

Cabinet Briefing 20 June 2017

Economic Growth Reserve Proposals

1. Introduction

An Economic Growth Reserve was approved by Council on 01 March 2017, and this report provides further information on indicative activities and expenditure to deliver economic growth outcomes.

A number of initial items to begin early work to redevelop the Council's economic development services are now proposed for approval as presented in the table below:

2. Economic Strategy

Support for the development of the Economic Growth Strategy - £15K

This is an important piece of work that will provide clarity and facilitate agreement on economic growth priorities and delivery for the district. Work to be undertaken will involve close communication with Council officers and members, business and economy stakeholder engagement, analysis and conclusions from up to date and emerging economic evidence base, development of strategy recommendations, presentation to stakeholder groups.

For information, two supporting pieces of work are currently being progressed as part of Local Plan work. These include:

Update on "Prospects and Recommendations for Achieving Economic Potential 2015"

This document was provided by Turley's as part of the Local Plan evidence base and to inform a developing Economic Growth Strategy and much of this work is still extremely current. However, since 2015, some significant influences have emerged that need to be factored in, including national policies around Place, sector development and Brexit.

Inclusive growth study and recommendations

No recent work has been undertaken to consider how local communities can contribute to and draw on the benefits of economic growth. However, this is important in terms of, for example, local skills supply and prospects and quality of life for local people. This study will recommend approaches to help ensure local economic growth can benefit everyone.

3. Economic Development Staff Resource

Economic Development Officer (Business and Skills) and part time Economic Development Assistant (0.5fte) - £101.7K (2 years fixed term contracts)

Since a series of restructures some years ago, the Council has had no capacity to properly engage with businesses to understand their needs and help them access support, or to undertake work to develop the district's skills base. The additional 1.5 posts will allow some of this work to recommence.

This level of resource is still low but the intention is not to duplicate but to work alongside partners, increasing access to all of the quality business support services that exist, creating the opportunity for businesses to be connected to a large Lancaster District business support network.

Activities will include:

- Business engagement and enquiries
- Inward Investment and International Trade support
- A programme of business events
- Representation at Trade events
- Developing a comprehensive business listing
- Business surveys
- Partner engagement and contacts
- Business communications – What's On, Who's Who, News, Views, Offers

There is excitement at the prospect that the Council intends to engage more directly in Economic Development but, as a result, expectations have risen considerably and demand is growing. This is extremely positive but within current resources is also very difficult to manage. This has created urgency regarding the proposal to invest in these posts.

Future needs will be informed by the Council's ongoing aims to promote the district and attract investment and what progress and developments occur in the interim. In that context, it is proposed to create the posts on a 2 year fixed term contract basis, with future needs being considered initially as part of the 2019/20 budget process. That will allow time to draw on progress and any changing circumstances.

4. Marketing Staff Resource

1 Senior Marketing Officer and 1 Assistant Marketing Officer (apprentice) - £111.4K (2 year fixed term contracts)

The Council currently has two aligned teams with marketing responsibilities.

The Tourism Marketing and Events team has 2.6 fte and undertakes all tourism and destination marketing, as well as providing core capacity for major festivals and events. This team has a challenging workload.

The Communications and Marketing Team supports the Council's corporate activities, including all press, other media and PR, internal and external communications, web site and digital developments and management, film and TV location services and marketing for the Council's commercial services. Marketing support is provided for services across the Council, including, for example, Salt Ayre, the Platform, the Storey and Printroom and business services, such as business waste and environmental health support services. Demand for marketing support has grown and is expected to grow further as the Council develops its commercial, income generating services.

This team has 5 fte, including 2 marketing posts (1 of which is vacant). Capacity in this team has decreased over the last 4 years with the loss of a senior lead officer post and two part time posts. Whilst day to day impact of this has been managed as far as possible, there is no available capacity to develop and deliver the strategic and ambitious Place marketing that is now required to lift the profile of the district, as a great place to live, work and do business, over the next few years, unless re-prioritised over other work streams.

This proposal is considered to be an immediate priority as recruitment is required to take the majority of the work forward and this will take some weeks.

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5. Growth Lancashire

Subscription to Growth Lancashire for business diagnostic and support services - £30K (£15K p.a. for 2 years)

The sub regional arrangements for business support are very good and this means that the Council can limit its role to business engagement, understanding needs and improving access to support services, rather than providing a broad range of direct business support itself. Lancashire County Council provide some funding towards the sub regional arrangement with Growth Lancashire and the council can therefore access a basic service.

However, most Local Authorities pay an annual subscription in order to gain more and better support as well as to gain the opportunity to influence the services that are provided for businesses in their districts. This is considered to be an extremely cost effective way of supporting business growth whilst retaining just a small core central team.

As part of the overall arrangement Growth Lancashire provide Evolutive, a very useful business database, which can provide for the Council's needs in terms of managing its business enquiries in a tried and tested way without a further investment.

Subscribing to Growth Lancashire is proposed for an initial period of two years and will be subject to review thereafter with any ongoing provision being considered as part of the 2019/20 budget process.

6. Business Events / Sponsorship

Sponsorship costs - £13.1K

Business events, exhibitions and awards are part of the emerging Place marketing approach and provide an opportunity to raise the profile of the district, its businesses and the workforce, as well as to communicate and engage with businesses and provide support.

Two important promotional opportunities have arisen, both to take place in September. These are:

- MIPIM UK, October 18th and 19th as part of Invest in Lancashire but with the potential to work with Morecambe Bay partners. This is the UK's primary property industry exhibition focusing this year on Investment, Housing and Residential, Retail and Logistics, Innovation and PropTech - £10K (estimated)
- The first North Lancs Expo, a large business exhibition, organised by the Chamber with the Council's and other partners' support - £1.6K
- The Bay Living Awards, a major new awards event associated with the Bay Living Magazine, which will celebrate the success of businesses and individuals at Lancaster University - £1.5K

All of these events provide useful ways of promoting the district as a place for business, attracting investment and developing supply chains. These are immediate requirements as commitments to these events need to be made well in advance.

7. Marketing Materials

Initial investment - Marketing and exhibition materials, signage, photography - £5K

This proposal relates to MIPIM UK, the North Lancs Expo and the Bay Living awards. In addition, the Council is working with partners to deliver a business event in Lancaster Town Hall in June.

Marketing and exhibition materials and some initial photography are required to support these events, much of which can be used again for future events.

This is an immediate requirement as materials will need to be designed and produced in advance.

8. Place Narrative and Prospectus

Agency support to develop Place narrative and prospectus - £20K (estimated)

The backbone of Place marketing is the Place narrative. This draws out the particular strengths, characteristics and identity of a place and highlights opportunities and uniqueness so that there marketing and activities can be a focused on things that make a difference, rather than being all things to all people. Developing a Place narrative needs to be built on engagement and involvement so, although it can take little time, the end result is that there is a good consensus. Funders and investors expect to see a clear place narrative as the background to any other specific information about the Place offer.

It is proposed that early work towards developing a Place narrative is commenced in the near future, to underpin other marketing and promotion work later in the year, but also to support the development of Place narratives and promotion at the sub regional level.

Officer comments	
HR	Any newly created posts that form part of the proposals within the Cabinet Briefing will need to have an up to date job description and person specification in place to enable them to be evaluated through the Job Evaluation Process. Any new posts will be subject to the Council's normal recruitment process.
Finance	The new posts will need to be created on a fixed term basis for the period of funding approved (i.e. 2 years). Any proposed extension or permanency of the posts beyond this will need to be submitted as growth bids as part of the 2019/20 budget process.
Legal	Legal will need to be consulted on any contractual matters arising.