



Title of Report:	Alchemy Mentoring Support Services
Committee Report Submitted To:	Leisure & Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	20 September 2022
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	£86,000
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 request a one-year extension to the existing Multiple Supplier Framework Agreement for Mentors for the Alchemy Mentoring Support Services from 30th September 2022 – 30th September 2023 and to request additional mentors to be added to framework.

2.0 Background

Alchemy has been operating throughout the Council area as a model to stimulate economic growth by providing business support to businesses in the Council area since 2013.

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 framework agreement has enabled a select list of mentors to be called upon as and when required.

The initial contract duration was to 30th September 2021 with contingency of a 3-year extension subject to funding. All mentoring contracts to be reviewed on an annual basis.

3.0 Progress / Plans

This Alchemy LITE mentoring programme has engaged with 350+ businesses in the last 3 years with 250+ businesses receiving one-to-one mentoring support, whilst others have attended workshops and/or been signposted to other stakeholder support available.

The Alchemy LITE programme delivery has operated in tandem with the Alchemy Growth Programme to date. The Growth programme is scheduled to complete in December 2022 when ERDF funding ends.

The business support needs for the Borough's indigenous business community will continue to be met by the Alchemy LITE programme through to 2023 and therefore the select list of mentors is required to remain in place.

The current contract states that all mentoring contracts would be reviewed on an annual basis. Therefore, given the information above, an extension for one year to the current business mentor framework is requested.

A request to add additional mentors to the framework is also required in order to enhance the knowledge and skills within the mentoring team which will be required to work with higher growth businesses when the ERDF programme ends. These additional mentors would be selected from those already procured through the Growth programme and have delivered successful outcomes to businesses in our area. This will ensure continuity of service for all businesses.

Prosperity & Place team will continue to investigate options for the future delivery of business support linking in with the Economic Development Strategy – 'Recovery & Renewal'

4.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that the Leisure & Development Committee recommends to Council:

- **A one-year extension to the existing Multiple Supplier Framework Agreement for Mentors for the delivery of Alchemy LITE Mentoring Support Services from 30th September 2022 – 30th September 2023.**
- **Permission to add additional mentors to the current framework from those already procured through the Growth programme.**