

Executive Decision Report

Employment Hub Extension

Decision to be taken by: City Mayor

Decision to be taken on: 8 March 2021

Lead director: Mike Dalzell



City Mayor

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All wards
- Report author: Joanne Ives
- Author contact details: 37 2934
- Report version number: 1

1. Summary

This report is seeking approval to extend the Leicester Employment Hub. The project provides a co-ordinated offer for businesses and individuals who are seeking apprenticeship, traineeship, and work placement opportunities.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To accept £1,981,175 of additional funding from the European Social Fund to extend delivery the Employment Hub and agree for the City Council to act as Accountable Body in relation to it.

3. Supporting information including options considered:

- 3.1 The Leicester to Work theme of the Economic Action Plan (2016-2020) set out how the Council will support those most in need to move into the labour market, gaining the relevant skills they require and addressing business needs. This included an objective to establish an Employment Hub for employers looking to recruit apprenticeships, internships, work placements and work experience.
- 3.2 In 2017, the Council's Economic Regeneration service secured £1.9m of ESF funding for delivery of the Employment Hub project from October 2017 to October 2020.
- 3.3 The project provides a co-ordinated offer for businesses and individuals who are seeking apprenticeship, traineeship, and work placement opportunities. The project specifically aims to support individuals of all ages that are most disadvantaged to access employment and training opportunities, thereby helping them move into the labour market.
- 3.4 The project has been running successfully since October 2017 and has achieved its target of working with over 300 businesses supporting 145 individuals into employment opportunities of the businesses engaged.

Funding Opportunity

- 3.5 A funding call was launched in December 2019 for European Social Fund (ESF) worth £1.9m to support an extension to the Employment Hub, as part of a set of £5.4m ESF funding calls launched by the LLEP. A proposal was submitted in response to this call to extend the Employment Hub from 1st October 2020 to 31st December 2023.

- 3.6 Delivery partners have been identified which will help meet the new tender requirements and target those furthest from the labour market, as follows:
- De Montfort University – delivers higher and degree apprenticeships
 - Leicestershire County Council –will target and support engagement with SMEs in the county, and also work with local District Councils.
 - The Prince’s Trust – Well-known national brand, delivering innovative recruitment solutions for SME’s involving disadvantaged cohorts. They will also support work experience opportunities with SMEs.
 - Futures: Advice, Skills and Employment – delivers the National Careers Service Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) support for adults. Is an Ofsted inspected ‘Outstanding’ training provider delivering a range of apprenticeships relevant to SMEs.
- 3.7 The extended project aims to support a further 300 SMEs and create a further 225 new jobs (in addition to the initial targets in the first phase to support 220 SMEs and 165 jobs created) across the city and county. This sub regional approach is a requirement of the ESF funding.

Project budget

- 3.8 The total proposed cost for the project extension is £3,962,351 with an ESF grant of £1,981,175. This creates a total project cost (including expenditure from October 2017 to September 2020) of £7,716,935, with combined ESF funding secured of £3,858,328. The table below provide details of the contributions from each match funding partner for the extension from 1st October 2020 to 31st December 2023:

Table 1: Funding package by partner

Partner	Match	ESF	Total
City Council	508,178	1,117,086	1,625,264
County Council	174,019	114,075	288,094
Futures	553,496	433,304	986,800
Princes Trust	173,052	115,368	288,420
De Montfort University	572,431	201,342	773,773
Total	1,981,176	1,981,175	3,962,351

- 3.9 No additional cash match from the City Council is required, as the project budget includes in-kind match from existing budgets. ESF can provide up to 50% match for eligible staff costs. As such, this ESF funding will provide £1,117,086 for eligible City Council staffing costs during the project.

4. Details of Scrutiny

Progress reports on the Employment Hub have been presented to the Economic Development Transport and Tourism Scrutiny Commission in April 2018 and January 2019.

5. Financial, legal and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

The report proposes that the Council acts as accountable body for £1.981m of ESF grant, working with a number of partners. The Council's own direct allocation from this ESF grant is £1.117m, to which £0.508m will be added as match from existing budgets, meaning that the Council will directly deliver projects to the value of £1.625m

Colin Sharpe, Deputy Director of Finance
ext. 37 4081

5.2 Legal implications

A partnership agreement should be agreed between Leicester City Council and the other partners detailing Leicester City Council's role as the Accountable Body; the role and responsibilities of the partners in respect of the Employment Hub and the levels of match funding to be provided by the partners.

Legal services should be involved in the drafting and negotiation of the partnership agreement.

Dominic Taylor
Solicitor
Ext: 37 3560

5.3 Equalities Implication

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions, they have a statutory duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

The proposal seeks approval to extend the project which provides a co-ordinated offer for businesses and individuals who are seeking apprenticeship, traineeship, and work placement opportunities. The project is likely to have positive impacts in terms of advancing equality of opportunity, leading to increase in labour market participation along with supporting skills development, employment and job creation, social inclusion and local community regenerations.

Surinder Singh Equalities officer 37 4148

5.4 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction implications

As businesses are one of the largest source of carbon emissions in Leicester, where possible consideration should be given to how to use projects and funding to promote sustainable business practices, provide training and opportunities for workers around these skills and support the low carbon economy within the city.

Additionally, the provision of further services contributes to carbon emissions, for example from the use of buildings, equipment and transport. To minimise these impacts staff and partners should be encouraged to reduce energy use, such as through switching off unused equipment and lighting, using sustainable travel options or digital alternatives and following sustainable procurement guidance.

Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer, Ext 37 2284

6. Background information and other papers:

None

7. Summary of appendices:

8. Is this a private report (if so, please indicate the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

No

9. Is this a “key decision”?

Yes

10. If a key decision please explain reason

Approval of European Social Fund revenue grant funding of £1,981,175