



Subject:	Universal Basic Income – Proposed Contribution to Feasibility Research
Date:	22nd October, 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
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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"/>
Sometime 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/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of the report is to inform the Committee of a proposed feasibility study into the development of a Universal Basic Income (UBI) pilot in Northern Ireland as well as a financial ask to contribute to the feasibility work.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to consider the request for a contribution of £15,000 towards a feasibility study into developing a UBI pilot in Northern Ireland.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Members will be aware that, in September 2019, the Council passed a motion to support the implementation of a Universal Basic Income (UBI) trial in Northern Ireland. Similar motions were passed in a number of other councils across the region. Over the last six months, a steering group has been formed to explore how this can be realised. This steering group is being co-ordinated by the UBI Lab Network, a global UBI advocacy movement with a local

	<p>Northern Ireland group. Membership of the steering group includes councillors and officers from five of the eleven councils in Northern Ireland, as well as Advice NI, the Participation and Practice of Rights (PPR) Project and Community Foundation NI. The Council's representatives are Cllr. McReynolds and Cllr. Heading.</p> <p>3.2 The group has met on three occasions to date. One of the main areas of work which they have explored is the potential to undertake a feasibility study to consider how a UBI trial would be planned, delivered and measured. This study would also identify the likely outcomes of such a trial and would create a foundation on which a NI-wide UBI might be delivered and resourced by the Northern Ireland Executive.</p> <p>3.3 Whilst the Department for Communities is not likely to be a funding partner in this preliminary work, support for a UBI is contained within DfC's <i>Recommendations for an Anti-poverty Strategy</i> paper (published December 2020), stating that 'informed public debate on the merits and challenges involved should be encouraged'. Subject to the outcome of the work, DfC could potentially become the lead agency in development and delivery of a UBI trial and any trial would require their endorsement.</p> <p>3.4 The UBI model has been explored to varying degrees in a number of other locations. In June 2020, Scotland published an extensive report exploring the feasibility of a UBI there, which included detailed economic modelling and a range of options for trialling the concept. The main conclusion was that Scotland would require permission from DWP to run a trial, which DWP have indicated they will not give. The Welsh government has recently (following the local elections) stated their commitment to trialling UBI and initial costings on this have recently been published. The coalition government in ROI committed to a trial of UBI in their Programme for Government, and planning of this trial is underway.</p> <p>3.5 An outline scope of services for the feasibility study has been drafted by the Working Group secretariat. Key areas of work include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agent Based Modelling - This type of modelling can provide a dynamic illustration of the potential impact of UBI on a diverse range of outcomes including mental health and wellbeing, crime, paramilitary activity and social trust. It has the potential to deliver a rich evidence base to support assumptions about the impact of any future trial. It would also be useful in expanding discussion around UBI outside of traditional metrics such as financial cost and labour market participation;
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- Economic Modelling – this modelling would provide the cost of a range of levels of UBI at devolved level, as well as an analysis of fiscal powers required to fund this, such as devolution of income tax or a national wealth fund. This element of the research also provides a tax and benefit simulation model which would show how much better or worse people would be under UBI and the potential impact of UBI on poverty rates and inequality; and
- UBI Calculator – this is a public-facing UBI calculator which would be hosted online and allow people to enter their financial/household circumstances and see how much better or worse off they would be under the devolved UBI explored in the feasibility study.

3.6 The total cost of this study has been calculated at £95,800. The UBI Lab Network has secured around £40,000 to date and is now seeking support for the remainder of the cost from steering group members and charitable trusts. The finance proposal for the NI feasibility study consists of:

- A £15,000 contribution from each of the local authorities identified as a potential trial locations within the study. These areas would be promoted as lead authors alongside the UBI Lab Network. At present, locations being considered are based in three councils areas: Belfast City Council; Derry City and Strabane District Council and Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council (Note: Derry City and Strabane District Council has recently agreed to the funding request)
- A £5,000 contribution from local authorities supportive of UBI but not identified as a potential trial location within the study
- A £5,000-£10,000 contribution from other steering group members CFNI and Advice NI (£5,000 secured from CFNI)
- Funding bids for any shortfall to trusts and foundations such as Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust, Big Lottery Awards for All, Nuffield Foundation, Andrew Wainwright Reform Trust.

3.7 The current funding position is as follows:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • €20,000 secured from Freiburg University in Germany via their <i>Basic Income and Peacebuilding</i> group • £5,000 secured from the Community Foundation NI • £2,500 secured from Queen’s University for a project researcher to support the work of the project team • £15,000 secured from Derry City and Strabane District Council • A funding bid for £5,000 has been submitted to Advice NI • A bid for £15,000 has also been submitted to Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council • In the event of a shortfall, funding bids will be prepared for Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust, Andrew Wainwright Reform Trust, Nuffield Foundation and Awards for All.
3.8	<p>The indicative timeframe for this work is completion by September, 2022. However, it is likely that the early modelling work will be able to identify indicative costings for a potential UBI trial by Spring 2022.</p>
3.9	<p>This proposal was presented to the Social Policy Working Group on 28th September 2021. It was agreed that the request to contribute to the research should be brought to the S P and R Committee for further consideration.</p>
3.10	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The overall cost of the feasibility study is likely to be in the region of £96,000. A financial request has been made of £15,000 from Belfast City Council.</p>
3.11	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>The modelling work will take account of the introduction of a UBI on all disadvantaged and s75 groups. One specific angle for this study will be to consider how this approach can support good relations in a post-conflict society.</p>
4.0	Documents Attached
	None