



Comhairle Ceantair
Lár Uladh
Mid Ulster
District Council

DTNI

Progressing Community Wealth Building

Mid Ulster District Council



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**A Project Report on
Progressing Community
Wealth Building in Mid Ulster
using a test and learn
methodology applied to the
five principles of community
wealth building.**

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Executive Summary

This brief report presents the findings and learning achieved from five test and learn (T&L) projects undertaken by officers in Mid Ulster District Council (MUDC) over the past year. These projects were designed to align with the five principles of Community Wealth Building (CWB), and the findings shall be used to inform a CWB framework aimed at advancing economic resilience and social equity across the district of Mid Ulster.

The five principles of Community Wealth Building, considered in the test and learn projects were designed to explore different principles of CWB each focusing on a specific area of current work going on within the council.



1

Fair Employment and Just Labour Markets This principle was put to the test by the Corporate Services team through the development of a Good Employment Charter, emphasising fair practices within the organisation. There is a future ambition for the council to be accredited as a Living Wage Employer.

2

Making Financial Power Work for Local Places

This principle was tested by the Outdoor Recreation team through a project that involved investigating the use of participatory budgeting (PB) in a capital project at Altmore Cappagh to test the use of mainstream PB. Additionally, this test and learn project also involved the communities team engaging with the network of local Credit Unions via a CWB workshop on social lending.

3

Plural Ownership of the Economy

This principle was tested by the Communities team to explore several models of ownership for the Bellaghy Bawn Writers Residence project. The aim of this test and learn project is to transition the management of the writer's residence from the council to a community run and council-owned social enterprise.

4

Socially Productive Use of Land and Property

This principle was explored through an exercise in Fivemiletown, where the council's Capital team mapped out council-owned assets, and the Communities team reviewed local governance structures, and engaged the local Chamber of Commerce to consider the potential for community ownership.

5

Progressive Procurement of Goods and Services

This principle was tested by the Finance team through an analysis of council purchasing, filtering postcodes to identify where the council's finances were spent. The team also evaluated the use of the social value clause to establish if this could be incorporated into the council's procurement policy which does not currently require it for spending £30,000 and below.

The implementation of a test-and-learn approach using existing projects to explore community wealth-building (CWB) principles in Mid Ulster has been highly effective. This strategy minimised the need for new, potentially time-consuming, and costly initiatives. The outcomes from these projects highlighted three key areas essential for advancing CWB within the Mid Ulster District Council (MUDC).

First, the projects emphasised the need for MUDC to ensure that its bold vision for CWB is fully integrated into its internal operations. Achieving this requires a comprehensive transformation of organisational processes to consistently apply CWB principles across all council departments. This alignment is critical to embedding CWB into the council's daily functions and decision-making.

Second, the projects underscored the importance of empowering local communities to take ownership of and manage their assets. This involves cataloguing council-owned physical assets and thoroughly mapping local governance structures, community resources, and participation levels. Such mapping will identify opportunities for local ownership and highlight areas where additional support and capacity building are needed.

Finally, the test-and-learn projects highlighted the necessity of strong community organisations and robust social infrastructure. Addressing this need will require direct investment, including financial support through grants and access to capital, to ensure the growth and sustainability of community organisations. These investments are crucial for fostering the social infrastructure needed to drive CWB efforts.

To govern the test-and-learn projects and explore new ways to introduce CWB within Mid Ulster, MUDC established a CWB working group. To enhance the group's understanding of the five CWB principles, a series of presentations were provided by organisations specialising in building and measuring community wealth. These knowledge sessions proved highly informative, prompting swift action by the group, such as introducing a tool for measuring social value and extending its use to a social partner.

One particularly impactful presentation on CWB partnerships by the North-West Partnership inspired discussions about adopting a similar approach between social partners in Mid Ulster. Ongoing internal discussions are also considering the benefits of the introduction of a Community Asset Transfer (CAT) policy. Additionally, collaboration with other public sector anchors through the Community Planning Partnerships is crucial for maximising the impact of CWB when its principles are widely applied by those with significant spending power within the Mid Ulster area.

Introduction

What is Community Wealth Building? Community Wealth Building (CWB) is people centred economic development approach focused on creating inclusive, sustainable, and resilient local economies. It emphasises the empowerment of community organisations, non-profits, social enterprises, and cooperatives, enabling them to drive economic growth and job creation. By prioritising local resources and ensuring that wealth generated within the community stays within the community, CWB aims to democratise the economy and build long-term prosperity.



In Northern Ireland, local authorities play a pivotal role in delivering CWB. They leverage public assets and procurement processes to benefit local communities, support the establishment and growth of locally rooted enterprises, and promote fair employment practices. Local authorities facilitate collaboration among stakeholders, provide strategic leadership, and have the capacity to ensure that CWB principles are integrated into local economic strategies. Through their actions, they help build resilient economies that serve the broader community's needs and contribute to a more equitable and just society.

Following a motion passed on June 23, 2022, Mid Ulster District Council committed to developing a Community Wealth Building (CWB) framework. The details of the motion are outlined below.

