

<b>Report on</b>	Economic Development Report – OBFI  1) Coalisland Town Centre Forum Minutes 9.11.20  2) Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2020 Evaluation Report  3) Pilot Covid Recovery Start Up Payment
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	11 February 2021
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

<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>Coalisland Town Centre Forum Minutes 9.11.20</b> Coalisland Town Centre Forum was established in March 2019. It is a partnership of public, private, community and voluntary sector organisations working together to deliver a range of strategic economic actions to develop Coalisland town.</p>
2.2	<p><b>Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2020 Evaluation Report</b> To mark Global Entrepreneurship Week 2020, Mid Ulster's second Enterprise Week took place between Monday 16<sup>th</sup> and Friday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2020. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, Mid Ulster Enterprise Week took a different format this year offering a programme of virtual events. Spearheaded by the Council with support from partner stakeholders this year's theme concentrated on sustainability and resilience amid the significant challenges of the pandemic.</p>
2.3	<p><b>Pilot Covid Recovery Start Up Payment</b> Covid-19 presents an unprecedented challenge for all businesses, and particularly so for Mid Ulster entrepreneurs at the most vulnerable phase of their development. During the Covid crisis, there have been extensive funding packages to support established businesses however, government aid has tended to neglect the new business start sector. Mid Ulster has a long held reputation for entrepreneurship, and a competitive economy, it is therefore vitally important that these individuals are supported financially during this time of crisis. The final quarter of the financial year traditionally sees a surge in those exploring self-employment as an option, and with the lockdown potentially ending in March and many people on furlough</p>

	<p>facing an uncertain future, this is a particularly opportune time to provide a pilot scheme providing a small one-off financial payment to Mid Ulster’s new business starts which will augment the current start up provision already in place.</p> <p>It is proposed to deliver a pilot initiative to support new business starts with a small one-off start up payment, working in collaboration with Council’s start up delivery partners (Cookstown Enterprise Centre, Workspace Enterprises and Marketing NI [Dungannon]) from January - March 2021.</p> <p>The objectives of the Pilot Covid Recovery Start Up Payment are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Stimulate and support entrepreneurship in Mid Ulster;</li> <li>▪ Award a payment of up to £250 to at least 60 start up clients to provide financial help towards the marketing of products, accessing a loan, capital costs, rent, set-up costs, or cost of renovating premises etc.</li> </ul> <p>A similar scheme was undertaken by Derry and Strabane City Council (in partnership with their Enterprise Agencies) in November 2020 which stimulated a 60% uplift in inquiries by January 2021.</p>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<p><b>Coalisland Town Centre Forum Minutes 9.11.20</b> Minutes of the meeting of Coalisland Town Centre Forum held on the 9<sup>th</sup> November 2020 are attached at <b>Appendix 1</b>.</p>
3.2	<p><b>Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2020 Evaluation Report</b> Due to the pandemic, the second Enterprise Week (16<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> November) went virtual with a series of online, interactive events organised by the Council with the support of partner stakeholders. Twelve virtual events were held across the week under the theme of ‘Survival, Recovery, Resilience’, reflecting the very different economic context in which businesses are operating as a result of coronavirus.</p> <p>A wide range of relevant business topics were offered to ensure all sectors of industry received support. Specific webinars were held for the Retail, Hospitality, Manufacturing and Engineering sectors, alongside advice for Start-ups, Brexit regulation changes for labelling and chemicals and a range of speakers representing funding organisations and support agencies. In addition, the virtual events provided advice on key business issues including communication, sales, leading teams through a pandemic and social media.</p> <p>Feedback from attendees was very positive with many welcoming the virtual format this year as this enabled them to take a short time away from their work commitments, without the need to travel to and from a venue, or access the event recording at a later date.</p> <p>The range of topics and speakers were highly commended by attendees and the relevance of topics were acknowledged, particularly given the extremely difficult trading conditions many of our businesses are facing.</p> <p>An Evaluation Report of Mid Ulster Enterprise Week is included in <b>Appendix 2</b>.</p>

