

7th March 2017**Agenda Item: 6****REPORT OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR, PLACE****NOTTINGHAMSHIRE LEADER PROGRAMMES – STAFFING RESOURCE****Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek approval to extend the contract term for the two LEADER Officers to 31st March 2019 and update committee regarding the recruitment to the two part-time business support posts.

Background

2. Previous reports to this Committee and Policy Committee have updated Members on the 2014-20 LEADER programme. LEADER is a European Union fund aimed at economic growth in rural communities. In 2014, local partnerships were invited to bid for LEADER funds for the period 2014-20. In Nottinghamshire, two bids were developed; one based on the existing North Nottinghamshire LEADER area and a second being a new bid for rural parts of the south of the county.
3. Across the two LEADER areas (i.e. South and North Nottinghamshire), having successfully completed the outline application stage, 23 applicants have currently been invited to submit full applications. Of these 23, 3 applications are in process and a further 3 projects have been approved and grant funding agreed. The programme officers are actively seeking further applicants and supporting businesses through all stages of the process. Committee will receive the fourth 6-monthly update on the North and South Nottinghamshire LEADER programmes in April 2017.

Information

4. Committee approved the establishment of the Leader Accountable Body function and the establishment of the new posts for the programme in March 2015. The LEADER officers were created as two-year fixed-term contracts until 31/03/2017.
5. In undertaking the accountable body role, the County Council is awarded 'Management and Administration' (M&A) funds which have a value of up to 18% of the LEADER award to each programme. The bulk of the costs relating to acting as the accountable body for the Nottinghamshire LEADER programmes are direct staff costs, to enable the County Council to meet its contractual obligations to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). The M&A costs are claimed quarterly from the Rural Payments Agency (RPA)

6. A review has determined that the LEADER officer posts will be required until at least 31/03/2019.
7. Approval was also granted to establish two part-time LEADER Business Support officers (covering the North and South of the county) also on fixed-term contracts until 31/03/2017. The recruiting to these posts was suspended whilst the delivery of the programme was delayed. Since the autumn statement of November 2016 and subsequent announcements, the programme is currently running unhindered. The need for the business support officers is now vital to delivering the LEADER programmes.
8. The recruitment is currently underway to appoint to these roles, with the aspiration that these vacancies will be filled by April 2017.
9. The annual cost for the LEADER posts is circa **£95,000**. These costs will be met from the M&A allocation.
10. The M&A allocation for the two programmes is £563,147 of which £476,409 is allocated for salaries. So far only £92,047 has been claimed from the RPA. It is anticipated approximately a further £227,000 will be claimed for staffing up to March 2018. Which leaves a surplus of around £157,000.
11. Nevertheless, the M&A budget is dependent on all grant funds being allocated. Should all funds not be allocated, then the M&A would reduce accordingly. There is a small risk that staffing costs would need to be picked up via the Economic Development budget. However, not only does the current predicted staffing surplus in the M&A 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.

Reason(s) for Recommendations

12. As stipulated by Defra and agreed by committee, a full- time programme officer and part-time Business support officer are required for each of the Nottinghamshire LEADER Programmes.

Statutory and Policy Implications

13. 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.

RECOMMENDATIONS

14. That Committee:

- a) Notes the recruitment to the two part-time business support posts is underway

- b) Approves the extension of the two Nottinghamshire LEADER Officer Posts until 31st March 2019

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For any enquiries about this report please contact:
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Constitutional Comments [LM 20170217]

The recommendations in the report fall within the Terms of Reference of the Economic Development Committee and may approve the recommendations.

Financial Comments [SES 22/02/17]

The financial implications are set out in the report.

Background Papers

- *LEADER Rural Development Programme – opportunity to submit application:* report to Economic Development Committee, 1 April 2014, published.
- *LEADER Rural Development Programme – Nottinghamshire proposed submissions:* report to Policy Committee, 2 July 2014, published.
- South Nottinghamshire Local Development Strategy submission.
- North Nottinghamshire Local Development Strategy submission
- *LEADER rural development programme – outcome of submission results:* report to Policy Committee, 10 December 2014, published
- South Nottinghamshire LEADER Delivery Plan – 31st July 2015
- North Nottinghamshire LEADER Delivery plan – 31st July 2015
- *Nottinghamshire Leader Programmes – Status Update:* report to Economic Development Committee, 8 September 2015, published
- *Nottinghamshire leader programmes – Status Update:* report to Economic Development Committee, 4 October 2016, published

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

Eligible rural communities in Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Gedling, Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood and Rushcliffe