“Council commits to developing a fully funded Community Wealth Building framework with the purpose of democratising the economy by empowering community organisations, non-profits, social enterprise and co-operatives to be established or expanded with the ambition to create employment and grow local economies.”

To ensure an inclusive and effective approach, Communities and Place accepted responsibility for implementing the motion. The first step was to establish governance mechanisms involving key stakeholders following a three-tiered approach:

- Working Group: This group includes elected members, social business groups, DfC representatives, and relevant council officers (Appendix 1).
- Cross Departmental Officer Group: Utilising the existing Leadership Team to implement CWB across all council services. (Appendix 1)
- Community Planning: The Working Group will engage with the Community Planning Strategic Board to ensure strategic, cross-sectoral involvement.

The first CWB Working Group meeting, facilitated by DTNI took place on the 22nd of February 2023 to introduce the five principles of CWB, discuss best practices, regional examples, and potential local actions, along with agreeing on the groups Draft Terms of Reference.

Actions for Developing and Delivering a CWB Framework in Mid Ulster

Engage expertise: Secure support from the Department for Communities (DfC) to employ the CWB expertise of Development Trusts Northern Ireland (DTNI).

Support and facilitate the CWB working group: Enhance support and facilitation for the CWB working group to ensure effective collaboration and progress.

Map current CWB provision: Conduct comprehensive mapping of existing activities within Mid Ulster to identify potential alignment to CWB principles.

Research and development of test and learn actions: Undertake thorough research to develop potential test and learn actions that can be piloted in Mid Ulster.

Develop a 'Next Steps' action plan: Create a detailed action plan outlining the subsequent steps for CWB development in Mid Ulster.

Support regional CWB development: Share insights and elements of the test and learn actions to assist other Councils in starting their CWB initiatives and contribute to regional CWB recommendations.

Methodology for Test and Learn Projects

To effectively apply the principles of Community Wealth Building (CWB) to current Council projects, a structured methodology was followed. This approach ensured thorough understanding and integration of CWB principles into existing initiatives. The steps undertaken are detailed below:

1 Initial Meeting with Community and Place Officers

A meeting was convened with the Community and Place offices to discuss the five principles of CWB: Inclusive ownership, local procurement, fair employment, use of land and property for community benefit, and democratic finance.

The purpose of this meeting was to identify existing council projects where these principles could be effectively applied.

This discussion helped pinpoint potential projects and areas where CWB could enhance economic and social outcomes.

2 Identification of Current Projects

During the initial meeting, a comprehensive review of ongoing projects within the council was conducted. Projects that aligned well with the principles of CWB were identified for further exploration and potential integration.

3 One-to-One Interviews

To gain deeper insights, one-to-one interviews were conducted with key stakeholder departments involved in the identified projects.

These interviews aimed to understand the current position of the projects, challenges faced, and opportunities for incorporating CWB principles. The meetings included senior managers and team members.

4 Site Visits and meetings

A site visit to an identified project was carried out to observe first-hand the number and quality of council assets. A follow up meeting with the local Chamber of Commerce explored if they regularly used assets owned by the council and their appetite for ownership.

The visits provided practical insights into the potential of an asset transfer project, local governance structures and potential community impact of asset ownership.

5 Department Meetings

Meetings were held with several departments (Communities & Place, Corporate Services, Capital Planning, Procurement & Finance, Outdoor Recreation & Economic Development) to discuss CWB and the integration of CWB principles into their respective workstreams. The sessions were used to gauge knowledge of CWB and to encourage cross-departmental collaboration to implementing the principles of CWB. Officers were encouraged to explore approaches for integrating CWB into their workstreams.

6 CWB Educational Awareness with the CWB working group

Speakers on various topics were invited to present their work and its connection with community wealth building. Organisations invited to present included:

Northern Mutual

The Northern Mutual is a co-operative society registered with the Financial Conduct Authority and set up for the purposes of establishing a mutual regional bank in Northern Ireland that would address the access to finance principle.

Social Value Engine

The Social Value Engine was jointly developed and is co-owned by Rose Regeneration and East Riding of Yorkshire Council in response to the Public Services (Social Value Act 2012), which requires public bodies to think about how they can secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits. Understanding the social value of projects is crucial to the continued wellbeing of society, but it can be challenging to measure and evidence it. The Social Value Engine tool helps to simplify that process.

Participatory Budgeting

Coordinated by Community Places, Participatory Budgeting (PB), can be used to allocate spending from a range of sources. PB is much more than just deciding how resources are allocated. It provides opportunities to engage in non-traditional ways that reach out to people who don't often have a voice.

Community Wealth Building Partnerships

The establishment of two place-based partnerships by DTNI represent a tangible effort to advance the concept of Community Wealth Building in ways that can respond to local economic challenges and social issues across Northern Ireland. They represent a collaborative effort by community anchor organisations to ground the five pillars of CWB in ways that can create lasting benefits for individuals, cross-sectoral businesses and communities within Larne and the North-West.

Credit Unions MUDU hosted a CWB meeting with the Irish League and Ulster Federation of Credit Unions (CU) to facilitate a meaningful dialogue on community wealth building. The aim was to explore how local credit unions can play a pivotal role in providing accessible finance to community and voluntary sectors for social investments.

