

POLICY, FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

10 APRIL 2013

REPORT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE

CORPORATE ISSUES

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to bring Members up to date with certain Corporate Activities and issues which have occurred in the intervening period since the last report.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:-

- 2.1 **The sum of £10,000 be made available as part of a proposal to start a Work Club in Melton Borough with adequate supported coordination.**
- 2.2 **A feasibility study be carried out to assess if Phoenix House could productively be utilised as a base for delivering life/business/employment skills.**
- 2.3 **The approach to support offenders in the Community be noted as part of the Team around the family and that a proposal be developed to submit to the Police and Crime Commissioner as part of his six months review, as considered appropriate.**

3.0 KEY ISSUES

3.1 Work and Skills Agenda

As part of the preparations for the Sainsbury's recruitment process, the provision for employability training is being arranged working in partnership with Loughborough College, Job Centre Plus and the Skills Funding Agency. The Council, through both its planning arrangements and its new focus on employment and skills sitting within the economic development priority has a key role in facilitating, communicating and assisting in the design of the training and support. In order to provide the training in a place which is considered as the "right" location with appropriate facilities fit for this purpose it has been suggested to your Officers that Phoenix House might be used. Sainsbury's have also enquired as to a suitable location for their recruitment processes to be undertaken and this location has also come to mind as a place to carry out that exercise.

- 3.2 Associated with this and as part of its approach and work under the Universal Credit Pilot the Council has been invited to the Countywide Work and Skills Board. At this meeting (held very recently) a proposition was on the table for the establishment of Work Clubs in certain areas of the County. It is considered that it would be beneficial to re-establish a Work Club within Melton, particularly with the potential work opportunities which are likely to come online, including that mentioned above, arising from new developments and facilities.

In the coming financial year 2013/14 the Council has a sum of £10,000 Voluntary and Community Sector funding. This has arisen as a result of a smaller contribution to the Countywide Community Infrastructure Contract. Officers request that the Committee consider using this funding to engage with the Voluntary and Community Sector to employ a post to establish the Work Club and act as its Co-ordinator with an initial focus on digital

skills for the middle third of benefits claimants as identified within the Universal Credit Pilot. This approach creates a synergy between the Pilot approach to enhance digital, social and financial independence together with the support to reduce Worklessness and enhance Employability Skills.

The Work Club could look at how people can support each other (potential virtually as we move forward using existing social media), it could build on communication networks and explore how these can be fed into the design of digital systems including the potential for new applications designed to achieve better outcomes for this cohort of people. It has been indicated to your Officers that there is a good opportunity to at least match fund this from money which is presently available at a County Level. To achieve such an outcome the Council could work in partnership with one of its existing Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations who has a good understanding of the local needs and a good rapport with local people, such an Organisation could be Voluntary Action Melton or another Active Local Group/Association.

3.3 Taken in context, these two recent opportunities/initiatives bring into focus the use and occupation of Phoenix House as a one stop shop for life/business/employment skills. Looking at the opportunity from the stand point of the Universal Credit Pilot the Council has a cohort of working age benefit claimants who consist of a high number of people who lack confidence and self esteem. Having a facility, a single place where these local people could come together to learn new skills, could be very advantageous as the Work and Skills Agenda develops. The facility could build on the work already being planned for its use for Sainsbury's and could link into the development of the Work Club mentioned above. The learning offered could not only encompass activities around digital skills including emails, money management, employability skills including customer care, but also move into additional activities and support such as healthy eating on a budget and self management skills. The Council has some experience in these areas with the work in Children's Centres and its commissioning activity arising from monies allocated to the 0-19 Agenda. It has been suggested from discussions held at the Countywide Work and Skills Board recently that there was in principle support for this opportunity and the Board have commissioned a paper to be presented at the next meeting.

3.4 From the above Members can see the synergies developing from the work and activity within the Borough. The Council is organising its Job Fairs, it is gaining understanding and developing support activities for the vulnerable working age benefit claimants and is supporting and sustaining the Sainsbury's approach within the Community. The establishment of a Work Club properly coordinated and an examination of the use and feasibility of developing the Council's asset of Phoenix House as a base for this approach could be considered as the next step in the Councils joint work on assisting vulnerable people through the difficult year(s) ahead, as well as tackling worklessness and employability issues as identified within the economic development strategy and approach. Your Officers suggest that a paper be presented to the Countywide Work and Skills Board at its next meeting bringing together these opportunities. Further that the Community and Social Affairs Committee and the Rural, Economic and Environmental Affairs Committee develop and oversee the proposals to capture and take the opportunities which are available for local support.

