

DECISION-MAKER:	Cabinet
SUBJECT:	Solent Get into Employment Project
DATE OF DECISION:	13th September 2021
REPORT OF:	COUNCILLOR VASSILLIOU CABINET MEMBER FOR CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES, CULTURE & HERITAGE

<u>CONTACT DETAILS</u>			
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STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY
Not Applicable
BRIEF SUMMARY
In November 2019, Southampton City Council submitted an application to the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) for European Social Fund (ESF) grant funding from the European Structural & Investment Fund (ESIF) Programme. The process the UK followed in leaving the European Union provided a 3 year ‘window’ during which applications for funding from EU funding programmes delivered by the UK Government’s Managing Authority (DWP) could be applied for and used.
Southampton City Council (The Lead Applicant) in consultation with DWP (Dorset, Wiltshire, Hampshire and Isle of Wight District), The Prince’s Trust and Autism UK identified a significant gap in employment support provision for adults with learning disabilities, learning difficulties, autism, and neuro-diverse conditions.
Officers have been notified that the application for an ESF grant totalling £529,000 has been successful and the purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval to accept the grant.
Building on outcomes, learning and good practice from recent employment support projects led by Southampton City Council and delivered in partnership with local 3 rd Sector organisations, Solent Get into Employment will increase the number of unemployed or economically inactive adults receiving support to get into work.
Target groups include; people who face significant challenges in gaining work or training due to learning disabilities, learning difficulties, autism or neuro-diversity (e.g. dyspraxia, dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) or associated physical/mental health conditions. The project will engage and support adults who will benefit from a personalised and strengths-based employment support package to (re)enter the ‘world of work’.

RECOMMENDATIONS:		
	(i)	To delegate authority to the Executive Director, Communities, Culture and Homes to take all actions necessary to accept the grant and deliver the project until December 2023.
	(ii)	To accept, in accordance with Financial Procedure Rules, a grant of £529,000 from DWP as match funding towards a total project budget of £1,059,000.
	(iii)	To approve, in accordance with Financial Procedure Rules, a corresponding revenue virement totalling £1,059,000 to the Solent Get into Employment project over 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24, along with the Council's individual financial contribution of £324,000 from existing budgets, of which £215,000 is itself from secured external funding.
	(iv)	To approve the Council to act as Accountable Body for the administration of grant funding and the delivery of the Solent Get into Employment project.
REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS		
1.	Under SCC Financial Procedure Rules, the matter requires a Cabinet decision to accept the grant award from the Department for Work & Pensions and to deliver the Solent Get into Employment project.	
2.	Southampton City Council will lead the project on behalf of a delivery partnership which will support adults living in Southampton and the wider Solent area into learning and work. Council investment will be focussed on service delivery in the City, whilst delivery outside the City will be ensured by The Prince's Trust and Autism Hampshire. Target beneficiaries will be people who face significant challenges in gaining work or training due to learning disabilities, learning difficulties, autism or neuro-diversity (e.g. dyspraxia, dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), and associated physical or mental health conditions.	
3.	<p>The proposed grant funding will contribute to the delivery of the Council's key priorities of creating a City with strong and sustainable economic growth, and where people can live safe, healthy and independent lives. The external funding will enable Solent Get into Employment to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help economically inactive people move into employment. • Assist employers secure the people they need to address labour shortages and improve business performance. • Widen project reach and impact by encouraging further innovative solutions to tackle unemployment, to maximise integration between local delivery partners and to build on the success of current interventions, including the Young Adults Employment Hub and Solent Apprenticeship Hub. 	
ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED		

