the Chancellor (**Appendix 8**). A response from the Permanent Secretary dated 23 January 2019 is attached (**Appendix 9**) advising that;

*"On foot of the Chancellor's position, Northern Ireland has been allocated funds through Barnett Consequentials. The additional revenue received as part of that process will be unhypothecated within the budgetary process. Any decisions in relation to Northern Ireland will be taken in the context of the wider public finance and policy position.*

*In relation to wider business rating policy, the Department is planning to go out to consultation later this year. That process will seek views on potential future options available for longer-term small business rate relief policy. The findings of that consultation will inform advice to be provided to incoming Ministers on this issue".*

3.11

**Department for Infrastructure re Sewerage Treatment Works**

As requested at a previous meeting, Council has written to the Permanent Secretary, Department for Infrastructure, asking that a meeting be arranged with Council representatives to discuss concerns regarding funding initiatives regarding Water and Sewerage (**Appendix 10**). An email acknowledgement from the Permanent Secretary's office, dated 14 January 2019 is attached (**Appendix 11**) advising *"the issues raised are being considered and a reply will issue shortly"*.

<p>3.12</p> <p>3.13</p>	<p><b>Retail NI, Manufacturing NI and Hospitality Ulster – ‘A New Deal for Northern Ireland’</b>  A joint letter from the CEO’s of Retail NI, Manufacturing NI and Hospitality Ulster was received, dated 17 December 2018, enclosing Report entitled ‘A New Deal for Northern Ireland’. Letter enclosed on <b>Appendix 12</b> and Report accessible at <a href="https://bit.ly/2B9Cf21">https://bit.ly/2B9Cf21</a>  The letter asks Council to freeze or consider reducing the district rate on non-domestic properties. The CEO’s, Messrs Roberts, Kelly and Neill, advise their members are experiencing huge uncertainty with Brexit, combined with slow economic growth and rising running costs and call upon Council not to add to their members’ financial burdens by increasing business rates.</p> <p><b>City/Growth Deals</b>  As discussed at the January 2019 meeting, Members are advised the Report prepared by the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre on the City Deal Regional Analysis, entitled “Mid, South &amp; West Region of Northern Ireland: Economic Geography Baselines and Outlook” has now been completed and the final report is enclosed (<b>Appendix 13</b>) for information.</p>
<p><b>4.0</b></p>	<p><b>Other Considerations</b></p>
<p><b>4.1</b></p>	<p><b>Financial, Human Resources &amp; Risk Implications</b></p> <p>Financial:</p> <p><b>Invest NI Letter of Offer: Gearing for Growth Programme</b>  Total programme cost £395,200. This includes 80% grant aid (£316,160) from Invest NI / ERDF and 20% Council match funding (£79,040) over the period to March 2023 approved by Council in June 2018</p> <p><b>Invest NI Letter of Offer: Transform Programme</b>  Total programme cost £263,000. This includes 80% grant aid (£210,400) from Invest NI / ERDF and 20% Council match funding (£52,600) over the period to March 2023 approved by Council in June 2018</p> <p><b>Renewal of Membership with Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce</b>  NI Chamber of Commerce Membership Renewal costs (for period 1 Jan 2019-31 Dec 2019) is £2,500+Vat, provision made from within economic development budget.</p> <p><b>Magherafelt Wi-Fi</b>  An estimated budget of up to £25,000 has been set aside within the economic development budget until the quotations are returned and assessed and the exact cost known.</p> <p><b>Strategic Review of Council’s Economic Development Online Services to Businesses-</b> A single tender action was approved to allow an existing supplier to carry out this work at a cost of £15,000 (excl. Vat) to be paid from Council’s Economic Development Budget.</p>
	<p>Human:  Officer time.</p>

