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| Title of Report: | NI Council-led Entrepreneurship Support Service |
| Committee Report Submitted To: | Leisure & Development Committee |
| Date of Meeting: | 17 October 2023 |
| For Decision or For Information | For Information |
| To be discussed In Committee | No |

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| Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25) | |
| Strategic Theme | Local Economy |
| Outcome | Council contributes to increasing business start-up and survival rates |
| Lead Officer | Head of Service - Prosperity & Place/ Business Development Manager |

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| Budgetary Considerations | |
| Cost of Proposal | £123,755 indicative per annum 2023-2025 – previously agreed |
| Included in Current Year Estimates | YES |
| Capital/Revenue | Revenue |
| Code | 100187 |
| Staffing Costs | Within budget |

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| Legal Considerations | |
| Input of Legal Services Required | NO |
| Legal Opinion Obtained | NO |

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| Screening Requirements | Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals. | | |
| Section 75 Screening | Screening Completed: | Yes/No | Date: |
| | EQIA Required and Completed: | Yes/No | Date: |
| Rural Needs Assessment (RNA) | Screening Completed | Yes/No | Date: |
| | RNA Required and Completed: | Yes/No | Date: |
| Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) | Screening Completed: | Yes/No | Date: |
| | DPIA Required and Completed: | Yes/No | Date: |

1.0 Purpose of Report

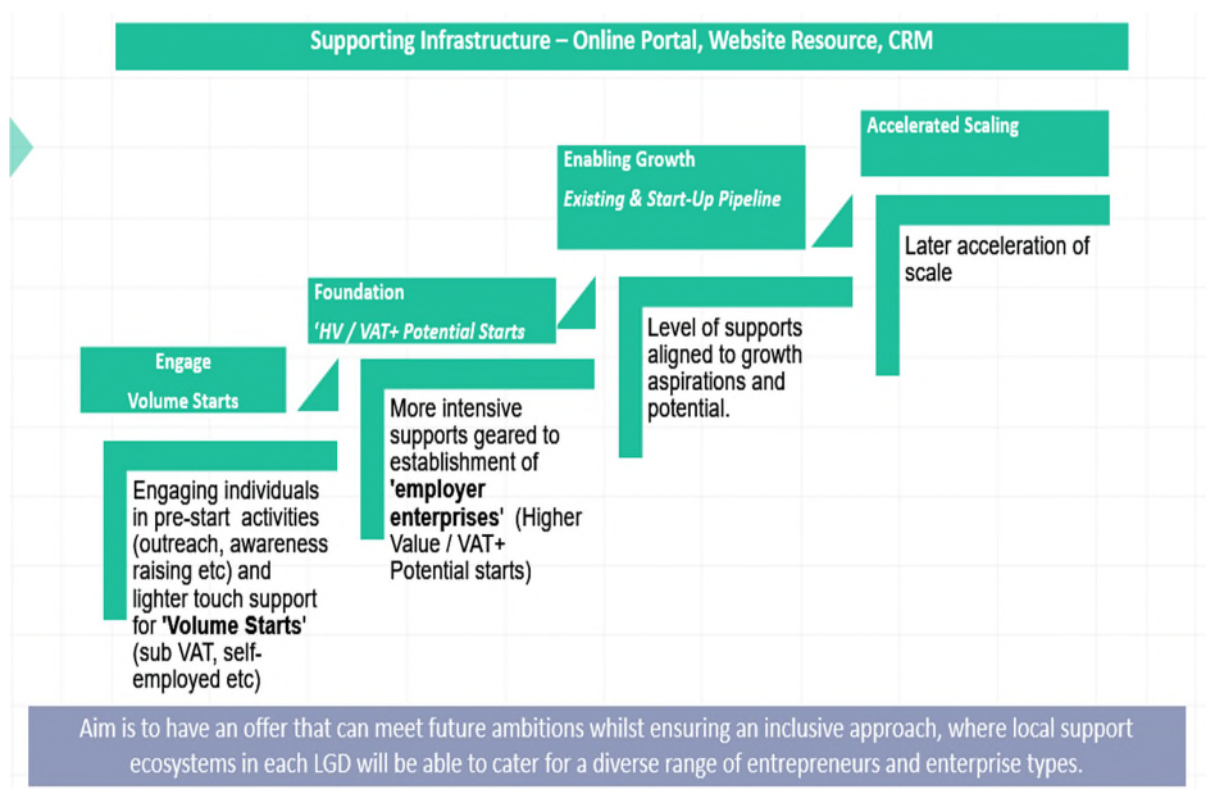
The purpose of this report is to update members on mobilisation of the new Northern Ireland Council-led Entrepreneurship Support Service (NI ESS). All 11 NI Councils are delivering this collaborative Enterprise Support Service funded by UK Shared Prosperity Fund to the value of £17 million, making it the largest single SPF award.

Belfast City Council, as lead council, is currently drafting collaboration agreements to set the basis for delivery of NI ESS, via a dedicated Programme Management Office currently being recruited. All 11 NI Councils continue to work on the planning and delivery of the service, via the ESS Working Group, overseen by the SOLACE Economic Development Group with representation at senior management level.

2.0 Background

In March 2023 Council approved participation in the NI ESS, to continue to meet its statutory obligations in respect of supporting local businesses to start and grow. Members are reminded of the programme delivery pillars as outlined below:

Table 1:



As detailed in Table 1 above, the proposed delivery model for the new Entrepreneurship Support Service consists of four pillars i.e.:

1. Engage;
2. Foundation;
3. Enabling Growth; and
4. Accelerated Scaling.

The new Entrepreneurship Support Service represents a continuum of support from pre-start support, through start-up and the growth journey thereafter. This may lead to transition to Invest NI support and/or acceleration of high-growth potential at any point.

ESS will also provide funding for businesses via delivery of a grant scheme available to those businesses identified through the foundation or growth stages of the service. Currently, the working assumption is grant amounts of between £1,000 and £4,000, administered via Council's Funding Unit.

It is expected that the service will have its official launch during Global Entrepreneurship Week 2023 (13 to 17 November).

3.0 Contractor Appointment

Procurement for multiple programme strands is now complete with awards as follows:

- **Engage and Foundation** – Enterprise NI and Partners.
- **Growth and Scaling** – Deirdre Fitzpatrick and Associates.

Annual Service Plans are currently being agreed to reflect local delivery priorities and project initiation meetings are pending.

Additionally, regional contracts for supporting architecture have been awarded as follows:

- **Tele-handling** – Like Us NE.
- **Communications and Marketing** – Ardmore.

In parallel, a regional CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system is being developed by Belfast City Council's Digital Support Services, to underpin all programme delivery and ensure GDPR compliance.