

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL**EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND - ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT FOR JOBSEEKERS****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to alert Members to the latest European Social Fund call for proposals aimed at supporting jobseekers into employment and self-employment.
2. Policy Committee approval is being sought to agree to Officers collaborating with two known bidders on the proviso that only in-kind (rather than hard cash) mandatory match funding is used.

Information

3. Employment and skills are a cornerstone of the County Council's Plan '**Your Nottinghamshire, Your Future**' which is focused on increasing the number of jobs within the economy and ensuring that businesses can access the skilled workers they need, both now and in the future.
4. The European Social Fund (ESF) supports projects aimed at increasing employment and skills at all levels across Nottinghamshire: higher-level skills, entry-level skills and employability skills. ESF will also address disadvantage in the labour market. 20% of funds are used to support active inclusion related activities, helping those furthest from the labour market move closer to employment, recognising that everyone should share the benefits of growth.
5. To access ESF monies, projects are selected through calls. A call is an open invitation for applicants to submit outline submissions against a published specification. This sets out the value of funding available, the outputs and type of activity sought, and the timetable and process by which projects will come forward and be assessed and selected.
6. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is responsible overall for ESF in England. Calls are published at regular intervals through the lifetime of the ESF programme, with the timing of calls and their content discussed between DWP and the Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire European Structural and Investment Fund Sub-Committee (D2N2 ESIF Sub-Committee), for which Councillor Reg Adair is the Council's representative.
7. There are currently two open calls which must cover the entire D2N2 LEP area:
 - a) Access to Employment for Jobseekers and Inactive People, and;
 - b) Careers and Employability Service for those at risk of becoming NEET (a young person "Not in Education, Employment, or Training").

8. The subject of this report is the former funding call, as Futures Advice, Skills and Employment (hereafter referred to as Futures - the social enterprise jointly owned by Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottingham City Council), are in the process of consulting on a potential bid.
9. Approximately £8 million of ESF is available (covering the entire D2N2 LEP area) for the *Access to Employment for Jobseekers and Inactive People* call. This call aims to support jobseekers into employment and self-employment. The expectation is that tailored individual support (which does not duplicate existing funded services such as the national careers service) will be offered. This is anticipated to be in the form of:
 - mentoring to help participants realise their careers and skills aspirations;
 - developing training pathways to increase the number of graduates employed in graduate level jobs;
 - support individuals in rural areas to address access to work issues;
 - ongoing in-work mentoring to support sustained employment, and;
 - skills training to increase individual prospects of employment.
10. With links to the D2N2 Growth Hub, through the ESF funding, a 'D2N2 Employment Service' will be created offering a range of added-value services. This includes: supporting those that face particular labour market disadvantage to compete in the labour market: providing support for women at a disadvantage in the labour market, to contribute to efforts to reduce the gender employment gap.
11. The *State of the Nation 2017; Social Mobility in Great Britain* report from the Social Mobility Commission, ranks all 324 local authorities in England in terms of life chances of someone born into a disadvantaged background. Ashfield (ranked 317), Mansfield (ranked 315) and Newark & Sherwood (ranked 323) were pointed out as 'cold spots' for areas experiencing social mobility problems. The report contends that children from those areas face big challenges in their educational and careers prospects from the outset. As we want the residents of Nottinghamshire to have the opportunity to acquire the skills and qualifications they need to build a rewarding life and career, one route is through the County Council fully engaging with the current ESF bid process to guarantee delivery of activity in these priority areas.
12. ESF meets only a proportion of the cost of any project. Typically, this equates to 50% of the total eligible project costs. The remainder of the project costs have to be funded from other sources, this is called match funding and can come in the form of hard cash and in-kind. In-kind match funding is where an organisation or individual provides a service or product to the project free of charge.
13. There are two known D2N2 LEP wide bids:

Option 1	A partnership involving Futures, Derbyshire County Council, Derby City Council and Nottingham City Council (as the Accountable Body, Nottingham City Council will ensure that ESF monies are spent in accordance with the master Funding Agreement)
Option 2	Led by the incumbent benefactor of current ESF funding, Derby Business College

14. Preliminary work by Officers has concluded there is sufficient alignment with the Council's existing work, to qualify staff time as in-kind match funding. Therefore, to increase the chances of Nottinghamshire getting both its fair share of the D2N2-wide funding opportunity and to influence the design to direct support to communities most at need, Policy Committee

approval is being sought to permit Officers to collaborate with both known bidders to full bid submission.

Other Options Considered

15. The call was launched in October 2018 as an open and competitive application process, with an indicative allocation of European Union funding for the D2N2 LEP area. Policy Committee could decide not to approve the Council's participation in the ESF funding call. However, from the start, it was very clear that there was widespread support for a D2N2-led proposal. A submission will be made with or without the County Council from the two proposals referenced in the body of the report. It is important that the successful contractor does not disadvantage Nottinghamshire and does not to focus on clients that will provide a quick win first. The Council will look to influence the targeting and support of those clients that have more challenging and complex needs. This approach will ensure that the programme delivers both a quality intervention and the quantity required. It is for this reason that the 'do nothing' option was discounted. Only full involvement by the Council can guarantee the needs of our priority communities are met.

Reasons for Recommendations

16. Developing a skilled workforce is a top priority for Nottinghamshire County Council, and embedded in our economic and community activity. The Council is committed to remaining an active and influential partner with the D2N2 LEP and to maximising the impact of ESF. This has been evidenced more recently through two exciting initiatives: (a) the award-winning Careers Local programme, which reaches out to young people to give them a better chance of transitioning from education to work, thereby reducing the proportion who become unemployed in adult life, and (b) the D2N2 Digital Business Growth Programme to support growing businesses to explore and introduce new and emerging ICT products and services.

Statutory and Policy Implications

17. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

18. An immovable deadline for submission of full bids has been set for 28 December 2018. The County Council is in the position to respond positively to the opportunity by influencing and supporting both proposals. Whilst staff time will be used as match-funding, there is no requirement for the County Council to commit hard cash. In the unlikely event of this position differing, a further report will be brought to the next available Policy Committee for consideration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Policy Committee:

- 1) Agrees to Officers collaborating with the two known bidders to the latest European Social Fund (ESF) call aimed at supporting jobseekers into employment and self-employment;
- 2) Approves Officers to continue to support both bidders to full submission, on the condition that only in-kind match funding is required from the County Council, and;
- 3) Agrees to receive a future report detailing the targets and outcomes expected in Nottinghamshire from the successful ESF bid(s).

COUNCILLOR MRS KAY CUTTS, MBE
Leader of the County Council

For any enquiries about this report please contact: Nicola M^cCoy-Brown, Growth and Economic Development, Tel: 0115 9772580

Constitutional Comments [KK 21/11/2018]

19. The proposals in this report are within the remit of the Policy Committee.

Financial Comments [RWK 22/11/2018]

20. The financial implications are set out in paragraph 18 of the report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- *The fifth annual 'State of the nation'* report from the Social Mobility Commission, published 28 November 2017 is available online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/state-of-the-nation-2017>

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All