	<p>Risk Management:</p> <p><b>Invest NI Letters of Offer: Gearing for Growth and Transform Programmes</b>  Both the Gearing for Growth Programme and the Transform Programme are scheduled to deliver support to 250 and 160 businesses respectively, until December 2022 and contribute to the creation of 480 jobs. While Invest NI's Letters of Offer commits funding of up to 80% towards each, this offer has been issued in line with existing legislation at time of issue. The relevant legislation which will apply post-Brexit is currently not known. Given the potential risks surrounding future EU funding, the Council will include a Clause in the Contract documentation to enable the Contract delivery to be reviewed/ended (if necessary), should funding be withdrawn or reduced, in a way which will minimise impact on programme beneficiaries,</p>
<b>4.2</b>	<p><b>Screening &amp; Impact Assessments</b></p> <p>Equality &amp; Good Relations Implications: N/A</p> <p>Rural Needs Implications: N/A</p>
<b>5.0</b>	<p><b>Recommendation(s)</b></p>
	<p><b>It is recommended that Members;</b></p>
<b>5.1</b>	<p><b>Invest NI Letter of Offer: Gearing for Growth Programme</b>  a) Accept Letter of Offer from Invest NI (dated 8 January 2019) for the Gearing for Growth Programme offering up to £316,160 (80%) grant towards total programme costs of £395,200 (including expenses and excluding vat), following which the Letter of Offer will be presented for sealing at the next Statutory Council meeting.</p> <p>b) Approve Officers to work with CPD to procure a suitably qualified organisation(s) to deliver the Gearing for Growth Programme.</p>
<b>5.2</b>	<p><b>Invest NI Letter of Offer: Transform Programme</b>  a) Accept Letter of Offer from Invest NI (dated 8 January 2019) for the Transform Programme offering up to £210,400 (80%) grant towards total programme costs of £263,000 (including expenses and excluding vat), following which the Letter of Offer will be presented for sealing at the next Statutory Council meeting.</p> <p>b) Approve Officers to work with CPD to procure a suitably qualified organisation(s) to deliver the Transform Programme.</p>
<b>5.3</b>	<p><b>Renewal of Membership with Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce</b>  Approve Corporate Membership of NI Chamber of Commerce and Industry costing £2,500+Vat for the period of 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2019.</p>
<b>5.4</b>	<p><b>Celebration of Mid Ulster Business Starts</b>  Note event on 19 March 2019 from 3pm to 8pm in the Burnavon Theatre, Cookstown.</p>
<b>5.5</b>	<p><b>Mid Ulster Village Spruce Up Scheme - Final Evaluation Report on Phase 2</b>  Note Final Evaluation Report on Mid Ulster Village Spruce Up Scheme - Phase 2 (the Reserve List).</p>



5.6	<b>Magherafelt Town Centre Wi-Fi</b> Note progress.
5.7	<b>Brexit Working Group</b> Approve the Brexit Working Group - Terms of Reference and the membership therein.
5.8	<b>Broadband Working Group</b> Note progress.
5.9	<b>Strategic Review of Council's Economic Development Online Services to Businesses</b> Note progress.
5.10	<b>Department of Finance re Rates Relief for Town Centre Businesses</b> Consider response from Permanent Secretary, Department of Finance re Rates Relief for town centre businesses.
5.11	<b>Department for Infrastructure re Sewerage Treatment Works</b> Note response.
5.12	<b>Retail NI, Manufacturing NI and Hospitality Ulster - A New Deal for Northern Ireland</b> Consider request from Retail NI, Manufacturing NI and Hospitality Ulster to meet with Members to discuss concerns regarding business rates.
5.13	<b>City/Growth Deals</b> Final Report on City Deal Regional Analysis entitled "Mid, South & West Region of Northern Ireland: Economic Geography Baselines and Outlook" enclosed for information.
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
	<p>Appendix 1 – Invest NI Letter of Offer - Gearing for Growth Programme (21.1.19)</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Invest NI Letter of Offer - Transform Programme (18.1.19)</p> <p>Appendix 3 – NI Chamber of Commerce - Membership Invoice</p> <p>Appendix 4 - Mid Ulster Village Spruce Up Scheme - Final Evaluation Report (Phase 2)</p> <p>Appendix 5 - Brexit Working Group - Terms of Reference</p> <p>Appendix 6 – Minutes of Broadband Working Group – 10.9.18</p> <p>Appendix 7 – Minutes of Broadband Working Group – 18.10.18</p> <p>Appendix 8 – Letter to Permanent Secretary, Department of Finance - Rates Relief for Town Centre Businesses</p> <p>Appendix 9 – Response from Permanent Secretary, Department of Finance - Rates Relief for Town Centre Businesses</p> <p>Appendix 10 – Letter to Permanent Secretary, Department for Infrastructure – Sewerage Treatment Works</p>

Appendix 11 – Acknowledgement Response from Permanent Secretary, Department for Infrastructure – Sewerage Treatment Works

Appendix 12 – Letter from Retail NI, Manufacturing NI and Hospitality Ulster – ‘A New Deal for Northern Ireland’

Appendix 13 - Final Report on City Deal Regional Analysis entitled “Mid, South & West Region of Northern Ireland: Economic Geography Baselines and Outlook”