



Subject:	Social Enterprise and Employment Support
Date:	12 April 2019
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
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Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time 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
1.1	The purpose of this report is to request Committee approval for the delivery of two pilot projects aimed at supporting social enterprise development, business start-up and employment for those with disabilities and/or health related conditions.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Note the ongoing work of the Economic Development Unit in supporting business growth, jobs creation, skills development under the Working and Learning and Growing the Economy pillars of the Belfast Agenda• Approve the delivery of two pilot projects to be delivered in partnership with NOW Group and USEL (Ulster Supported Employment and Learning) aimed at supporting people

	<p>with disabilities or health related conditions into work as well as helping new artisan food businesses including social enterprises to start up and grow.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree to enter into a Licence agreement for an initial 12 months period to facilitate delivery of the pilot initiative in partnership with USEL (Ulster Supported Employment and Learning), subject to the advice and approval from the Council's Legal Services and Estates Management teams.
3.0	Main report
3.1	As Members will be aware, the Council provides a range of activities to support business growth, help create jobs and enhance the skills levels of Belfast residents. This includes delivery of a suite of business start and development programmes including social enterprise support, as well as a variety of employment and skills initiatives including the sector-specific employment academies. Aligned to both the Working and Learning and the Growing the Economy pillars of the Belfast Agenda, these work streams support inclusive growth ambitions by addressing barriers to employment and progression.
3.2	The city continues to face persistent challenges relating to the high levels of economic inactivity and geographical deprivation, and whilst unemployment rates are decreasing, levels of economic inactivity remains high at 31% or 67,850 persons of working age across the city of Belfast. Of these numbers, around 35% (or 23,748 persons of working age) are known to have a disability or health-related condition. Council officers have been working with a number of organisations to explore opportunities for developing targeted initiatives to help some of those individuals to re-enter the labour market on a voluntary participation basis. For out-of-work individuals, long periods of inactivity can cause health conditions to worsen, work related skills and motivation deteriorate, and significant new barriers to work can arise. These individuals will require additional support to remove their particular barriers to employment.
3.3	In recent years, the Council's Hospitality Employment Academy has provided an ongoing pipeline of talent into this sector. Whilst efforts in this regard have been positively received, the challenge of low levels of unemployment, sector growth and the potential implications of the UK exit from the EU on the flow of migrant labour have highlighted the risk of labour shortages within this industry and underlined the need for ongoing interventions of scale.
3.4	The growth of the hospitality industry has been driven by both international brands and indigenous outlets. In the case of the latter, the uniqueness and the quality of the sector and individual businesses operating within it have recently been recognised through

	<p>awards such as the Good Taste Awards. Importantly, Northern Ireland was announced as the “Best Food Destination” at the prestigious International Travel and Tourism Awards in London at the end of 2018. This is a significant accolade and highlights the innovation and quality of both the producers and the hospitality outlets across the region. Through business start-up activities, the Council is supporting a growing number of artisan food producers. One of the key challenges that they face is the ability to access professional kitchen space and distribution outlets for their products. Officers are aware of at least 20 food production businesses who have outgrown their existing space, and have a requirement to utilise a commercial kitchen space to grow their business.</p>
3.5	<p>To address these challenges and support the development of the hospitality sector, officers are proposing to develop two pilot initiatives in partnership with two social enterprise organisations, USEL and the NOW Group. Uniquely both organisations offer training and employment support to individuals with disabilities or health-related conditions and, in addition, support the employment of this client group through the operation of their social enterprises. Additionally both organisations have links with employers within the hospitality sector, providing access to a wider pool of employment opportunities. The pilot initiatives will also facilitate the establishment and growth of artisan food producers, including social enterprises. Further information on each of the proposed pilot projects is set out below.</p>
3.6	<p><u>Partnership with USEL: Hospitality Training Academy and Food Production Facility</u></p> <p>This pilot will involve utilising a vacant city centre property (located in Bridge Street) to operate a social enterprise café, a training academy and provide professional kitchen space for artisan food producers. Previously operated by Barnados as Dr B’s, the site is already fitted with a fully functioning café located on the ground floor with separate kitchen space located on the first and second floors of the building that can be used as preparation and training space. The scope of the site will allow for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operation of a social enterprise café providing employment opportunities for up to 20 trainees • Delivery of a hospitality training academy supporting workless individuals with a disability or health-related conditions (from USEL and partner organisations) • Provision of professional kitchen space with the potential of supporting the creation and growth of up to 40 artisan food producers.
3.7	<p>Each of the distinct elements are interlinked and complementary. For example, it is expected that academy trainees will progress into employment within the café as well as</p>

