



Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Women in Business Annual Awards – request for sponsorship
Date:	19 August 2014
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
Contact Officers:	Lisa Toland, Head of Economic Initiatives & International Development, ext 3427

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members are advised that a request has been received from Women in Business NI to provide sponsorship for the Women in Business Annual Conference to be held on 20 November 2014 at the Culloden Hotel.
1.2	The Women in Business NI Annual Conference, now in its fourth year, is an annual signature event for business women from across Northern Ireland. Applications are welcomed across a range of award categories.
1.3	The event is sponsored by a range of organisations including Invest NI, Irish News, JC Decaux, Moy Park and the Equality Commission.

2	Key Issues
2.1	There will be 11 award categories in the 2014 awards. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Best new start-up - Entrepreneurship/Innovation - Outstanding Management/Leadership - Best Marketing Campaign - Best small business - Best customer service - Best in professional services - Young business woman of the year - Advancing diversity in the workplace - Best exporter - Excellence in IT.
2.2	Last year's awards attracted over 100 applications and 480 people attended the event on the evening. The applications were shortlisted to 36 finalists. Feedback

	from both applicants and finalists has been very positive in terms of the peer connections made, profile gained and learning from the experience. Another key benefit of the awards ceremony is the platform it gives to female role models and the encouragement the winners can provide to others to grow their business or develop their leadership skills.
2.3	Members are reminded that, from 1 April 2015 onwards, local authorities will have responsibility for business start-up support, including any targeted interventions for key groups such as females and youth. At present, Invest NI does not provide any specific support for female entrepreneurship but does provide sponsorship for events such as the Women in Business Awards. Invest NI is the event's key sponsor this year.
2.4	In recognition of the significant challenge on budgets, it is proposed that the amount available for sponsorship of this year's event is set at £1,500. This will provide access for the council to all associated promotional activities in the run-up to the event as well as on the evening of the event and all post-event publicity. Invitations will be issued to a number of key council representatives to attend the event, as part of the sponsorship arrangement.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	It is proposed that sponsorship of £1,500 is provided towards this year's event.

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	This event is intended to acknowledge, celebrate and reward the achievements of women in business.

5	Recommendations
5.1	Members are asked to note the content of the report and the request to sponsor the Women in Business NI Annual Conference in November 2014.

6	Decision Tracking
There is no specific decision tracking attached to this report.	