4.	To not accept the ESF grant would result in the loss of external funding and cancellation of a proposed project to support economically inactive individuals overcome their barriers to employment, and to become more economically independent.
DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)	
5.	Building on the outcomes, learning and good practice of recent and current interventions to support adults with barriers into employment, Solent Get into Employment will increase the number of people with a learning disability, learning difficulty, or neuro-diverse condition into paid work.
6.	<p>In 2019, discussions between officers from Southampton City Council, Portsmouth City Council, The Prince's Trust, Autism Hampshire and DWP identified that additional interventions were required to support specific cohorts of unemployed people into work.</p> <p>An application to fund the Solent Get into Employment project with both Unitary Authorities, The Prince's Trust and Autism Hampshire as delivery partners was submitted to DWP in December 2019 - one month before the first confirmed case of Covid19 in the UK. The subsequent 'Lockdowns' and their significant economic and social impact on our communities continue to unfold.</p> <p>Following a delayed appraisal by DWP due to the pandemic, the application received formal approval in early 2021. However, due to financial pressures Portsmouth City Council was unable to proceed and withdrew from the project.</p> <p>The City Council and remaining delivery partners, in consultation with DWP and the Solent LEP, decided to reprofile the project and submitted a modification of the original ESF application to DWP on 4th June 2021.</p> <p>Following a second appraisal by DWP, the application was successful, and Southampton City Council received a formal ESF Grant Offer to fund the Solent Get into Employment project on 29th July 2021.</p>
7.	<p>One of the many consequences of the economic impact of Covid19 is that whilst officers have access to excellent 'high-level' data on unemployment (e.g. numbers of claimants and in which Wards), most of the data regarding specific groups of people published before 2020 does not take full account of the economic impact of successive 'Lockdowns'. However, pre-2020 data can be used to indicate the direction of travel regarding the employment rates of specific groups. Research by the Office for National Statistics in 2020 (ONS, 2021), referenced by Autism UK, indicated only 22% of adults with autism were in any form of employment (despite 77% reporting in 2017 they wanted to work), when the National in-work rate was approaching 80%.</p> <p>A high proportion of people with an offending history (20-30%) have a learning difficulty, learning disability or neuro-diverse condition. A 2017 study into the learning difficulties and disabilities of prisoners found 47% of young offenders demonstrated language skills significantly below the population average, with</p>

	<p>more than 1 in 4 identified as having a learning impairment (Hughes et al, 2017).</p> <p>The Prince's Trust has worked in partnership with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) delivering life skills and pre-release employability programmes in HMP Winchester Young Offenders Institution (YOI) since 2015. In addition, many of the young adults suffer from adverse childhood experiences (ACE) that can create a range of complex needs and form barriers to employment opportunities and stable accommodation.</p>
8.	<p>The Solent Get into Employment project will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage and support 610 economically inactive or unemployed adults with a learning disability, learning difficulty and/or neuro-diverse condition and whose lack of basic skills, including digital skills, or health condition create barriers to education, training or effective participation and progression in the labour market. • Achieve a minimum 34% of clients into sustained employment, six months after leaving provision. • Engage and enable local employers to secure people with the literacy, numeracy and basic IT skills businesses will require as the economy rebuilds post-Lockdown. <p>The project will target adults living within the Solent LEP geographical area, including Southampton and the South Hampshire area and offer a strengths-based and personalised employment support package, focused around basic skills attainment, pre-employment work trials, work experience or in-work placement support and employer engagement. Personalised support plans and client beneficiary budgets will secure tailored solutions that meet individual need and provide for equipment, training, essential clothing, and contribute towards initial travel and childcare costs.</p> <p>Provision will be delivered by partner agencies in the project (The Prince's Trust and Autism Hampshire).</p>
9.	<p>Activity will run for 2 years commencing September 2021 and conclude in December 2023, with participation open to all residents who meet the eligibility criteria (i.e. economically inactive or unemployed benefit claimants, including Job Seekers' Allowance, Employment & Support Allowance, Income Support or Universal Credit).</p>
10.	<p>The project delivery partners are Southampton City Council (Lead Applicant) and The Prince's Trust, who together will employ 7.6 full-time equivalent Employment Support Officers or caseworkers (4.6fte in Southampton and 3.0fte covering South Hampshire) and Autism Hampshire who will deliver employer engagement activity.</p> <p>Delivery and project management will be ensured by the Councils' Employment Support Team, which will host the 5.4fte officers required to deliver the Council's part in the programme (2.4fte of which are existing employees). It is proposed to recruit an additional 3fte Employment Officers</p>

