



<b>Subject:</b>	<b>SOLACE NI Report on Strategic Funding Alignment - Mapping of Investment Fund Opportunities in Northern Ireland</b>
<b>Date:</b>	20th January, 2023
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy
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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>	
<b>After Committee Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>After Council Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Sometime in the future</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Never</b>	<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/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update on work undertaken on behalf of the SOLACE to examine and identify funding opportunities available to Northern Ireland and associated 'Investment Mapping Tool' developed for use by councils.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is requested to:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. consider and endorse the covering report (<b>Appendix 1</b>) and Investment Mapping Tool (<b>see link provided in paragraph 4.0</b>) to this report produced by Ekosgen;</li> <li>ii. agree that Council officers use this report and the Investment Mapping Tool as a ‘live’ tool which should be updated as may be required, to guide and inform a corporate approach to funding opportunities;</li> <li>iii. agree that officers design a process to continuously review and update the investment mapping tool, investment/funding opportunities and approved/committed projects internally and link this as appropriate to projects across the wider local government sector. Mindful that there will be resource implications by introducing and maintaining this process;</li> <li>iv. agree that officers design an internal process to continuously review and update the investment mapping tool populating it with funding opportunities and approved/committed projects internally and also across local government; and</li> <li>v. consider and provide direction on how the final report may be shared on behalf of the Council, and also the wider local government sector via SOLACE NI, with relevant partner organisations in Central Government, Community Planning Partnerships and City and Growth Deal Boards.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	Members may be aware that Ekosgen had been commissioned by SOLACE NI last summer to undertake a scoping exercise of the existing funding landscape and to identify potential sources of investment/funding opportunities available to councils in Northern Ireland.
3.2	<p>The aims of this project were to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. provide councils and SOLACE NI with a clear understanding of the existing funding landscape and to inform the strategic alignment within and between councils and partners of investment funds in Northern Ireland;</li> <li>ii. inform council officers of the timeframes that exist within these funds including engagement sessions, fund opening submission dates, fund award and fund closing dates; and</li> <li>iii. where possible, outline the range of different projects that are currently within the pipeline in Northern Ireland delivered through these investment funding vehicles.</li> </ul>

3.3	<p>The study focused on identifying and alignment of the various thematic areas eligible for the available/emerging funds and the associated priorities, timings and bid submission dates. Within the context of the growing fiscal pressures facing local government. SOLACE identified the importance for councils to understand what funding opportunities may exist and how such funding opportunities align with existing sectoral and strategic priorities.</p>
3.4	<p>SOLACE also recognised the importance of this work in providing an opportunity for each council to explore how as a local government sector and individual councils we can scope out existing (and potential future) partnerships to maximise the drawdown and benefit of these funding opportunities.</p>
3.5	<p>The report attached presents the findings of an investment mapping exercise conducted by Ekosgen. The purpose of this report is threefold:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="272 813 1477 902">i. to provide an overview of <b>the range of different sources of investment available to local authorities in Northern Ireland;</b></li><li data-bbox="272 913 1477 1003">ii. <b>to identify any potential areas of synergy or potential overlap across funding themes and potential projects;</b> and</li><li data-bbox="272 1014 1477 1238">iii. to inform users of the content and use of the <b>Investment Mapping Tool</b> which has been created for the purposes of detailing the strategic fit of the Northern Ireland Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) programmes Interventions List against the investment themes, projects, and missions of other funding programmes currently active in Northern Ireland.</li></ul>
3.6	<p>The Committee should note that the baseline funding programme set out within the Mapping Tool is interchangeable and for example the Peace Plus programme could substitute the Shared Prosperity Fund to demonstrate strategic fit against the investment themes, projects, and missions of other funding programmes as required by each Council. The wider aim of this tool is to establish synergies that could be gained from acknowledging that investment funds in Northern Ireland have similar aims and objectives, and thus can be exploited for wider collaboration across the funds.</p>
3.7	<p>The mapping tool can be used in the decision-making process of councils and across wider funding partners to identify potential areas of complementarity between their projects and other investment funds.</p>
3.8	<p>The mapping tool can and will be used by each council or in conjunction with sub-regional partners to align their strategic objectives against emerging funding opportunities. The tool</p>

3.9	<p>can be tailored and designed to assess and map the funding needs of each Council, including Belfast, aligned to emerging priorities. The application and ongoing maintenance and analysing of the mapping tool will be important and will help inform future decision-making processes of elected Members.</p> <p>If the Committee agrees, officers will design a process to continuously review and update the investment mapping tool, populating it with funding opportunities and approved/committed projects internally and also across local government. The resource implications of this will be considered within existing service areas.</p>
3.10	<p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>None associated with this report. This report was commissioned by and will be paid through SOLACE NI on the basis of equal contribution by each Council of £1,310.</p>
3.11	<p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>None associated with this report</p>
4.0	<p><b>Documents Attached</b></p> <p>Appendix 1 – Ekosgen – Mapping of Investment Fund Opportunities in Northern Ireland  Appendix 2 – <a href="#">Investment Mapping Tool</a></p>