3.5 **Reoffending**

Members will recall that the Council has successfully run Pathfinder projects around reducing reoffending by active support for recently licensed probationers/released prisoners. As the Supporting Leicestershire Family approach develops, the Council has through some residual funding been able to allocate monies towards developing its approach allied to the Families work. Officers are aware the Police and Crime Commissioner has indicated support for projects which focus on reducing reoffending and support for probationers as a means of early intervention to reduce crime and Anti-Social Behaviour. Your Officers are utilising the unallocated monies not only to offer support to

those vulnerable people within our Communities who have previously offended and wish to move on but also to develop a proposal for the Police and Crime Commissioner to gain sustainability for this service within the Borough. The Council would be able to at this stage to offer funding to develop the proposal during 2013/14 with the bid/request to the Commissioner be made as part of his 6 month review period. This work would sit alongside the Leicestershire Family activity complimenting it by the focus on re-offenders and offering a focus to those with families in need of support. The Council would therefore, within its Team around the family, have intensive activity around worklessness and employability/life skills, as mentioned above, together with an offer for offenders.

3.6 Children and Young People Services

As Members are aware discussions are continuing in a positive manner concerning the Children's Centre services the Council supports and those relevant to the Early Years Activity such as the 0-19 services available within the Borough. Senior Officers in the Children and Young People Services have offered an opportunity to Localities to develop proposals to consider further services being managed within the locality. Officers are considering this proactively and see the opportunity to create synergies within the integrated services for Supporting Leicestershire Families as well as the activities outlined above within this report. Officers hope that a further report can be made to the Community and Social Affairs Committee at its next meeting to consider how this opportunity can and should be taken further.

3.7 City Deal

As reported at the previous meeting of this Committee the Council supported an Expression of Interest to BIZ for a City Deal for Leicester and Leicestershire. In March the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership was advised the Expression of Interest had been successful. Discussions have commenced amongst the parties as to how to move the Expression of Interest forward in the context of the feedback from Government. As previously reported this matter will be presented through the Rural, Economic and Environmental Affairs Committee at future meetings.

4.0 POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 From the above Members can see that its Policy approach to priority areas of supporting vulnerable people and improving places, particularly with the developing Economic Development Agenda, are creating synergies based on our approach. Your Officers will continue to explore opportunities to utilise seed corn funding and partnering approaches to develop services which are required in these challenging times. Work carried out will sit within the priority approaches identified by Members.

5.0 FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 It is proposed in the recommendations to this report that Members consider the allocation of the £10,000 currently budgeted to support the Voluntary and Community Sector to develop the approach to a Work Club for Melton with proper coordination. The process for putting this in place would be overseen the Community and Social Affairs Committee. Furthermore, a feasibility study for the use of Phoenix House as a base/centre for employment and life skills particularly focussing on the working age benefit claimants and tackling worklessness is proposed for consideration. Both the Community and Social Affairs Committee and the Rural, Economic and Environmental Affairs Committee will have an interest and oversight of this approach should Members consider it worthy of further attention.

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS

6.1 At this stage there are no particular legal implications, however funding arrangements arising from bidding opportunities or partnership approaches will be legally documented as required. The Council’s Memorandum of Understanding with the County Council is a useful legal framework for the development of Public Sector Partnership Services.

7.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY

7.1 It is suggested that should certain of the proposals be developed further and made sustainable there would be measurable impact on Community Safety, Anti-Social Behaviour and crime reduction.

8.0 EQUALITIES

8.1 There are no specific implications arising from the proposals set out in the report, however, the development of the services in Phoenix House would likely to be subject an Equalities Impact Assessment as the proposals progressed and became more concrete.

9.0 RISKS

9.1 **Probability**



Very High A				
High B				
Significant C				
Low D		1		
Very Low E				
Almost Impossible F				
	IV Neg- ligible	III Marg- inal	II Critical	I Catast- rophic

Impact →

Risk No.	Description
1	Opportunities to assist vulnerable people are not taken as they arise.

10.0 CLIMATE CHANGE

10.1 There are no implications arising from this report.

11.0 CONSULTATION

11.1 Consultations have taken place with the Work and Skills Board at its last meeting and with certain Partners in the Community. In developing the proposals further consultations would be necessary.

12.0 **WARDS AFFECTED**

12.1 All

Contact Officer Lynn Aisbett, Chief Executive
Date: 28 March 2013

Appendices : None

Background Papers: Emails to Chief Executive: 25.03.13 and 26.03.13
Notes of Meeting LCC 06.03.13

Reference : X : Committees\PFA\2012-13