Project Summaries

Fair Employment and Just Labour Markets

Introduction

The Mid Ulster District Council Corporate Services team embarked on a test and learn project to explore the principles of Community Wealth Building (CWB) and its application to fair employment and just labour markets. The project aimed to develop a Good Employment Charter, emphasising fair practices within the council. The ambition for the future is for the council to be recognised as an accredited Living Wage employer.

The council successfully drew up and published a Good Employment Charter, outlining its commitments to fair wages, employee well-being, and local economic impact. The Good Employment Charter can be found on the Council's website. The test and learn project was an internal exercise, allowing the council's Corporate Services team to better understand CWB principles and how they could be addressed using current working practices.



Achievements and Learning

The Good Employment Charter was designed to articulate the council's commitment to fair employment practices. Key aspects include fair pay policies, employee engagement, career progression through learning and development, health and well-being initiatives, and the promotion of diversity and inclusivity. During its development, the team recognised a challenge with securing Living Wage accreditation from the [Living Wage Foundation](#) due to a requirement that all third-party staff engaged by the council be paid a wage slightly higher than the National Living Wage. Achieving this accreditation would necessitate amending the council's procurement policy to include a 'social clause' mandating that all suppliers and contractors pay the Living Wage.

While the council already ensures fair and competitive wages for all employees based on equal pay principles, without addressing this procurement policy issue, accreditation remains unattainable. Becoming an accredited Living Wage Employer would ensure that all council staff, including third-party contractors, earn a wage that meets the cost of living, thereby protecting them from in-work poverty and supporting the council's commitment to community wealth building.



Recommendations and Next Steps

The establishment of the Good Employment Charter is a significant milestone in the council's CWB efforts and should be integrated into future staff engagement and awareness initiatives. Enhancing employment skills is crucial for increasing employability and providing "good jobs", which are essential for broader policy objectives like poverty reduction. Local employers and public sector partners should be encouraged to develop their own Good Employment Charters, following the council's lead.

Amend Procurement Policy

Consult with the Living Wage Foundation to revise the procurement policy, incorporating a social clause to ensure third-party staff receive the Living Wage. Consider a phased implementation for existing contracts.

Engage Anchor Institutions and the Business Community

Expand the Good Employment Charter's influence by engaging public sector anchor institutions within Mid Ulster through the Community Planning Partnership to create their own charters. Share insights with Economic Development to encourage local businesses to adopt similar principles, particularly regarding Living Wage payments, supporting the council's goal of obtaining Living Wage Foundation accreditation.

Measuring Success

Employee Satisfaction Regularly survey employees to gauge satisfaction with the charter's provisions, focusing on satisfaction scores, retention rates, and engagement levels.

Wage Equity Monitor wage disparities and act where necessary. Key metrics include the ratio of highest to lowest salaries, the percentage of employees earning the Real Living Wage, and wage growth over time.

Local Economic Impact Evaluate the Charter's contribution to the local economy by measuring spending with local suppliers, job creation, and procurement support for local businesses.

Career Progression Track employee development through promotion rates, training participation, and internal mobility.

Supplier Compliance Assess compliance with the Living Wage requirement among third-party suppliers, tracking the percentage of compliant suppliers and any changes over time.

Conclusion

The establishment of the Good Employment Charter is a significant milestone in the council's CWB efforts and should be integrated into future staff engagement and awareness initiatives. Enhancing employment skills is crucial for increasing employability and providing "good jobs," which are essential for broader policy objectives like poverty reduction. Local employers and public sector partners should be encouraged to develop their own Good Employment Charters, following the council's lead.

Making Financial Power Work

Introduction

Mid Ulster District Council's Outdoor Recreation team embarked on a test and learn project to apply the principles of Community Wealth Building (CWB) to a capital project in Altmore Cappagh. The goal was to introduce a participatory budgeting model at scale (mainstream PB). However, the project faced several challenges that prevented its successful implementation.

To involve social partners in the test and learn, local credit unions were invited to a CWB workshop. Unfortunately, the timing clashed with new regulations being addressed by most local branches and therefore the workshop was postponed. A follow up meeting with Credit Union members from the CWB working group discussed how social lending can, and has, benefited capital projects driven by the local community.



Challenges of using the PB model

Timing posed a key challenge for the Almore Cappa project, particularly regarding when to introduce participatory budgeting (PB). Ideally, PB should start at the project's outset to ensure everyone understands the process and timelines. However, consultants were already deeply engaged in community outreach for the Almore Cappa project when PB was considered, introducing the model could have potentially delayed the agreed planning schedule.

Another challenge was the absence of a confirmed budget when the PB process was proposed. The standard PB process requires a dedicated budget for community allocation through voting, which was not available at the time of the test and learn exercise.

To support the CWB test and learn initiative, the Outdoor Recreation team evaluated all suitable projects for PB application potential. Despite recognising its benefits for stakeholder involvement, most ongoing projects were too far along in design and community engagement to integrate the mainstream PB model effectively.



