



Report to: Development Committee

Subject: EDU staff resources

Date: 20 June 2013

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| 1 | Relevant Background Information |
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| 1.1 | Members will be aware that the Investment Programme includes a significant focus on promoting economic regeneration within the city. In addition to “business as usual” activity for many units, there have been commitments to undertake a considerable number of new projects. |
| 1.2 | Many of these are complex in nature and involve engagement with external partners and delivery agents. In addition, given that the investment in the capital schemes must be incurred by end 2015 in order to draw down the available resources from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), there is now some pressure on resources within the teams responsible for ensuring their delivery. |
| 1.3 | These projects require specific skills sets in terms of project management capacity, ability to build relationships with external agencies and to develop and oversee collaborative projects, ability to engage with potential end-users and ensure that this input is reflected in project design, and technical skills to understand construction management processes. |

| 2 | Key Issues |
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| 2.1 | <p>The Economic Development Unit (EDU) in the Development Department has been leading on a number of the most significant Investment Programme projects. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The development of the Innovation Centre at Forthriver Business Park - The establishment of a creative hub in inner North Belfast - The development of a demand stimulation programme for businesses to promote access to ultrafast fibre connections and to up-skill the businesses to ensure that they can take advantage of the new technologies - The development of a methodology for introducing social clauses into all |

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| | <p>future council contract and ensuring that these opportunities can be accessed by local residents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promotion of procurement opportunities for council and other public contracts to maximise take-up by local businesses - The development of the bursary scheme to promote access to education, training and employment for young disadvantaged people in the city - Engagement with partners to develop a collaborative approach to employability and skills development across the city in order to support inclusive economic growth and improve the demand and supply of skills - Development of an integrated economic strategy (IES) with Invest NI to create a collaborative programme of work to enhance the city's competitiveness and coordinate resources around delivery. |
| 2.2 | <p>All of these activities are being undertaken in addition to the core programme of support around business start-up and growth as well as export development and social economy support. The current annual operational budget is £1.5million but the additional activity will be in the region of £15million overall.</p> |
| 2.3 | <p>This has placed a significant burden on the team of 9 staff (one Economic Development Manager, six Economic Development Officers and two Project Assistants) and has created a situation whereby letters of offer for existing activity are at risk of not being delivered while staff are accumulating significant hours of flexi leave that are unsustainable in the medium to long-term.</p> |
| 2.4 | <p>In addition to the staff issues, this scenario presents a range of potential risks including loss of income by not being able to fulfil conditions of letters of offer from funding bodies, increased reliance on council funds if external resources cannot be drawn down and lack of ability to commit time to developing new activity, thereby missing out on possible match-funding opportunities for future years.</p> |
| 2.5 | <p>It also means that the development of any new activity is difficult as there are limited staff resources to see this through. This can impact on our ability to raise our profile in the field of business start-up and growth as well as our increasing focus on international business activity. It could also have a detrimental impact on the council's ability to prepare properly for the transfer of economic development powers that will come to the council as part of local government reform.</p> |
| 2.6 | <p>In order to address this issue, it is proposed that a new post of Assistant Economic Development Manager (AEDM) is created. This would support the work of the current manager in carrying out the additional activities and delivering the ongoing programme of work and existing commitments, ensuring that the support required by businesses can be made available to them.</p> |
| 2.7 | <p>The creation of a post at Assistant Manager level is necessary in order to free up the time of the Economic Development Manager to oversee the strategic management and operational delivery of some of the Investment Programme projects. It is intended that the AEDM will support the delivery of some elements of these schemes and will also deal with staff management and other operational issues to support the performance of the team.</p> |

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| 3 | Resource Implications |
| 3.1 | <u>Human resource implications</u> The creation of an Assistant Economic Development Manager would bring the number of permanent posts in the Economic Development Unit to 10. |
| 3.2 | <u>Financial implications</u> The creation of an Assistant Economic Development Manager post, with an indicative grade of PO7, will add a further cost of £46,616 per annum. It is anticipated that the additional cost can be offset by both future income generation and by maximising the income set out in the letters of offer. |

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| 4 | Equality and Good Relations Considerations |
| 4.1 | No specific equality and good relations implications. |

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| 5 | Recommendations |
| 5.1 | Members are asked to agree to the creation of a post of Assistant Economic Development Manager in order to proceed through normal council policies and procedures to recruitment. |

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| 6 | Key to Abbreviations |
| EDM – Economic Development Manager ERDF – European Regional Development Fund IES – Integrated Economic Strategy | |