	(Grade 8) on 24 month fixed term contracts, following the Council's standard recruitment process.
11.	<p>Solent Get into Employment delivery involves intensive, but flexible person-centred support into work, focused around basic skills attainment, pre-employment work trials, work experience or in-work placement support and employer engagement. Personalised support plans and client beneficiary budgets will secure tailored solutions that meet individual need and provide for equipment or support aids, training, essential clothing, and contribute towards travel and childcare costs. Provision will be secured through external procurement or joint working with local agencies, and include (where appropriate):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialised motivational and employability training • Job coaching, job carving (identifying reasonable adjustments to role) and careers information, advice and guidance • Consideration of self-employment and sole-trading as alternatives to being employed by others • Basic digital / IT skills • Literacy and numeracy skills • Life skills coaching • Counselling • Money management and tenancy sustainment <p>Attracting and enabling local businesses to engage with Solent Get into Employment is key to achieving client progression into work. Autism Hampshire will work across the partnership and with Solent LEP Growth Hub and Hampshire Chamber of Commerce to further develop relationships with local employers. It will target businesses in appropriate sectors (e.g. retail, hospitality, construction, transport and logistics) to effectively promote the benefits of individual wrap-around employment support and provide bespoke training and one-to-one advice and guidance sessions to facilitate successful recruitment, job progression and retention of project clients.</p> <p>Client Journey</p> <p>Solent Get into Employment will use a 3-stage integrated delivery approach to engage and support client progression into education/training, and sustained employment:</p> <p>Stage 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral and Initial Assessment • Social and personal development, including a personalised support plan <p>Stage 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Employers • Match employer need with aspirations of participants • Work Placement <p>Stage 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment Support/Sustainability (Including in-work support) <p>Solent Get into Employment activity will ensure;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term engagement in the labour market. • Improved employability skills. • Enhanced employment opportunities.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved levels of self-confidence and self-esteem. • Increased levels of motivation and self-reliance. • Increased level of economic independence and resilience <p>Caseworkers will work with local 3rd Sector agencies, day service providers and local home care providers, adult social care teams, commissioners, housing and resettlement teams, HMP Winchester, Liaison and Diversion Services (supporting offenders with mental health or learning difficulties), Forensic Learning Disability Community Team and in-patient providers and Jobcentre Plus (JCP) to coordinate and optimise client referral rates.</p>
12.	<p>A Project Steering Group chaired by Southampton City Council and comprising representatives from project partner organisations and relevant stakeholders, including Jobcentre Plus, will assure project activity, monitor actions and progress, and quality assurance data. The group will meet quarterly and make recommendations regarding project plans, timescales, expenditure and allocation of resources, communication and publicity actions, and agree actions (corrective or otherwise) in accordance with Council policies and procedures, and ESF Operational Programme rules.</p>
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	
<u>Revenue</u>	
13.	<p>The Solent Get into Employment project will be funded by an ESF grant of £529,000 from the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP). Grant funding will be paid to the Council under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003.</p> <p>Southampton City Council officers will coordinate and administer quarterly claims across the delivery partnership to secure (in arrears) payments of eligible defrayed expenditure from DWP. These grant payments will then be distributed to the relevant organisation (in arrears) once the Managing Authority (DWP) has made a payment to Southampton City Council acting as Lead Accountable Body. Any ineligible expenditure claimed will remain the responsibility of the organisation submitting the claim and result in a reduction of funding to the relevant organisation, not the Lead Accountable Body.</p>

14. The ESF grant represents 50% of the total project cost of £1,059,000. Southampton City Council (as Lead Partner) and all other project partners are contributing match funding in terms of staff time and cash from existing budgets over the Financial Years 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24.