through a wider network of hospitality employers. Additionally, the café provides a potential retail outlet for artisan food producers, in addition to other outlets within the Council's responsibility, including St George's Market.

3.8 As an arms-length body of the Department for Communities (DfC), USEL is not in a position to enter into a lease agreement for this site. Therefore, the Council would be required to enter into a licence agreement with the landlord for a period of 12 months with the option of extension for a further 12 months (subject to legal services and estates review and final agreement on terms and conditions including liability for rates payment). Additionally the Council would be required to provide £30,000 of funding against a total expected cost of £170,000 for the 12 month period, the remainder would be provided by USEL and income generated from the operation of the social enterprise café. Expected outputs from this pilot would include:

- A 12 week training programme for individuals with disabilities seeking to progress into employment within the hospitality industry with 40 participants to complete the training academy per annum
- Up to 20 trainees employed in the Café
- Up to 40 Belfast-based food production businesses supported to start or grow their business
- Re-opening of a currently vacant property in the city centre, operating as a café and providing employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities to gain employment
- Provision of professional kitchen space for food-based start-up enterprises to test and produce food products with the potential to look at options for selling products produced through the commercial café and other outlets.

3.9 Now Group Catering and Hospitality Academy

The aim of this proposal is to support people with learning difficulties, disabilities and autism into sustainable employment through the delivery of a 12-week catering and hospitality academy. This academy will be distinct from the USEL academy in that it will focus on catering and food production skills development as an area that has been identified within the hospitality sector as having severe skills gaps. Training will consist of both theory and practical learning methodologies providing a holistic perspective of the vocation and develop well-trained, qualified participants ready for the exploration of employment opportunities. In addition to this, this pilot provides an opportunity to expand on the relationship that the NOW Group has developed with a number of employers in the

hospitality sector through its wider services and products including the JAM card and food products, to create a self-sustaining social enterprise model to supporting people with disabilities into employment. The NOW Group respective JAM Card team have engaged with 83 employers across Belfast, with 68 becoming JAM Card friendly businesses/organisations. The NOW Group will utilise these connections to maximise placement and paid employment opportunities for the participants on the academy. Expected Outputs from this pilot would include:

- A 12-week training programme for individuals with a learning difficulty, disability and autism who have been out of employment.
- A minimum of 40 participants per annum
- A minimum of 20 full time employment outcomes per annum
- In work support for both participant and employer a minimum of 12 months

3.10 Additional detail on target groups, expected outputs, timescales and costs is attached as Appendix 1.

Financial and Resource Implications

3.11 The proposed projects outlined in this report will be resourced from the 2019/20 Economic Development budget. Budget breakdowns detailed below:

	Category	Total Cost per annum
Hospitality Training and Food Production Facility	Capital (Licence)	£30,000 p.a.
Catering and Hospitality Academy	Revenue	£35,000 p.a.
TOTAL		£65,000 p.a

3.12 Both elements of the project will be for an initial 12-month period with the option to extend subject to satisfactory contract performance.

Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment

3.13 The projects referenced in this report have been informed by stakeholder engagement and statistical research. Officers will work closely with the Equality and Good Relations Team

	on this activity. No specific rural needs impact – engagement is open to all eligible Council residents and businesses.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 - Expected outputs, timescales and costs