

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

RURAL LEADER PROGRAMME: MANAGEMENT RESOURCES

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek Policy Committee approval to extend the resources required to manage the continued delivery of the Nottinghamshire LEADER programme funded by the European Union.

Information

2. Nottinghamshire is a great place to start or grow a business, and has a vibrant rural and visitor economy. The council and its partners have successfully capitalised on funding opportunities to accelerate growth and support local businesses to thrive and prosper.
3. The LEADER programme (an acronym in French meaning *Links between actions for the development of the rural economy*) is a European Union initiative to support rural development projects initiated at the local level in order to revitalise rural areas and create jobs.
4. The South Nottinghamshire and North Nottinghamshire LEADER programmes provide grant funding to develop and grow new and existing businesses, strengthen the development of the rural economy and communities, create new jobs, develop and retain skills and capitalise on the area's industry, heritage, culture and land.
5. The LEADER programmes have ambitious targets, supporting businesses, enterprises, community groups and organisations in rural areas across the County:
 - Deliver 180 jobs
 - Support business growth, start-up and diversification
 - Support rural services and tourism
 - Attract £1.6 million private sector match funding
6. The combined grant fund for the two LEADER programmes is £3.4 million to support growth in rural Nottinghamshire. Currently, circa £2.8 million is allocated to be awarded as grants to rural businesses/organisations and circa. £561k for administering the programme. To date, 90 rural businesses have applied for a LEADER grant, with £510k of grants being awarded, £525k ready and waiting for a grant award decision, and a further £2.3 million of grants being prepared for submission as full applications by rural businesses/organisations. 18 jobs have been created so far.
7. As confirmed in previous reports to Policy (and the former Economic Development Committee) the LEADER programmes include management and staffing costs, which are met from the management fee (16.5% of the total programme funding). No financial contribution is required from the Council.

8. In November 2017, Policy Committee approved an increase on a temporary basis of the resources to support the delivery of the LEADER programmes.
9. To ensure continued delivery, full realisation of outputs, and maximisation of the benefits to Nottinghamshire's rural economy, there is now a requirement to extend the contracts for the three existing (temporary) 0.5 FTE (grade 4) Grant Support Officers, until 31st March 2019.
10. A full staffing proposal for the LEADER programme covering the period from 1st April 2019 to 31st December 2020 will be presented to Policy Committee in December 2018.

Other Options Considered

11. The option to continue to deliver the programmes at less than the current staff resource level was discounted as this would limit the amount of Grant funding available to rural businesses and organisations in Nottinghamshire and restrict economic growth.

Reasons for Recommendations

12. Additional staffing resources are required to fully realise the potential of grant funds available to businesses and organisations in rural Nottinghamshire.
13. An increased staffing resource will provide the capacity to invite and process applications swiftly to maximise available funds, and protect the Council's finances and reputation.

Statutory and Policy Implications

14. 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

15. Funding for these posts are contained within existing programme budgets with no additional cost to the Council.
16. The management fee is dependent on all grant funds being allocated. Should all funds not be allocated, then the management fee would reduce accordingly. There is a small risk that staffing costs would need to be picked up via the Growth and Economic Development budget. However, not only does the current predicted staffing surplus in the management fee allocation provide some protection to this potential risk, there are appropriate mechanisms in place for precise and frequent monitoring of both the budget and grant allocation profile.

Human Resources Implications

17. The LEADER Grant Support Officers are employed on temporary contracts, which will be extended in line with the programme requirements.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Policy Committee:

- 1) Approves the contract extension until 31st March 2019 of the three temporary part-time staff posts for the Nottinghamshire LEADER programmes.
- 2) Agrees to receive a report in December 2018, with a full staffing proposal covering the period from 1st April 2019 to 31st December 2020 for the LEADER programme.

COUNCILLOR MRS KAY CUTTS, MBE
Leader of the County Council

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Constitutional Comments [KK 23/05/2018]

18. The proposal in this report is within the remit of the Policy Committee.

Financial Comments [RWK 30/05/2018]

19. The financial implications are set out in paragraphs 15 and 16 of the report.

HR Comments [JP 23/05/2018]

20. The HR implications are contained in the body 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.

- *LEADER programme and Digital Business Growth programme – Additional Staffing:*
Report to Policy Committee 15 Nov 2017, published

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All