

11th March 2014**Agenda Item: xx****REPORT OF THE GROUP MANAGER, CORPORATE STRATEGY****LETTER OF SUPPORT – UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM ENTERPRISE
ZONE APPLICATION****Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek Committee approval for a letter of support from the Council for the University of Nottingham's 'University Enterprise Zone' application.
2. This report is to be considered under Option A, Part C of the Constitution. An urgent decision is required as the submission referred to needs to be made by 31st March and the deadline for a letter of support for the submission cannot be met unless Committee has an opportunity to consider this report at the meeting on 11th March 2014. It is in the interests of the residents of Nottinghamshire to support the proposal within the report which supports the economic growth of the area.

Information and advice

3. In January 2014, the Government announced that it was inviting universities in the eight Core Cities to submit proposals for new 'University Enterprise Zones' to be established. The Government will back the new zones with £15 million capital to March 2017 'to drive local growth plans and support entrepreneurship and innovation'.
4. The Government expects to fund a maximum of four University Enterprise Zones through this programme, with a maximum grant of £5 million. The new zones will not have the same incentives as existing Enterprise Zones (i.e. no business rate relief (unless locally agreed), capital allowance or support for superfast broadband) but they will have additional support from UK Trade and Investment and simplified planning arrangements with the relevant local authorities.
5. The University of Nottingham proposal (see attached) seeks support towards the £7.8 million cost of constructing a new 2,000m² incubator building on the university's Innovation Park in Nottingham and delivering innovation and knowledge transfer activities in the new building and in the wider area. The new building will offer a range of high spec business accommodation, meeting and engagement space targeted at high-tech companies in the early stages of their development. The focus will be on companies in sectors such as aerospace, chemistry, energy and geospatial engineering.

6. The proposal will have to demonstrate how the investment will enable businesses to access the university's knowledge and expertise, particularly in relation to innovation. The County Council will need to work closely with the university to ensure that the university's offer extends beyond the immediate location of the new incubator building and into the wider county. Assurances have been secured from the university that this will be a key element of their proposal. Linkages to the county's network of Innovation Centres, our work with high growth companies and financial support for emerging and growing companies will also be important.
7. It is proposed that any letter of support from the County Council will recognise the importance of the university to the Nottinghamshire economy and will highlight our aspirations for the reach of this project to extend into the wider county area. Supporting this proposal does not have any financial implications. The letter of support, if approved by Committee, will be signed by the Chair of this Committee and the Chief Executive.

Reason(s) for Recommendations

8. The Government has invited applications for University Enterprise Zone projects from universities in the eight Core Cities in England. The University of Nottingham intends to submit an application with the support of the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership. The deadline for the application is 31st March 2014, and the University of Nottingham has requested a letter of support from the County Council.

Statutory and Policy Implications

9. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described in the report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

10. It is recommended that Committee approves the submission of a letter of support for the University of Nottingham's 'University Enterprise Zone' application.

Report of the Group Manager, Corporate Strategy, Celia Morris

For any enquiries about this report please contact: Matt Lockley, 72446.

Constitutional Comments [NAB 07.03.2014]

The Economic Development Committee has authority to approve the recommendation set out in this report.

Financial Comments [SEM 07/03/2014]

There are no specific financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills – University Enterprise Zones Pilot:
Guidance for Bidders

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All