

**19<sup>th</sup> January 2016****Agenda Item: 4****REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, PLACE****NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL WORK CLUBS****Purpose of the Report**

1. To inform Committee of the more specialised and targeted provision for job seekers becoming available within the suite of European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) projects.
2. To notify Committee of this alternative provision's impact on the Nottinghamshire County Council Work Clubs and resulting proposals to withdraw County Council direct delivery during 2016/17 financial year.

**Background**

2. The Nottinghamshire Work Club initiative was established in 2012 with the first Work Clubs in libraries in Worksop and Sutton-in-Ashfield. Since then, the network has expanded to cover nine libraries in the County (at least one in each district). Work Clubs typically open for two hours each week, are organised by a co-ordinator (member of the Economic Development team) and benefit from ad hoc support from library staff and volunteers. The total budget for 2015-16 is £52,000 which covers the core costs for the co-ordinator post, library staff time, training and facilities.
3. As the economy has changed over recent years, the demographic of people attending Work Clubs has also changed. Initially, attendees were more likely to be work-ready, seeking general advice and support on finding work. Now, attendees are presenting with more complex needs (such as long term health and mental health conditions, debt and welfare issues). The cohort tends to be older people who have been unemployed for a long time which means they would benefit from more intensive support to re-enter the labour market. As a consequence, the likelihood of the Work Club initiative delivering significant job outcomes is significantly reduced. The Work Clubs can only provide a superficial service and do not have the expertise or resources to deal with the aforementioned more complex needs.
4. More specialised and targeted provision will be available within the suite of European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) projects. The prevailing view therefore is that this future provision will more effectively meet the needs of the Work Club clients. The second phase of procurement is currently taking place and

the successful consortium is likely to be appointed in late summer/early autumn 2016.

5. As part of the budget challenge for 2016-17, the Economic Development Service has been tasked with delivering a saving of £80,000; this saving is included within the 'Options for Change' analysis that was approved at Policy Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2015. It is proposed that a proportion of the saving (approximately £26,000) will be delivered by enabling clients onto the new provision and ceasing the Work Clubs approximately halfway through the 2016/17 financial year.

### **Information and Advice**

6. More formalised and targeted support provision will be available through the ESIF programmes which are being procured by the D2N2 LEP and partners. Nottinghamshire County Council will have a strategic role and input into the planning and delivery of the provision. These programmes will be delivered by organisations with demonstrable capacity and skills to deliver in the local areas. The provision, due to be delivered in the new financial year, will provide for both job-ready clients and those with additional barriers.
7. The European Social Fund 'Building Better Opportunities' programme will target adult employment and adult skills provision for disadvantaged groups considered to be furthest away from the labour market. This beneficiary group includes: older long-term unemployed people, young people, women returners, people with multiple and complex needs and the financially excluded. The first phase of procurement has been completed and it is envisaged that the successful consortia will commence delivery in the late summer/early autumn 2016.
8. Nottinghamshire County Council has recently invested in '220 Soft Universal Skills' software which is a user friendly on line learning tool, available in libraries and other council computers. The software provides comprehensive guides to all areas of job search skills including: CV writing, cover letters and completing online applications.
9. Commencing in January 2016, the Economic Development Service will develop a risk assessed closure plan for the Work Clubs. The plan will include consultations with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), lead organisations for the ESIF Building Better Opportunities project and colleagues in the library service. To ensure that clients are supported, the changes will be discussed at each Work Club to ensure clients are appraised of the changes and know how to access alternative provision.

### **Staffing Implications**

8. The Work Clubs have been led by the Work Club Co-ordinator post, which is a temporary post on the Economic Development establishment. This post has been published on the Section 188 notice which means that it is potentially at risk of redundancy. The corporate procedures for supporting people at risk of redundancy will be implemented should the closure plan be accepted, which will include access to redeployment support for the incumbent post holder.

## **Reason(s) for Recommendations**

9. The 'options for change' proposal to cease funding direct delivery of County Council Work Clubs during the next financial year has been made because of the new and more targeted provision which will be available to support Work Club clients. Budget pressures exist within the Economic Development Service and the continuation of funding for Work Clubs (in light of the new provision) would not be the most effective use of the Council's resources. The new ESIF provision is intended to be more intensive and should more effectively support clients in their journey towards work.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

10. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described within the body of the report.

### **Implications for Service Users**

11. A risk and closure plan is being developed to ensure that the pastoral needs of the Service Users (averaging at four across the nine County Council Work Clubs) are met to the point of transfer to the alternative provision.

### **Financial implications**

12. Allocating the funding as outlined in the body of the report will ensure the continued delivery of the County Council's Work Clubs until the alternative provision is in place.

### **Human Resources Implications**

13. Consultation and engagement with staff affected and the trade unions will continue during the transition period to alternative provision.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Committee notes the content of this report including the intention to continue to fund County Council Work Clubs during the transition period to alternative provision, which will be available from September 2016.

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**Corporate Director, Place**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**  
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### **Constitutional Comments [SLB 08/01/2016]**

This report is for noting only.

### **Financial Comments [SES 07/01/16]**

The financial implications are set out in the report.

**Background Papers**

*Spending Proposals 2016/17-2018/19* – report to Policy Committee, 9-12-2015, published

**Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All