The SCC revenue funding 'match' of £324,000 is profiled against existing Employment Support Team budgets over 3 financial years, of which £177,000 is eligible Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) City Deal grant funding to support unemployed residents into work, £109,000 comes from an employment and skills budget focussed on supporting people with a Learning Disability/Difficulty and £37,000 comprises legacy grant funding re-purposed to support this project.

In accordance with ESF rules, indirect costs (overheads) are calculated at 15% of staff costs.

Partner organisations (The Prince's Trust and Autism Hampshire) have confirmed their match-funding is in place.

The forecast income and expenditure is;

Income

PROJECT PARTNER	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	TOTALS £000
ESF grant 50%	143	256	130	529
Southampton City Council 'Match'	87	157	80	324
The Prince's Trust 'Match'	41	73	37	151
Autism Hampshire 'Match'	15	26	14	55
TOTALS	286	512	261	1,059

Expenditure

ITEM	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	TOTALS
Staff costs (SCC)	137	241	121	499
Direct costs (SCC)	17	37	19	73
Indirect costs 15% of SCC staff costs	21	36	18	75
SCC Totals	175	314	158	647
The Prince's Trust Totals	82	145	74	301
Autism Hampshire Totals	29	53	29	111
TOTALS	286	512	261	1,059

<u>Property/Other</u>	
15.	The project will not place any new demands on Council accommodation during delivery or post completion.
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	
<u>Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:</u>	
16.	Under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003, a grant may be paid by a Minister of the Crown to the local authority towards expenditure incurred or to be incurred by it. The amount of grant, manner of payment and any such conditions imposed may be determined by the person paying it.
<u>Other Legal Implications:</u>	
17.	<p>These funds are targeted at supporting people in vulnerable positions in society and contribute to the Council's Public Sector Equality Duty obligations through;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing the disadvantages vulnerable adults experience • Better meeting the economic needs of people with protected characteristics <p>Supporting people with protected characteristics to more effectively participate in economic life.</p>
RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS	
18.	<p>A Risk Register will identify high, medium and low risks and dependencies to ensure outputs and outcomes. Key areas include:</p> <p>Performance – this will be monitored monthly and involve written monitoring reports against the profile of the project. Under-performance will be managed by the mechanisms set out in the Funding Agreement.</p> <p>Financial - The project will put in place stringent financial controls (complaint with Council Financial Procedure Rules) to ensure all financial claims are for eligible defrayed expenditure and backed with evidence.</p> <p>Grant payments will be distributed to the relevant organisation (in arrears) once the Managing Authority (DWP) has made a payment to the Lead Accountable Body (SCC). Any ineligible expenditure claimed will become a 'loss' to the organisation submitting the claim – not the Lead Accountable Body.</p> <p>Data Management - Records will be stored in compliance with SCC records retention policy and procedures and for the minimum length required by the funder.</p>
POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS	

19.	Solent Get into Employment contributes to the delivery of Southampton City Council's Corporate Plan (2021-2025) and its overarching vision of Southampton as a City of Opportunity through prioritising employment and skills and supporting people into work.

KEY DECISION?	Yes
WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	ALL
<u>SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION</u>	
Appendices	
1.	None

Documents In Members' Rooms

1.	Equality and Safety Impact Assessment (ESIA) - COMPLETED
2.	Data Protection Impact Assessment - IN DRAFT AWAITING COMMENT

Equality Impact Assessment

Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality and Safety Impact Assessment (ESIA) to be carried out.	Yes
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Data Protection Impact Assessment

Do the implications/subject of the report require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) to be carried out.	Yes
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Other Background Documents

Other Background documents available for inspection at: Not Applicable

Title of Background Paper(s)	Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)
1.	
2.	