

8 March 2022

Agenda Item: 4

## **REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, PLACE BUSINESS SUPPORT AND GROWTH HUB**

### **Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is twofold:
  - a. to inform the Committee of the successful extension of the Growth Hub
  - b. provide an update on business support activities

### **Information**

2. The Council's *COVID-19 Crisis Economic Recovery Action Plan 2020-2022* prioritises supporting business and working with partners to mitigate the economic impact of the pandemic.
3. The Council through dedicated Nottinghamshire Business Advisors, plays an active role in creating an environment and culture conducive to entrepreneurship and business success. The advisors support the start-up, growth and survival of dynamic and innovative businesses, making sure they are as competitive as possible and trading at their full potential.
4. The Growth Hubs are a Government-led initiative with flexibility at the local level to offer businesses a one-stop shop for support. Nottinghamshire businesses benefit from a range of general and specialist advice which is facilitated initially by the Growth Hub's frontline service, with referrals made to the Council's Business Advisers for more individualised and tailored support. In its delivery of support to businesses, the County Council is a long-term partner in the Growth Hub.
5. Through a national underspend of residual EU funding, an opportunity arose to extend the current Growth Hub model beyond March 2022 to June 2023. The Council approved the proposed extension of the current relationship with the Growth Hub at its meeting on 7 September 2021 at the following net costs to the Council:

<b>Financial Year</b>	<b>Amount</b>
2022 / 23	£67,000
2023 / 24	£17,500

6. The funding from the Council not only supports the staffing complement at 50% of the costs, but lever the additional resources to enable Nottinghamshire businesses to access the wider support programmes, the core support, the comprehensive on line presence, the seminar and workshop package and access to the Business Investment Fund.

7. The Council was informed on 21 December 2021 that the project change request / extension was approved with the new targets (see below) for Nottinghamshire for the remaining period (April 2022 to June 2023). These targets are largely similar to those that were set in the previous round and have been met over the last period.

Output	Target
C1 – Number of enterprises receiving 12 of hours of support (based on advisor support, webinars, peer network)	34
C8- Employment increase in supported enterprise	6
P13 – 3 hours of advisor support	34

8. Below is a summary of activity across Nottinghamshire that has taken place up to the end of the October - December 2021.

<p><b>Business Adviser Professional advice</b>  <a href="https://www.d2n2growthhub.co.uk/about/meet-the-team/">https://www.d2n2growthhub.co.uk/about/meet-the-team/</a>            New total of 591 leads for Nottinghamshire since April 2020; 71 businesses supported since the start of October 2021 (this quarter). NCC Businesses Advisers have provided in excess of 160 hours of one-to-one advice and guidance to new and existing SMEs over the last three months.</p>
<p><b>GH Webinar support.</b> <a href="https://www.d2n2growthhub.co.uk/events/">https://www.d2n2growthhub.co.uk/events/</a>            569 Nottinghamshire SME's have attended GH Webinars since April 2020, totalling over 4400 hours; 22 SMEs attended since the start of October 2021 with over 280 hours of webinars attended.</p>
<p><b>Growth Hub Peer Networks.</b> <a href="https://www.d2n2growthhub.co.uk/grow/peer-networks/">https://www.d2n2growthhub.co.uk/grow/peer-networks/</a>            Phase 2 has continued following the success of the previous programme. 17 cohorts are currently in progress which involves 158 participants, totalling 272 groups session hours.</p>
<p><b>Business Investment Fund.</b> <a href="https://www.d2n2growthhub.co.uk/grow/managing-finance/funding-for-your-business/access-to-local-finance/d2n2-business-investment-fund/">https://www.d2n2growthhub.co.uk/grow/managing-finance/funding-for-your-business/access-to-local-finance/d2n2-business-investment-fund/</a>            The extension to BIF has been approved. The fund is currently still closed to application until further notice, this is due to the volume of expressions of interest and applications already received. 90 Nottinghamshire SMEs expressed an interest, of which 68 have been supported in drafting their applications. 46 have now been contracted with projects totalling over £1.6m with grants in excess of £590k.</p>

9. In order to engage directly with the wider business community and understand local needs, Business Advisors are regular attendees at business groups including Mansfield Ashfield 2020, Newark Business Club, Rushcliffe Business Partnership and Retford Business Forum.
10. Our Business Advisors are actively engaged with Local Authorities and having returned to face to face offering they have provided a Business Surgery in Retford, the aim is to roll this initiative out across the whole county.

11. A key role was also played at the Newark & Sherwood Economic Growth Conference where the Business Advisors had two speaker slots to highlight the support available from our team.

### Other Options Considered

12. The 'do nothing' option was discounted because Nottinghamshire County Council is looking to build on the county's economic strength and stability. It will do this by working in collaboration with a range of partners to drive local economic growth through support for employment, skills, small businesses, high street and town centres. The business support landscape can often be complex for businesses to navigate. Businesses require consistent and clear support, delivered collaboratively across a range of partners and the business advisors directly support the ambition of '*Strengthening businesses and creating more good-quality jobs*' in the Council Plan.

### Reasons for Recommendations

13. The ongoing work with the Growth Hub allows the Council to provide support to businesses to help them to thrive and support economic recovery.

### 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. As referenced in the September 2021 report and point 5 above the net costs of the support provided are:

Financial Year	Amount
2019/20	£50,401
2020/21	57,655
2021/22	65,000
2022/23	£67,000
2023/24	£17,500

16. The Economic Development Initiatives budget is used to fund these costs.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Economic Development and Asset Management Committee:

- 1) Note the contents of the report.
- 2) Agree to receive a progress update report in six months time.

**Adrian Smith**  
**Corporate Director, Place**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:** Jo Davies, Group Manager for Growth, Infrastructure and Development, Place Department, [Joelle.davies@nottscc.gov.uk](mailto:Joelle.davies@nottscc.gov.uk) Tel: 0115 977 4857

### **Constitutional Comments (ELP14/02/2022)**

17. The recommendations fall within the delegation to Economic Development & Asset Management Committee by virtue of its frame of reference.

### **Financial Comments (SES 09/02/2022)**

18. The financial implications are set out in paragraph 15 and 16 of the report.

19. The costs of £67,000 in 2022/23 and £17,500 in 2023/24 will be funded from the Economic Development Initiatives budget for which a sum of £465,036 is included in the annual revenue budget.

### **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 D2N2 Growth Hub 2.0 – Partnership and Match Funding Approval to April 2022. Report to Policy Committee, 18 July 2018 available [here](#)
- The COVID-19 Recovery Action Plan. Report to Economic Development and Asset Management Committee, 16 June 2021 (item 6 plus Appendix) available [here](#).
- Business Support: Report to Economic Development and Asset Management Committee, 7 September 2021 (Item 4 plus appendix) available [here](#)

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

- All