



Subject:	Request to Present - Future Provision of Business Start-up Support in Northern Ireland
Date:	14 April 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Cathy Keenan, Enterprise and Business Growth Manager

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 or Summary of main Issues
1.1	Members will be aware that the Council is committed to refreshing the range of business start up support that is currently in place in order to help us achieve the substantial shift that will be required in order to meet the targets set out in the Enterprise Framework. The actions of the framework focus on increasing the number of business start-ups in the city and making existing businesses more productive and competitive.
1.2	Working with the 10 other councils, Invest NI and DfE, it was agreed that Belfast City Council take the lead in undertaking research to inform the future measure and model required to deliver business start-up support across the region.

	As this work is now complete, it is proposed that the findings are presented to members at the May meeting of the Committee by the Enterprise Research Centre, the consultancy team which has been working with officers on the development of the research.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agree to receive at its monthly meeting in May, a presentation from the Enterprise Research Centre on their findings from the research on the Future Provision of Business Start-up Support in Northern Ireland.
3.0	Main report
3.1	Members will be aware that, as part of the transfer of functions and Local Government Reform, responsibility for business start-up and support for under-represented groups in terms of enterprise support transferred to Councils. Since the transfer of functions in 2015 we have been working with other councils across the region as well as local delivery partners to put in place a range of support which is aimed at engaging new entrepreneurs and supporting them to develop the skills and capabilities to start their own business.
3.2	As a council we acknowledge that the current provision has some significant shortcomings and limitations particularly in relation to how success is measured through a jobs outcome approach which is estimated based on the delivery of a client led business plan. This measure firstly restricts the model of delivery used to support new businesses across the region, and it also does not take account of the wider provision of support that is in place to encourage entrepreneurial activity.
3.3	We are committed to refreshing the range of support in order to help us achieve the substantial shift that will be required in order to meet the targets set out in the Enterprise Framework. With the Enterprise Framework now in place, officers have been working in partnership with stakeholders across the city to put in place an action plan which takes account of the longer-term ambitions to increase the number of new business starts and to make existing businesses more productive and competitive. The Enterprise Framework recognises that, to achieve these ambitions, the council and partners must nurture a strong entrepreneurial culture across the city.
3.4	One such action is undertaking research to inform the future delivery of start-up support across the region. we are working in partnership with the 10 other councils across the region, Invest NI and the Department for the Economy (DfE) to inform and shape what our future

	<p>offer needs to look like. The research proposes a new target framework and focuses on supporting the pipeline of new businesses, from engaging individuals in early stage entrepreneurship through to scaling businesses and sustaining business growth.</p>
3.5	<p>The objectives of the research as agreed by the 11 councils, Invest NI and DfE were as follows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- To draw on best practice from comparable regions to provide the 'case for change' for business start-up delivery in Northern Ireland.- To provide recommendations on appropriate measures of success, targets, and delivery mechanisms required to help local start-up businesses to flourish.
3.6	<p>The research seeks to identify and articulate how Northern Ireland and Belfast should best measure and articulate business start progress providing indicative targets for business start delivery based on the region's ambitions, resources and learning from comparable successful regions. The findings will enable us to make recommendations to DfE on the most appropriate measure for reporting on business start-up performance which is based on a model of delivery that sets out to achieve our ambitions as a council.</p>
3.7	<p>The Enterprise Research Centre was commissioned to undertake the research in the Summer of 2020. The research involved a review of available metrics on start-ups in Northern Ireland, together with appropriate comparisons across other regions of the UK and internationally; a review of the literature on international best practices; extensive stakeholder engagement in Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK.</p>
3.8	<p>The outputs for policy makers and stakeholders from the research include an assessment of the current delivery model, a set of indicative ambitious 'stretch' targets; recommendations for a potential re-boot in light of revised targets; and an outline of budget and other resources needed for a revised business start-up support programme in Northern Ireland.</p>
3.9	<p>It is proposed that the presentation by the Enterprise Research Centre will provide an overview of the key findings from the research and recommendations which will include priority areas of investment for the Council in order to deliver on and achieve the ambitions set out in the Belfast Agenda, inclusive growth strategy and the recovery plan for the city, Belfast: Our Recovery.</p>

3.10	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The development of the research to inform the Future Provision of Business Start-up Support in Northern Ireland has been resourced from the 2020/21 financial budget for the Economic Development budget. The financial implications of any new areas of investment will be factored into the 2021/22 budget and into the medium-term financial planning process.</p>
3.11	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>The unit is currently undertaking a process of equality screening on the overall work programme, this will ensure consideration is given to equality and good relation impacts throughout the delivery of this project.</p>
4.0	Appendices
	N/A.