

8<sup>th</sup> September 2015

Agenda Item: 4

**REPORT OF THE GROUP MANAGER, CORPORATE STRATEGY****NOTTINGHAMSHIRE LEADER PROGRAMMES – STATUS UPDATE****Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide Committee with a six-month update (as agreed by Committee in a previous report) on the two LEADER Programmes in the County.

**Information and Advice**

2. There are two LEADER Programmes in Nottinghamshire for which the County Council holds the Accountable Body role. These are:
  - The North Nottinghamshire LEADER Programme – covering designated rural areas in Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood and Bassetlaw – with £1,853,000 provisionally<sup>1</sup> allocated to spend by 2020 and
  - The South Nottinghamshire LEADER Programme – covering designated rural areas in Gedling, Rushcliffe and Ashfield with £1,555,000 for the same period.
3. Each Programme is overseen by a Local Action Group – this has a private/civil society majority and each should ideally be chaired by representatives of those sectors. The County Council will hold a voting place on the LAGs plus LEADER project staff and Accountable Body representatives will advise the Group in making compliant and consistent decisions on grant funding and programme prioritisation. These LAGs are currently acting in transitional or shadow capacities but will be formalised later in September with recruitment on-going throughout the lifetime of the Programmes.

**Contracting Progress**

4. The original intention was for the Nottinghamshire LEADER programmes to be “live” from the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2015 – this was in line with Defra’s requirements at the point of the bid submission in September 2014. However, negotiations between DEFRA and the European Commission delayed the sign off of the

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<sup>1</sup> The funding is provisional as DEFRA will re-calculate annual allocations of the global award based on exchange rate fluctuations between the euro and the pound. This means that care will be needed to manage the Programme within year with particular prudence as the programme nears completion so that funding awards can be honoured within official allocations. To off-set risk to the Accountable Body the RCA award is guaranteed based on 2015 requests for the entirety of the Programme.

National Programme – resulting in significant, on-going delays in Defra releasing key details of the Programme to LAGs and Accountable Bodies.

5. To date no contract has been received although steps have been taken to meet Defra's request to facilitate this process. This has included the submission of financial profiling for the grants and administration costs of the Programme 2015-2020 and the submission of an annual Delivery Plan for 2015/16. This Delivery Plan included the Terms of Reference for the LAG and other policies and frameworks to ensure compliant delivery. Feedback on the Nottinghamshire approaches is awaited.
6. Defra however, has advised that the schedules will enable the release of a Funding Agreement to all Accountable Bodies which in turn will allow the submission of claims to cover administrative costs backdated to the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2015 (where relevant). The schedules have been agreed in principle.
7. Meanwhile, the annual Delivery Plan will enable Defra to release a Delegated Authority Agreement to Accountable Bodies to enable grants to be offered to third parties.

### **Programme Resourcing**

8. Since the March 2015 meeting of the Economic Development Committee the North Nottinghamshire Programme Officer post has been filled via TUPE from Bassetlaw District Council (the 2007-2013 North Nottinghamshire LEADER Programme Accountable Body). This was effective from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015. Further the Programme Officer for the South commenced employment on the 15<sup>th</sup> June 2015. The two project administration posts will be recruited to in the autumn in line with the revised start date for the programmes.

### **Programme Schedules**

9. Both LAGs have agreed that the first year will operate scheduled calls for activity commencing January 2016 to facilitate joined up approaches to other funding programmes and to manage application flows.
10. Whilst the delays remain disappointing, they do provide opportunity for officers to raise awareness of the programme within the context of other funds that are also currently being launched or planned. Further, it affords the opportunity to revisit the pipeline of project interest that has been collected since the bid was developed. To date there are 52 registrations of interest across all priorities on the Nottinghamshire LEADER Programmes and work is underway to liaise with the project sponsors to ensure they are aware of the position and to support them with alternative funding advice where required.

### **Programme Launch**

11. There will be two main entry points to the Programmes – through the websites / social media and referrals to dedicated Programme Officers.

12. The County Council will host website pages for both programmes and work with partners – including those within the districts – to cross reference information and activities on LEADER. Events, workshops, editorial, sector briefings and social media will be used to drive applicants and current and potential LAG members to the website where information on the application process will be made available together with information on key priorities and contacts. It is the intention, when the web pages are live, to have a separate launch for both Programmes to generate awareness of the Programmes and to bolster local governance and engagement. Such launch events will be targeted for Autumn 2015.
13. Work is also underway with the D2N2 Rural Reference Group – the body which is overseeing the development and strategic shape of the D2N2 LEP’s £5.2m Growth Programme allocation of European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). This will offer a key opportunity to align EAFRD and LEADER activity.

#### **Other options considered**

14. None. This report is for noting only.

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

15. This report has been prepared to support the Committee’s understanding of the latest position on LEADER and plans to maximise take up and launch activities prior to projects going live in April 2016.

#### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

16. 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**

17. It is recommended that Committee notes the content of this report as part of its six-monthly update on the LEADER programmes

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**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**  
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**Constitutional Comments [SLB 27.08.2015]**  
This report is for noting only.

### **Financial Comments [NDR 26/08/2015]**

There are no financial implications arising directly from the report.

### **Background Papers**

*LEADER Rural Development Programme – opportunity to submit application:* report to Economic Development Committee, 1 April 2014, published.

Minutes of Economic Development Committee, 1 April 2014, published.

*LEADER Rural Development Programme – Nottinghamshire proposed submissions:* report to Policy Committee, 2 July 2014, published.

Minutes of 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

Minutes of Policy Committee, 10 December 2014, published

South Nottinghamshire LEADER Delivery Plan – 31<sup>st</sup> July 2015

North Nottinghamshire LEADER Delivery plan – 31<sup>st</sup> July 2015

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

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