

Title of Report:	Alchemy Mentoring Support Services
Committee Report Submitted To:	The Leisure and Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	17 August 2021
For Decision or For Information	For Decision

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021 -25)	
Strategic Theme	Local Economy (Linked to Community Plan Population Outcome “A Thriving Economy”)
Outcome	Council contributes to increasing early stage entrepreneurial activity in line within the norm for Northern Ireland Council contributes to increasing business start-up and survival rates Council contributes to improving levels of business innovation in the Borough
Lead Officer	Economic Development Officer - Alchemy

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	£52,829.00
Included in Current Year Estimates	YES/NO
Capital/Revenue	Revenue
Code	31403
Staffing Costs	Existing Staff Time

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date: Not applicable
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date: Not applicable
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date: Not applicable
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date: Not applicable
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date: Not applicable
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date: Not applicable

1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to ask members to approve a one year extension to the existing Multiple Supplier Framework Agreement for Mentors for the delivery of Alchemy Mentoring Support Services from 30th September 2021 – 30th September 2022.

2.0 Background

Alchemy has been established throughout the Council area as a model to stimulate economic growth by providing support to businesses.

Alchemy aims to support start-ups, stimulate growth and increase the competitiveness of the NI economy by making local economic development support accessible, individual, meaningful and flexible for all local businesses.

In March 2018, Council procured third-party specialists, suitably qualified to provide one-to-one and group mentoring support through the LITE programme to directly meet individual participant needs including but not limited to the following areas:

- Strategic business growth & development.
- General business planning.
- Business operations, production and logistics.
- Customer experience management.
- Employment, HR and staff development.
- Environment and efficiency.
- Financial management & admin.
- Health and Safety & risk management.
- ICT & e-commerce.
- Innovation, product development and Intellectual property.
- Export and import trading.
- Marketing, sales, networking, social media & promotion.
- Tendering & procurement.
- Social enterprise development.
- Legal requirements.

The purpose of the framework agreement was to establish a select list of mentors to be called upon as and when required.

The initial contract duration is to 30th September 2021 with possibility of a 3-year extension beyond that subject to funding.

In respect of the Alchemy Programme delivery, since March 2018 Council have followed a twin track approach with an Alchemy Growth Programme operating alongside this Alchemy LITE Programme. Alchemy Growth was procured, led by CPD (Central Procurement Directorate), part funded by Invest NI and the European Regional Development Fund under the Investment for Growth and Jobs Northern Ireland (2014-2020) Programme. The Growth programme focuses on supporting those businesses in the borough with higher growth potential, possible job creation and referrals to Invest NI and will continue until December 2022.

3.0 Progress / Plans

The Alchemy LITE mentoring programme has engaged with 300+ businesses in the last 3 years with 228 businesses receiving one-to-one mentoring support, whilst others have attended workshops and/or been signposted to other stakeholder support available.

Currently, the Monitoring and Evaluation officer is carrying out an evaluation of the programme to be completed by the end of September 2021.

Following this, consideration needs to be given to the best way forward for the future delivery of the programme, collaboratively across Prosperity and Place and to link in with the new Economic Development Strategy 'Recovery and Renewal' themes.

At the time of the contract award, it was stated that all mentoring contracts would be reviewed on an annual basis. Therefore, given the information above, an extension for one year to the current framework is requested.

4.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that Council approve the one year extension to the existing Multiple Supplier Framework Agreement for Mentors for the delivery of Alchemy LITE Mentoring Support Services from 30th September 2021 – 30th September 2022.