	<p>Have a look at the short video on Council’s YouTube Channel which summarises a variety of the virtual events held during Mid Ulster Enterprise Week at <a href="https://youtu.be/HX3Uzuf12ok">https://youtu.be/HX3Uzuf12ok</a></p> <p>If Members wish to view any of the webinars held during Mid Ulster Enterprise Week, these can be accessed at <a href="https://bit.ly/enterpriseweekwebinars">https://bit.ly/enterpriseweekwebinars</a></p> <p><b>3.3 Pilot Covid Recovery Start Up Payment</b></p> <p>The payment will be open to those clients within Mid Ulster who have received support from the Business Start / Go For It Programme, completed a Business Plan by 31 March 2021 which has been signed off by the Lead Enterprise Partner between the period January-March 2021 and can confirm they intend to start a new business within 6 months of their letter of offer. They will be required to complete a short application, which will be screened by the 3 Enterprise partners who will then make a recommendation to Council Officers.</p> <p>Recipients will be contacted by Council Officers after 6 months to ascertain whether the business has started. Updates will be submitted to Members at regular intervals.</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:  <b>Pilot Covid Recovery Start Up Payment</b></p> <p>Provision has been made in the economic development budget in the region of £15,000 (i.e. equivalent to 60 payments), however, some additional monies may be required should demand for support be high (or less if demand is lower). Funding for the scheme will be accommodated within the existing economic development budget without placing any additional demands on Council resources.</p> <p>Human:  <b>Pilot Covid Recovery Start Up Payment</b>  Officers’ time in management and delivery of scheme.</p> <p>Risk Management:  <b>Pilot Covid Recovery Start Up Payment</b>  Failure of participants to start a business following participation on the programme.</p>

	<p>The risks need to be considered in the context of the risk of doing nothing, which could have much more serious implications such as reduced levels of business starts within the council area, lower levels of entrepreneurship, higher unemployment levels and more people seeking benefits – all exacerbated within the current Covid crisis. The following measures will be implemented in an effort to minimise the identified risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Programme participants must complete the Go For It Programme with one of the three Enterprise Partners, this will represent a commitment on the client’s part to start a new business and provide them with the necessary support and guidance to take their business idea forward;</li> <li>ii. Following completion of the Go For It Programme the Enterprise Partners will evaluate the suitability of participants to receive a one off start up payment of £250 and make a recommendation to Council; and,</li> <li>iii. Council will then issue a letter of offer to approved clients who will be required to sign a declaration accepting the terms and conditions of the letter of offer. Payments will be triggered by the creation of a business plan and written confirmation from the client that they are committed to starting the business within a period of 6 months from their application date. Applicants will be advised that payment may be clawed back if the business does not provide appropriate confirmation that they have started within the specific timeframe.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4.2</b></p>	<p><b>Screening &amp; Impact Assessments</b></p> <p>Equality &amp; Good Relations Implications:</p> <p><b>Pilot Covid Recovery Start Up Payment</b> An Equality Screening Exercise has been completed.</p> <p>Rural Needs Implications:</p> <p><b>Pilot Covid Recovery Start Up Payment</b> A Rural Needs Impact Assessment has been completed.</p>
<p><b>5.0</b></p>	<p><b>Recommendation(s)</b></p>
<p>5.1</p> <p>5.2</p> <p>5.3</p>	<p>It is recommended that Members;</p> <p><b>Coalisland Town Centre Forum Minutes 9.11.20</b> <b>Note</b> minutes of Coalisland Town Centre Forum meeting dated 9 November 2020.</p> <p><b>Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2020 Evaluation Report</b> <b>Note</b> the Evaluation Report on Mid Ulster Enterprise Week held on 16-20 November 2020.</p> <p><b>Pilot Covid Recovery Start Up Payment</b></p>

	<p><b>Note</b> the establishment of an indicative economic development budget of approximately £15,000 towards the delivery of a Pilot Covid Recovery Start Up Scheme. Members should note the budget will depend on the level of demand from clients. Should additional monies be required to meet higher demand than anticipated, then this will be met from Council's existing economic development budget during the pilot period.</p>
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
	<p><b>Appendix 1</b> – Minutes of Coalisland Town Centre Forum - 9.11.20</p> <p><b>Appendix 2</b> - Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2020 Evaluation Report</p>