



<b>Subject:</b>	Growing the Economy Update
<b>Date:</b>	9 October 2019
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
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<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide an update on progress against a series of commitments set out under the Growing the Economy pillar of the Belfast Agenda. The update is in line with the activity that was approved at this Committee on 6 March 2019.

<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Note the Council's performance and contribution to delivering against Belfast Agenda ambitions to grow the Belfast economy, focusing on the current support for Business Start-up, Growth and Investment.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<p>At its meeting of 6 March 2019, the City Growth and Regeneration Committee approved the delivery of the Growing the Economy work plan for the 2019/20 financial year. Since April 2019, officers have been working on a range of activities to address the challenges around low levels of start-up, innovation, business competitiveness and productivity and ensure that all of our residents are connected to economic opportunities.</p>
3.2	<p>This programme of work reflects the commitments of the Inclusive Growth Framework in relation to social enterprise and cooperative development, and in supporting the development of businesses in high growth sectors to create opportunities to connect our residents to the jobs of the future.</p>
3.3	<p>With the Enterprise Framework now in place, we have been working in partnership with stakeholders across the city to put in place an Action Plan to 2021. The framework sets a vision for the city as a great place to start and grow a business. It outlines recommended steps to be taken for Belfast to be "recognised for its diverse community of entrepreneurs, who benefit from a comprehensive, planned and coherent system of enterprise support, which fulfils their needs at all stages of the business growth life-cycle". Aligned to the thematic priorities of the framework, officers have been working to develop research and intelligence and deliver and further develop the range of support offered by the council. We have also been working to put in place the foundations required to support us to deliver the service more effectively through the development of a new customer relationship management system, and processes to ensure the support is flexible to meet the needs of the market.</p>
3.4	<p>Whilst work is ongoing to deliver the 2019/20 work plan, the key achievements to date are outlined below.</p>

3.5	<p><u>City for Enterprise</u></p> <p>We deliver a range of initiatives which enable individuals including those from traditionally underrepresented groups to explore opportunities to start their own business or consider self-employment as a career path. To date 193 females have been engaged in activities with 72 accessing support through workshops, boot camps, peer support and pitching competitions. Our outreach and enterprise awareness support will culminate in a week-long series of events and workshops on Global Entrepreneurship Week in November. During that week, we plan to engage 400 individuals and support them to take positive steps towards starting a business. We are also exploring opportunities to engage with local community groups and individuals who are economically inactive to support them into self-employment as well as supporting access to St George’s Market and other test trading opportunities for new businesses.</p>
3.6	<p>Following on from research undertaken as part of the Global Entrepreneurship Model (GEM) report for Belfast, the potential for additional economic impact to be generated from targeted graduate entrepreneurship activity was identified. The Council has been working with both universities and the FE college for some time to deliver targeted enterprise support for college and university students, alongside their studies. 37 students participated on this support last year with 11 reporting that they are actively trading to date. A further 6 of the students have gone on to access salary support through Invest NI, enabling them to build their business and undertake the necessary development work required in advance of them being able to draw down a full salary. This year’s programme is launching in September with the new academic year and will support 40 univeristy and college students to start their own business.</p>
3.7	<p><u>City for Business Start-Ups</u></p> <p>New businesses, social enterprises and cooperatives can access a range of advice and guidance to support them to go out on their own. Since April this year, 182 individuals have been engaged in the “Go for It” programme which has supported the development of 112 new jobs to date. In June we launched a new initiative to extend the range of support available to new starts by providing additional mentoring and access to financial and other incentives. Since its launch, 37 new businesses have been supported and we have allocated £6,000 worth of incentives, helping towards business overheads.</p>
3.8	<p>One of the most significant challenges in Belfast is not only the number of business starts but also the lack of new businesses that have the potential for high growth. While there has</p>