Recommendations for Next Steps

Early Introduction of PB

To successfully implement the participatory budgeting (PB) model in future projects, it should be introduced at the design stage, allowing the community to engage in decision-making from the start. Projects should be carefully selected for the application of the PB model. Ideally, these should be projects that are in the early stages of development.

Budget Planning

A confirmed budget is essential before implementing mainstream or other PB initiatives, enabling the community to influence how funds are allocated.

Training & Capacity

Additionally, training on Community Wealth Building and PB principles should be provided to departments involved in capital projects, with potential extensions to contractors. This ensures a focus on social value and not simply a cost benefit approach. Meaningful community involvement in resource prioritisation and project governance should also be covered in the training.

Cross-departmental Collaboration

Engaging other council departments, particularly Regeneration Officers in Economic Development, throughout the project lifecycle is essential. This cross-departmental collaboration ensures a holistic approach to project delivery, helping others understand the value of a capital project and the decision-making process.

Conclusion

The test and learn project, despite its challenges, revealed the significant potential of participatory budgeting (PB) as a catalyst for community wealth building. By incorporating PB at the design stage, the council can create opportunities for broader community engagement, ensuring transparency and giving residents a direct role in resource allocation. This inclusive approach builds a sense of ownership and accountability, leading to more equitable and effective outcomes that align with the principles of community wealth building.

To maximise the impact of PB, it is essential to integrate both PB and CWB principles early in project planning. This proactive approach lays a strong foundation for success and sustainability. Moreover, engaging social lenders, such as local credit unions, can further empower communities by providing access to financial resources and literacy programs, enhancing their ability to participate meaningfully in PB initiatives. By embedding these strategies, the council can drive inclusive economic development and social well-being in future community projects.

Plural Ownership of the Economy

Introduction

Mid Ulster District Council's Communities team initiated a test and learn project to apply the plural ownership of the economy principle of Community Wealth Building (CWB) to The Bellaghy Bawn Writers Residence project.

Project Overview

The project aimed to explore and present various models of community ownership to determine the best legal structure for establishing a management board to oversee the ownership of the Bellaghy Bawn Writers Residence. Currently owned by the Department for Communities and Mid Ulster District Council, the asset may eventually be transferred to a community-based board to operate as a social enterprise.



Achievements and learning

This project offers several valuable learning opportunities and valuable insights into applying the plural ownership of the economy principle of CWB. The importance of clearly defining community within CWB, developing robust frameworks for measuring success, and understanding how the community benefits from the wealth created were the key takeaways.

Governance and Ownership Transfer

The process of transferring ownership from public entities to a new community-based board presented a unique opportunity to learn about the complexities of legal, financial, and administrative arrangements. This included negotiating clear terms of transfer, understanding asset valuation, and managing liabilities. Successfully navigating these aspects can set a precedent for future community ownership initiatives.

Capacity Building

The project highlights the critical need for capacity to support new community-led entities. This ensures that communities are not only capable of managing significant assets but also of driving long-term community benefits such as job creation, enhanced local services, and increased civic engagement.



Working with a Newly Established Board

Engaging with a newly formed community board provides an opportunity to build trust, establish effective communication channels, and clarify roles and responsibilities. This process also allows the board to develop its credibility and capacity, creating a strong foundation for managing the project and similar future initiatives.

These learning opportunities emphasise the importance of strategic planning, transparent communication, robust governance, and aligning the project with Community Wealth Building (CWB) principles, such as job creation, procurement, and enhanced community engagement. Tracking metrics like community engagement, social value, economic impact, and governance effectiveness will help in measuring the project's success.



Conclusion

The Bellaghy Bawn Writers Residence project serves as a critical case study in applying the principles of plural ownership within Community Wealth Building (CWB). At its core, plural ownership of the economy seeks to decentralise economic power by diversifying the ownership of assets, ensuring that wealth is generated and retained within the community. This project features the transformative potential of transferring asset ownership from public entities to community-based structures, thereby advancing local governance, accountability, and resilience.

The project illuminates the importance of creating legal and governance frameworks that empower communities to take an active role in managing and benefiting from local resources. By transitioning the Bellaghy Bawn to a community-managed social enterprise, the council not only aims to preserve cultural and historical assets but also to generate sustainable economic and social value that is reinvested into the local community.

Moreover, the project highlights the critical need for capacity building and robust governance structures to support new community-led entities. This ensures that they are not only capable of managing significant assets but also of driving long-term community benefits such as job creation, enhanced local services, and increased civic engagement.

Ultimately, the success of this project will be measured by its ability to exemplify the principles of plural ownership, demonstrating that community-led economic models can effectively contribute to the broader goals of CWB. By embedding these principles, the council paves the way for a more inclusive and resilient local economy, where wealth is shared, and the community is actively involved in shaping its own future.

Socially Productive Use of Land & Property

Introduction

The selection of Fivemiletown as a testbed for applying the socially productive use of land and property under the principles of Community Wealth Building (CWB) reflects a forward-thinking approach by the council to local governance and economic development. The project, centred on the potential transfer of council-owned assets to the local community, to serve as a model for how public resources can be leveraged to empower communities and drive local economic resilience.



