



Subject:	Belfast Business Promise
Date:	23 rd August 2024
Reporting Officer:	John Tully, Director of City & Organisational Strategy
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Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.	
Insert number <input type="checkbox"/>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Information relating to any individual2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime	
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
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1.1	The report provides an update on the work being taken forward to scale up the Belfast Business Promise including proposals to support organisations become JAM card friendly and adopt practices which supports those who may have a hidden disability or communication barrier.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) note the work being progressed in relation to the refinement of the Belfast Business Promise and the increase in the number of organisations becoming supporters. (ii) consider and agree the proposed establishment of a seed-fund/bursary (up to a value of £27,480) to support up to 80 organisations over a 2-year period to achieve JAM card friendly status, enabling them to become more inclusive
3.0	Main Report
3.1	The Committee will be aware of the pioneering work which has been taken forward to develop, pilot and scale-up the Belfast Business Promise (BBP). As a key commitment in the Council's Inclusive Growth Strategy and Belfast Agenda, the BBP is an accreditation for employers working to improve Belfast. It encourages, supports and recognises excellence and its flexibility makes sure all employers can take part, regardless of size or sector. The scheme has created a growing community of organisations committed to improving how they do business together.
3.2	The BBP is a demonstration of effective partnership working across sectors and across Council in designing, implementing, and securing commitment to the model. In May 2024, the Committee noted the positive response and commitment from businesses of all sizes and sectors during the first year of operation. There are currently 49 organisations committed as BBP Supporters (refer to Appendix 1 attached)
3.3	The BBP is a commitment from organisations to inclusive business practices and work towards achieving eight pledges including three core pledges which all businesses are committed to (refer to Appendix 2 attached). An underpinning accreditation process has been developed in conjunction with key Council Departments, partner organisations such as the Labour Relations Agency and external advisers, including those with expertise and experience in auditing quality standards (IIP, EFQM and ISO standards). This enables organisations to benchmark their performance and practice against the eight pledges and gain support from the Belfast Business Promise community and network to continually improve.
3.4	In delivering the BBP and engaging with businesses and employers, a key area identified for possible improvement related to enhancing the accessibility to services for those with disabilities (including hidden disabilities). In response, and working alongside BBP partners, including the Equality Commission and the NOW Group, the following standard for organisations has been attached to core pledge 2 (Working in partnership with our communities):

“Ensure services are accessible and inclusive for those with disabilities (including hidden disabilities) through, for example, JAM Card membership (or equivalent)”

Just A Minute (JAM)

3.5 Members may be aware of the Just A Minute (JAM) Card, an award-winning initiative which originated within Belfast. The JAM Card is a discrete way for people with a disability (including hidden disabilities) or communication barriers to indicate that they need extra time and understanding in a private and easy way. It is a card that can be displayed in physical form or via an App, and which is widely recognised by both the people and participating businesses around the world, There are in excess of 2,500 businesses signed-up. Belfast City Council is already JAM card friendly alongside other organisations such as Danske Bank, Bank of Ireland, Translink, Belfast Harbour, Belfast City Airport, Labour Relations Agency, NHS as well as many smaller and community-based businesses. The NICS has also committed to becoming JAM Card friendly and have trained 17,000 staff across the region. Becoming JAM Card friendly, enables organisations to access the training, support and knowledge they need to ensure users of the JAM Card feel welcome in their premises.

3.6 Within the Belfast Agenda, there is a stated commitment to work towards Belfast becoming a JAM Friendly City; ensuring that all individuals are confident living, working and socialising in the city. There is a strong recognition across the Belfast Business Promise supporters and network of the benefits and social impact of becoming a JAM friendly organisation (refer to **Appendix 3** for examples of feedback and testimonials received).

3.7 To encourage and support Belfast Business Promise support organisations to adopt more inclusive practices and to avail of available training and advice, it is proposed that the Council consider the creation of a ‘JAM Card Bursary’ scheme. The scheme would be put in place in collaboration with the NOW Group, who is the custodian of the JAM Card as well as a BBP partner. The scheme would act as a seed/fund to enable up to 80 organisations, over a 2-year period, to start their journey to become JAM Card Friendly. The scheme will target BBP supporters covering micro, small and third sector (voluntary, community, social enterprise) organisations. The scheme will provide one-off funding to participating organisations to become a JAM Card member and enable them to access the training and support available for a 3 year period. Any subsequent membership beyond the 3 years would be subject to consideration and funding by the organisations themselves.

3.8 Some examples of expected outcomes from the bursary include:
i. enhance awareness and promote inclusivity and accessibility in the workplace and in service provision

	<p>ii. demonstrate the Council’s commitment to promoting inclusion;</p> <p>iii. support the delivery of the Belfast Business Promise and increase the number of organisations achieving the core pledge ‘Working in partnership with our communities’.</p> <p>iv. enable up to 80 businesses to become JAM Card Friendly and directly contributing to the Belfast Agenda commitment for Belfast to become a JAM card friendly city by 2028.</p> <p>3.9 Ongoing development of BBP model</p> <p>The process to refine and develop the Belfast Business Promise includes identifying different mechanisms to encourage, support and challenge organisations on their improvement journey, particularly in terms of bolstering the core pledges. The expertise and input from BBP Partners, including their resources, is critical to this. For example, external technical expertise has been provided to support the core pledge ‘Protect our Environment’ and work is underway with BBP Partners to improve and develop this further. Work is also ongoing to maximise the alignment and support through the Go Succeed programme.</p> <p>3.10</p> <p>As the BBP moves through its second year of delivery with 49 Supporters there is need to maintain momentum by continuing to build the programme of support available to Supporters and providing the robust assurance process to support the accreditation process, encouraging organisations to continue to improve and recognise their good practice.</p> <p>3.11</p> <p>As part of the ongoing development of the model, officers have commenced a process of independent evaluation of work undertaken to date in order to advise on the optimal approach for the BBP work for the next phase of development. An update on the key findings, implications and proposals will be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee for information and endorsement.</p>
	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p>
<p>3.12</p>	<p>The proposed JAM Card bursary scheme to be put in place to enable and encourage up to 80 Belfast Business Promise supporter organisations (micro, small and voluntary, community and social enterprise sector organisations) to become a member over a 2-year period is estimated to cost £27,420 (approx.). This budget would cover an organisations JAM Card membership and accessing associated training and support services. The actual costs incurred will depend on the level of uptake by organisations which will be monitored by the BBP team.</p>
<p>3.13</p>	<p>The proposed budget has been included within existing City and Organisational Strategy departmental budget.</p>

	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.14	An Equality screening and Rural Needs Assessment has been carried out, with the Belfast Business promise screened out with mitigating actions. Whilst the Belfast Business Promise is a key tool to deliver on the Inclusive Growth Strategy and is not expected to have any adverse impacts on the Section 75 categories, the programme will continue to be informed by practice and review, with an interim evaluation planned. This will ensure that modifications and mitigations can be put in place to meet the needs of programme participants as delivery matures.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1: Belfast Business Promise Supporters and Partners Appendix 2: Belfast Business Promise Pledges Appendix 3: Belfast Business Promise Supporter feedback and testimonials