	<p>been significant inwards into the development of more knowledge-based and high growth companies, our micro-business base is still predominantly locally-focused and the key individuals often require targeted support in terms of leadership skills to drive future growth.</p>
3.9	<p>In recognition of the need to provide a more focused support service to those businesses that have the potential to be high growth companies, the Council has put in place a support programme in collaboration with Invest NI and with support from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). 33 businesses are currently accessing this support and, since April 2019, this has helped create 44 full time or equivalent jobs and helped the companies secure nearly £1m in export sales.</p>
3.10	<p>Members have confirmed their commitment to provide targeted support for the social enterprise and cooperative sectors and this is reflected in our new social enterprise programme which was launched in June 2019. This year to date our support for the Social Enterprise and Cooperative sector support has enabled us to work with 11 individuals or organisations. Later in the year, the Crowdfunder Belfast pilot project will go live. This will provide opportunities for 10 social enterprises or cooperatives to generate up to £10k of public pledges in order to grow their organisation. Subject to attracting funding from other sources, Belfast City Council will provide up to £5,000 of financial support towards each of these businesses.</p>
3.11	<p><u>City for Business Growth</u></p> <p>Members will be aware that, since 2015, the Council has had statutory responsibility for business start-up, social enterprise and targeted business support e.g. for female entrepreneurship. The Council also works with early stage and small businesses that are not yet Invest NI clients (in that they have not yet reached the export threshold or are not in key growth sectors). The support provided helps the companies address a specific growth challenge and covers issues such as marketing, cashflow management, digital skills and leadership development. Since April this year, we have supported 120 businesses by providing targeted 1-2-1 mentoring on their specific areas of challenge. We have also supported a further 16 companies to export to new markets. Collectively, these companies expect to generate very initial increases in sales of around £1.6million.</p>
3.12	<p>In August 2019, this Committee endorsed the “Way to Scale” programme and this was subsequently launched – along with our partners from Catalyst Inc. and Invest NI – in early September. The programme aims to increase the number of businesses with the potential</p>

	<p>to scale and achieve turnover in excess of £1m in Belfast. 70 businesses have now registered to take part in the business bootcamp which will form part of the programme's selection process. Following the bootcamp, 10 businesses will be selected to participate in a one week residential as part of Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Entrepreneurship Development Programme. They will also engage in 1-2-1 mentoring and peer workshops with other participating businesses and the programme will close with a one week Boston-based residential programme, which will focus on go-to-market strategies and tactics. We will work with our Boston-based contacts and networks to maximise the return for participating businesses.</p>
3.13	<p>In addition to our programme delivery, we continue to deliver services through the Innovation Factory including access to workspace, workshops and coaching for the growing entrepreneurial community. To date, the service has supported the creation of 125 jobs and houses 44 small businesses. The Innovation Factory is currently at 60% occupancy and the target for 31 Dec 2019 is 68%. The calibre of the businesses at the Innovation Factory is very impressive and they continue to create positive profile for themselves and for the centre. One example of this is a local start-up tenant, New Era Global Sports, which recently attracted a significant amount of positive publicity due to its association with Rio Ferdinand. He recently visited the centre to launch the business.</p>
3.14	<p><u>City for Investment</u></p> <p>In 2018, the City Growth and Regeneration Committee agreed to the establishment of a "City Investment Service" on a pilot basis, for a period of 18 months. The aim of the service is to make the process of attracting and managing investment to the city as straightforward as possible. Since its launch, the team has worked with over 76 businesses. An evaluation into this service is currently underway, and this will be used to inform potential future options and approaches for delivery. Further details will be presented to the committee at a future date.</p>
3.15	<p><u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The activities outlined within this report will be resourced from the 2019/20 Economic Development budget agreed by this Committee on 6 March 2019.</p>
3.16	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>Each of the proposed projects referenced in this report is informed by statistical research, stakeholder engagement and complementary policies and strategies. The unit is currently undertaking a process of equality screening on the overall work programme, this will ensure</p>

	consideration is given to equality and good relation impacts throughout the delivery of each project.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices</b>
	None