Project Overview and Key Insights

The Council's Capital's team with support from the communities team identified four towns and villages across the Mid Ulster district that included listing all council owned assets in the places. The village of Fivemiletown was selected as a typical rural town that offered the potential of demonstrating the use of a community asset transfer (CAT). The Fivemiletown project was not without challenges. The main challenge was the list of council owned assets available did not fit with the strategic objectives of the group. Consequently, the group chose to pursue the acquisition of a privately-owned asset that offered greater potential for achieving their objectives.

Achievements and Learning

The project provided valuable insights into the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) process for Mid Ulster and its link to the principles of CWB. Key learnings include the necessity of a clear, transparent, and legally sound process for transferring assets, and the critical role of local governance in ensuring that transferred assets are managed effectively by the group who undertake the acquisition. The importance of securing sustainable revenue streams for the upkeep and management of assets was also identified as crucial, reinforcing the need for comprehensive capacity building initiatives to support community groups interested in community ownership.



Next Steps & Recommendations

CAT Policy Development

The Council should focus on formalising a CAT policy that aligns with its broader asset management strategies and CWB principles. Such a policy would establish a framework to guide the transfer process, ensuring that the assets being disposed of are an attractive opportunity for community groups and that groups are well-prepared to take on the responsibilities of asset ownership. This approach not only facilitates successful CATs but also strengthens the council's commitment to place-based working and the principles of CWB.

Capacity Building

Capacity building is essential for this process. Targeted investments in training, mentorship, and networking opportunities for both council staff and community groups, particularly in areas with low community engagement, will build the necessary competencies for effective asset management.

Ongoing Community Engagement

Including collaboration with local organisations such as the Chambers of Commerce, social enterprises and community anchors will be vital in ensuring that the asset transfer process is inclusive and reflective of local needs.

Measuring Success

To gauge the success of CATs, this test and learn project highlights that the council, when developing its policy should implement metrics that track activities such as community engagement, asset utilisation, social value, and economic impact. These metrics will provide a clear understanding of the effectiveness of asset transfers in delivering community benefits and driving CWB through local economic regeneration and development.

Conclusion

The Fivemiletown project highlighted the importance of end use in the asset acquisition process. While the available council-owned assets did not align with the community group's needs the decision to pursue a privately-owned asset enabled the group to potentially take control of a property that offered greater scope for local economic and social development, building wealth in their community. This experience stresses the need for a broader and targeted approach by the council to community asset transfer. One that also recognises the value of private assets in achieving the socially productive use of land and property. By supporting the capacity of communities both directly and indirectly via the provision of clear information in pursuing the most suitable assets, whether public or private, the council can create more resilient and empowered local wealth building communities across the district of Mid Ulster.



Progressive Procurement of Goods & Services

Introduction

In its commitment to progressing a sustainable and equitable local economy, this test and learn project by the Finance team embarked on an exploratory project to align its procurement policy with ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) principles. This initiative was well-timed to become part of a broader strategic effort to incorporate Community Wealth Building into the council's operations. The aim was to ensure that procurement activities not only meet the needs of the council, but also contribute positively to the local economy, society, and environment.

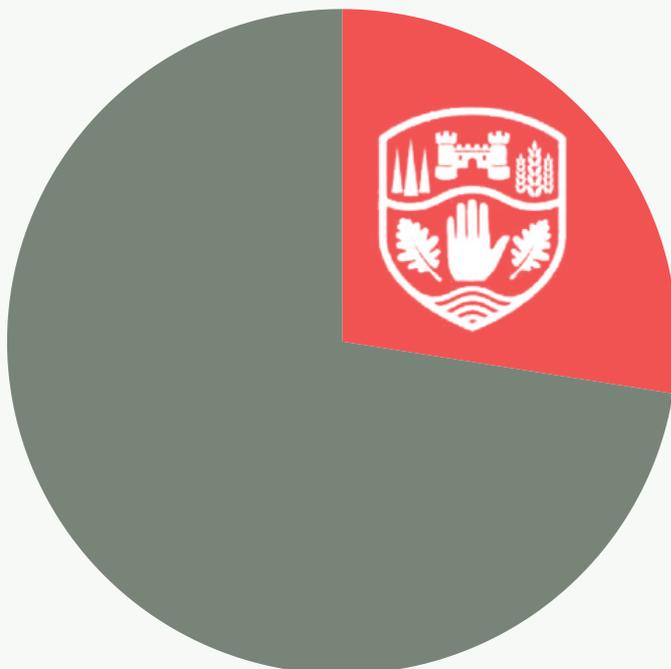


Project Overview

The procurement and finance team conducted an analysis of current spending, filtering by postcodes to identify where the council's finances were spent. They found that of the approximated £40M total of third-party spend, £11M (or 28%) was spent within the Mid Ulster district in 2022/23 financial year. The team also examined the social value clause in the procurement policy, which is not currently applied to projects £30,000 and below.

Achievements and Learning

The project presented the potential for aligning procurement practices with ESG goals and CWB principles. It also introduced the need for tracking local spending for smaller projects, and for raising awareness of existing clauses and advice within current policies such as considering local suppliers first for contracts by commissioning staff.



