Nottinghamshire County Council

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

LEADER PROGRAMME AND DIGITAL BUSINESS GROWTH PROGRAMME: ADDITIONAL STAFFING

Purpose of the Report

1. This report seeks approval to increase on a temporary basis the Growth and Economic Development Team resource to support the accountable body functions and delivery for the Nottinghamshire LEADER and Digital Business Growth (DBG) programmes:

- Two staff posts for the Nottinghamshire LEADER programmes.

- One staff post for the Digital Business Growth programme.

Background

2. Previous reports to Policy and Economic Development Committees have established the programmes and approved the funding, including that for the management and staffing.

3. Both programmes have suffered delays arising from issues outside the Council's control. As a result extra team members are now required to deliver the programmes and achieve the agreed outputs over a reduced period of time.

4. Funding is already available to increase staff within the previously approved programme administration budgets as there is currently an underspend which has principally arisen due to the delayed recruitment of the existing programme staff.

5. The North and South Nottinghamshire LEADER programmes form part of the Rural Development Plan for England (RDPE). As such all costs for the Programmes (including management and administration costs) are met by the Rural Payments Agency (RPA). The combined fund for the two programmes is £3.4Million. There is no financial contribution from the Council.

6. The Council Acts as Accountable Body for the DBG programme on behalf of the Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership (D2N2 LEP). The DBG Programme is part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund with further contributions from the programme partners. Funding for the programme is £4.5Million which includes £210K from the Council.

7. The LEADER and DBG Programmes have ambitious targets, supporting businesses, enterprises, community groups and organisations across the County.

8. LEADER programmes across the rural areas of Nottinghamshire are aiming to deliver around 180 jobs, supporting business growth, start-up and diversification alongside supporting rural services and tourism. Attracting around £1.6million private sector match funding.

9. Across the D2N2 area the DBG programme will support over 800 new and existing businesses. Supporting over 600 of which to introduce new digital products to their business. Attracting around 2.7Million private sector match funding.

Proposed staffing

10. For the LEADER programmes, as the volume of work the team needs to process has accelerated rapidly, and is likely to increase as the programme comes to an end, two further posts are requested on a one year, fixed term basis:

   a) One FTE (grade 4) business support officer, doubling the current business capacity, processing applications, supporting appraisals, processing claims and general programme administration

   b) One FTE (band A) programme coordinator, managing the programme delivery and the accountable body function, including arranging the marketing, comms, events and promotion of the programme. Also directing the work of the business support officers and supporting the work of the programme officers. This post will also free up time of a senior member of the growth and economic development team, minimising the contribution required by the senior staff.

11. For the Digital Business Growth programme additional resource will contribute to the programmes ability to competently deliver the accountable body function and the agreed outputs in what is now a compressed timescale. A further post is requested, on a fixed term basis, for the duration of the programme until 30th June 2019:

   a) One FTE Business support post (Grade 4). To undertake project support processes, including; creating reports, monitoring and supporting the external grant claim requests. Manage and monitor the collation of programme information across the partners. Liaise with partners and customers, to ensure the timely submission of grant information. Be responsible for the preparation of meetings and events and support the Contracts and Partnership Manager with audit activity.

Risks

12. Without further staffing resources the risk is not allocating the full amount of grant funding and thus not achieving the growth and jobs to the businesses and communities of Nottinghamshire that the programmes offer.

13. Also reputational risk and poor customer service associated with an under resourced programme, as applications, grant awards and claims are not processed in a timely manner.

14. For the LEADER programmes failing to commit the full amount of grant funding could also expose the Council to a financial risk associated with the Management and Administration (M&A) budget. As the M&A budget is a proportion (16.5%), of the grants awarded, if the programmes are unable to commit all the funds, then the Council may only be able to claim up to 16.5% of the grants committed, leaving the Council to fund the remaining costs.

15. This risk has been understood and accepted by the Council when it undertook the role of Accountable body for the programmes. However, as the risk has increased as the delivery period is now shorter, increasing the programme staff is the best way to mitigate against this by providing the capacity to invite and process applications swiftly enough to commit all funds within the time available.

Other options considered

16. Not increasing the staffing resource for the programmes and continuing to deliver the programmes with the currently established programme teams. However, this was discounted due to the risk to which this would expose the Council and the programmes.

Reason for Recommendation

17. Both programmes have suffered delays to their respective starts and as such are delivering the same targets and outputs over a reduced period of time. Previously agreed budgets are available to increase the staffing resource. Therefore, it is felt that this is the best way to mitigate the risks arising from the delay and to ensure the agreed outputs are delivered.

Statutory and Policy Implications

18. 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.

Finance implications

19. There are no additional financial implications arising from this report, the overall budgets for both programmes have previous Council approval. LEADER programme funds being provided by the RPA.

RECOMMENDATION

20. It is recommended that Policy Committee:

   a) Approves the establishment of two new temporary (fixed for 1 year) staff posts for the Nottinghamshire LEADER programmes:
   b) Approves the establishment of a new temporary (fixed until 30th June 2019) staff post for the Digital Business Growth programme:
   c) Notes that funding for these posts are contained within existing programme budgets and that no additional costs to the council will be incurred.

Cllr Mrs Kay Cutts, MBE
Leader of the Council

For any enquiries about this report please contact:
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Constitutional Comments (SLB 06/11/2017)

Policy Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report.

Financial Comments (SES 03/11/2017)

The financial implications are set out in the report.

HR Comments (JP 06/11/2017)

The HR implications are contained in the body of the report. The grade for the Programme Coordinator post will be subject to full job evaluation.

Background Papers

LEADER Programmes

- *Nottinghamshire Leader Programmes – Status Update: report to Economic Development Committee, 4 October 2016, published*
- *Nottinghamshire Leader Programmes – Status Update:* report to Economic Development Committee, 8 September 2015, published
- South Nottinghamshire LEADER Delivery Plan – 31 July 2015
- North Nottinghamshire LEADER Delivery plan – 31 July 2015
- *Establishing the Nottinghamshire LEADER Programmes Accountable body function:* report to Economic Development Committee, 3 March 2015, published
- *LEADER rural development programme – outcome of submission results:* report to Policy Committee, 10 December 2014, published
- South Nottinghamshire Local Development Strategy submission.
- North Nottinghamshire Local Development Strategy submission.

- *LEADER Rural Development Programme – Nottinghamshire proposed submissions:* report to Policy Committee, 2 July 2014, published.
- *LEADER Rural Development Programme – opportunity to submit application*: report to Economic Development Committee, 1 April 2014, published.

Digital Business Growth Programme

- *D2N2 Digital Business Growth Programme,* report to Economic Development Committee, 6th December 2016
- *D2N2 Digital Business Growth Programme,* report to Economic Development Committee, 6th September 2016
- *ESIF Programme: D2N2 Digital Business Growth Programme,* report to Economic Development Committee, 19th January 2016
- *European Structural Investment fund: ERDF ICT Funding Call,* report to Economic Development Committee, 8th September 2015
- *Additional proposals for Economic Development budget 2015-16,* report to
- Economic Development Committee, 7th July 2015

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected
ALL