**£11 Million
(28%)
Spent
Locally**

2022/23

Recommendations for Next Steps

Aligning ESG with other Council Frameworks

The council can enhance its policies, operations, and strategic oversight by embedding Community Wealth Building (CWB) and ESG principles across procurement, performance measurement, and reporting. Updating the procurement policy to reflect these values will align spending with goals of environmental sustainability, social equity, and good governance, ensuring decisions contribute positively to local economies and society. Incorporating CWB and ESG into senior management reporting and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) further strengthens accountability, supports strategic alignment, and enables effective tracking of progress toward sustainability and equity goals.

Tracking Local Spend

Another key opportunity lies in improving the tracking of local spending. By introducing a new module in the financial accounting system to monitor expenditures below £30,000 and highlighting this requirement in existing documentation templates used by commissioning officers, the council can enhance transparency and accountability. Research supports that transparent tracking of local spending raises community trust and bolsters the local economy, aligning financial practices with community-focused objectives and strengthening local economic resilience.

Staff Awareness & Training

Increasing staff awareness of CWB and ESG principles through educational sessions is crucial for embedding these values into the council's organisational culture. By ensuring that all employees understand and consider these principles in their daily operations, the council can build a cohesive and informed approach to sustainable and equitable practices, enhancing commitment to these values across all departments.

Economic Development Collaboration

The finance team's collaboration with the economic development department in organising "Meet the Buyer" events presents another valuable opportunity. Engaging with local businesses through these events not only stimulates local economic activity but also supports smaller suppliers with limited capacity. This engagement strengthens the council's relationship with the community, creating a dynamic and resilient local marketplace.

Measuring Success: Key Metrics

To assess the impact of the project, the council could consider tracking and reporting on the following metrics:

Local Spending Measure the percentage of council spending that goes to local suppliers.

Social Value Evaluate the social impact of procurement practices, such as job creation and community development.

Environmental Impact Monitor the environmental impact of procurement practices, such as the use of environmentally friendly suppliers and products.

Governance Assess the effectiveness of governance practices, such as transparency in procurement processes and adherence to ESG principles.

Conclusion

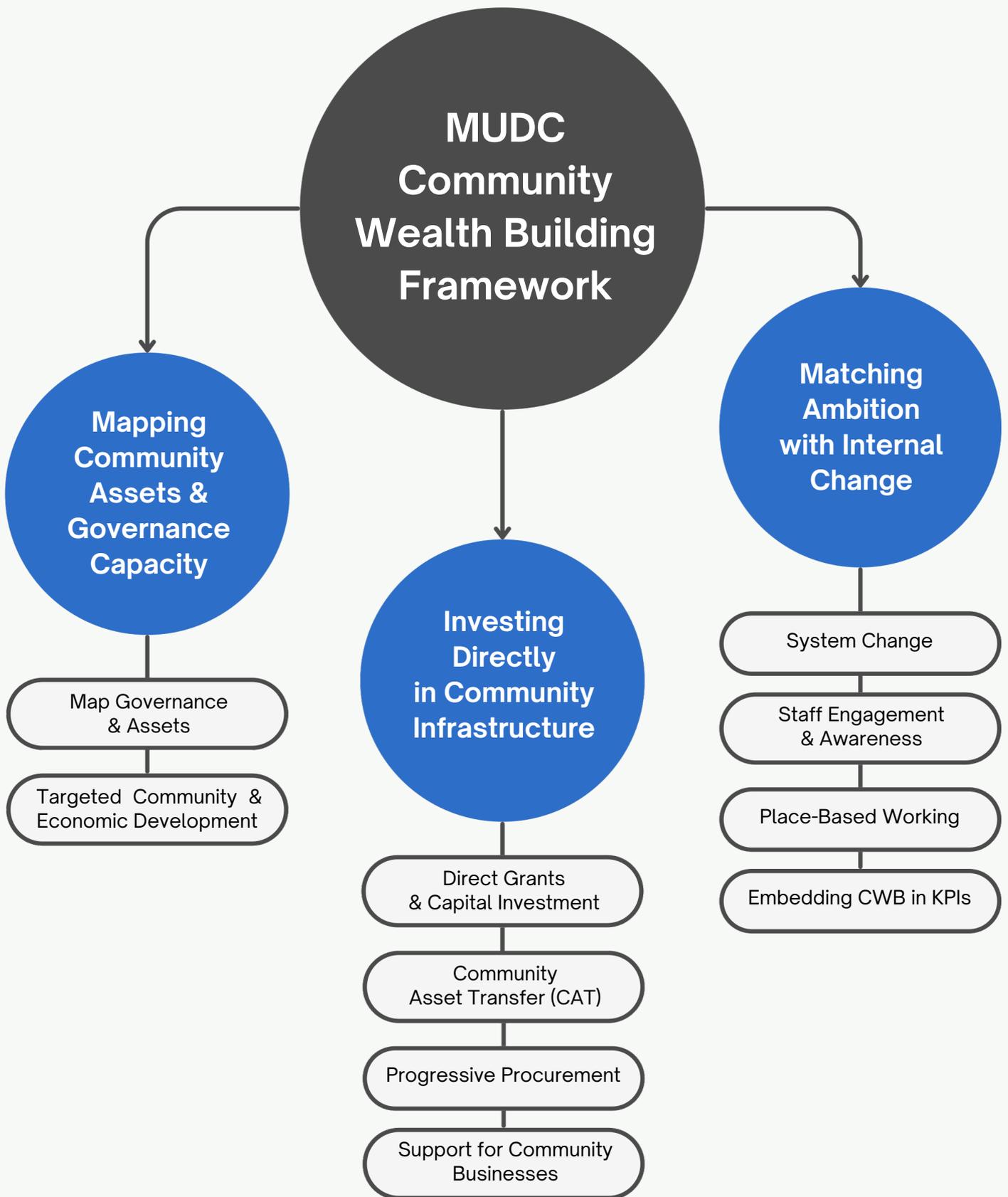
The project's learning addresses the importance of tracking local spending, integrating, promoting and reminding staff about the social value clauses in procurement policies. It highlighted opportunities for enhancing awareness among staff regarding CWB and ESG principles, ensuring these values are embedded in all aspects of council operations.

In conclusion, this project sets a precedent for wealth building in Mid Ulster District Council by advancing CWB through procurement practices. By embracing these principles, the council not only enhances local economic resilience but also strengthens community ties and environmental stewardship, paving the way for a sustainable future in the district.

Key Learnings from the Test and Learn Projects

Key Learnings

Mid Ulster District Council embarked on five test-and-learn projects to understand how officers and departments could integrate Community Wealth Building principles into their daily working practices. These projects revealed varied experiences; some principles were seamlessly incorporated into existing activities, while others presented challenges. The outcomes highlighted both successes and obstacles, providing valuable insights into the approach needed to fulfil the council's commitment to "develop a fully funded Community Wealth Building framework with the purpose of democratising the economy by empowering community organisations, non-profits, social enterprises, and co-operatives to create employment and grow local economies." The insights from the test and learn projects have been organised into three distinct categories, which shape the foundational framework for community wealth building in Mid Ulster. These categories are:



Matching Ambition with Internal Change

The test and learn projects highlighted the need for MUDC to ensure that its strong vision for CWB is reflected in internal organisational practices. This involves implementing a systematic transformation that aligns organisational processes with CWB principles that are applied across all departments of the Council.

System Change

Implement systemic transformation aligning organisational processes with CWB principles. This may involve revising existing processes and structures within Mid Ulster District Council to ensure they fully support and align with the goals of CWB. It may also involve changes to policies, procedures, and operational frameworks to embed CWB principles at every level.

Staff Engagement and Awareness

Support the development of a toolkit for support staff in understanding and implementing CWB. This toolkit should aim to educate and empower staff across all levels of the organisation about CWB principles. It could include awareness sessions, guidelines, and resources to help staff incorporate CWB considerations into their daily work, adopting a culture of awareness and CWB knowledge.

Place-Based Working

Adopt a place-based approach to service delivery. This approach suggests breaking down service silos and ensures that services provided by MUDC are tailored to meet local needs and contexts within the district. It involves collaborating closely with local communities and stakeholders to develop solutions that are responsive to specific geographic areas and their unique challenges.

Embedding CWB in Key Performance Indicators

Integrate CWB principles into Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) across all departments.

By incorporating CWB into KPIs, MUDC can systematically measure its progress towards CWB goals. This integration ensures that CWB becomes a core component of performance evaluation and accountability mechanisms within the organisation, driving continuous improvement and alignment with strategic objectives.

Mapping Community Assets & Governance Capacity

The test and learn projects emphasised the importance of empowering communities to own and manage local assets. This involves a thorough recording not only of physical council owned assets but also of local community governance structures, community assets and participation levels in community development to gauge the potential for local ownership and identification of areas that require support and capacity building.

Map Governance and Assets

Conduct a comprehensive mapping of local governance structures and community assets across the district in any future surveys or consultations. This involves identifying and cataloguing existing governance structures, community organisations, and resources within different areas of the district. This will help MUDC understand the distribution of assets and governance capacity across the district, identifying areas where support is needed to enhance local ownership and management of resources.

Targeted Community and Economic Development

Focus on enhancing community and business development in under-engaged areas. MUDC could aim to build capabilities and stimulate economic growth in communities that have historically had lower levels of engagement. This targeted approach ensures that all parts of the district benefit from CWB initiatives, promoting equitable development and participation.

Investing Directly in Community Infrastructure

The test and learn insights call for a need for robust organisations and social infrastructure. This involves providing financial support through grants and access to capital investments to nurture all levels of community organisations.

Direct Grants and Capital Investment

Provide financial support through grants and capital investments to community organisations. Work closer with local social lenders to identify opportunities for partnership working and even consider developing new financing models. MUDC already offers strategic funding to support community-driven initiatives and projects that contribute to CWB. This support helps build and maintain local infrastructure, encouraging sustainable development and resilience within communities.

Community Asset Transfer (CAT)

Facilitate the transfer of assets to community groups. By developing a CAT policy, MUDC enables local communities to take ownership and control of assets such as buildings or land. This transfer fosters community empowerment and enhances the long-term sustainability of local initiatives aligned with CWB principles.

Progressive Procurement

Implement procurement policies that prioritise local businesses and community enterprises. MUDC adjusts its procurement practices to favour local businesses and community enterprises when sourcing goods and services. This policy supports the local economy, promotes job creation, and strengthens community ties through economic partnerships.

Support for Community Businesses

Provide dedicated support to community businesses. MUDC to build its offer of resources, guidance, and networking opportunities to help community businesses thrive. This support enhances their contribution to the local economy and social well-being, reinforcing CWB goals through plural ownership and sustainable economic activities.

Conclusion

Conclusion

Over the past year, Mid Ulster District Council (MUDC) has piloted five test-and-learn projects to embed Community Wealth Building (CWB) principles across its operations and community initiatives. Each project reflected one of the five CWB pillars and revealed valuable insights, along with key challenges and opportunities.

A primary learning was the need to fully integrate CWB into internal council operations. This includes aligning organisational processes and policies, such as adopting a Good Employment Charter and pursuing Living Wage Foundation accreditation, to ensure consistency across departments. Empowering communities to manage local assets also emerged as essential, as illustrated by the Bellaghy Bawn Writers Residence project, which demonstrated the potential of community-led ownership and the need for clear governance and capacity-building.

The projects also underscored the importance of strong community organisations and resilient social infrastructure. Initiatives like Fivemiletown and the progressive procurement pilot showed how direct investment, fair procurement practices, and access to capital can strengthen local capacity and social value creation.

To build on these lessons, MUDC should develop a comprehensive CWB framework. Key actions include amending procurement policies to incorporate social value clauses, embedding CWB in performance indicators, and enhancing staff understanding through training. Additionally, MUDC should adopt a clear Community Asset Transfer policy and invest in community capacity building. Strategic infrastructure investment, via grants, capital access, and procurement reform, will further stimulate local economic growth.

Partnerships with local lenders and new finance models can also help communities participate more fully in CWB efforts. To ensure continued progress, MUDC should track indicators such as wage equity, employee satisfaction, community engagement, and economic impact.

In conclusion, the test-and-learn approach has equipped MUDC with a strong foundation to advance CWB. By embedding these principles into every level of governance and working collaboratively with stakeholders, MUDC can drive a more inclusive, resilient, and locally rooted economy - serving as a good practice model for Community Wealth Building in local government.

Appendices

Appendix 1

CWB Working Group/others involved in the Test and Learn Projects

Elected Members	Organisation	Name
	DUP	Cllr W Brown
	DUP	Cllr J Burton
	DUP	Cllr Eva Cahoon
	SF	Cllr S McPeake
	SF	Cllr C Corry
	SF	Cllr B McGuigan
	SF	Cllr N McAleer
	SF	Cllr G Bell
	SF	Cllr D Versani
	SDLP	Cllr M Quinn

DfC	Organisation	Name
	DfC	Bebhinn Ni Bhriain
	DfC	Lorraine Gallagher

Social Economy	Organisation	Name
	STEP	Fintan McAliskey
	Workspace	Georgina Grieve
	BEAM	Kathryn O'Neill
	Coalisland CU	Brian O'Neill
	Fairhill (Cookstown) CU	Alison McKay
	CWSAN	Conor Corr
	Ballinascreen CU	Patsy McShane
	Rural Action	Michael Kelly
	Superstars	May McAvoy

MUDC Officers	Department	Name
	Communities	Ryan Black
	Communities	Claire Linney
	Communities	Martina Totten
	T&L Lead (Plural Ownership)	Davina McCartney
	Finance	Claire McNally
	Economic	Fiona McKeown
	Economic	Paul McCreedy
	Labour Market Partnerships	Shelly Grimes
	T&L (Fair Employment)	Celene O'Neill
	T&L (Fair Employment)	Philip Moffett
Capital Team	Laura Porter	

Other Engagements

MUDC	Organisation	Name
	Economic Development Team	Full Team
	Capital Planning Team	Anne Marie Campbell
	Capital Planning Team	Terry Scullion
	Capital Planning Team	Laura Porter
	T&L Lead (Financial Power)	Paul Bailie
	T&L Lead (Financial Power)	Martin Conlon
	Procurement	Linda Ferguson
	SMT	Full team

Credit Unions	Organisation	Name
	Irish League of Credit Unions	Martin Fisher
Ulster Federation of Credit Unions	Gordon Smyth	

T&L Pilots	Organisation	Name
	Fivemiletown	Chamber of Commerce
Cappagh/Galbally	Community Reps	

Education & Awareness	Organisation	Name
	North West CWB Partnership	Brian O'Neill
	Living Wage Foundation	Mary McManus
	Mutual Bank	Bridget Meehan
	Rose Regeneration - Social Value Engine	Ivan Annibal
	Rose Regeneration - Social Value Engine	Conor McGale
	Community Places	Louise O'Kane

Delivery	Organisation	Name
	Development Trusts NI	Margaret Craig
Development Trusts NI	Charlie Fisher	



Comhairle Ceantair
Lár Uladh
Mid Ulster
District Council

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