

POLICY, FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

3rd December 2013

REPORT OF HEAD OF COMMUNITIES AND NEIGHBOURHOODS

LEARNING AND SKILLS CENTRE

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1. To update members of this committee on progress made in the development of a Learning and Skills Centre, within Phoenix House, Nottingham Road, Melton Mowbray with particular reference to submitting a bid for European Social Fund money by 31st December 2013.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that:-

- (a) the progress to date be noted and support confirmed for the European Social Fund Bid, which has a deadline for submission of 31.12.13;
- (b) consideration is given to organisation of an event to enable members to hear first hand some of the life changing stories from people who have worked with the employment and skills project;
- (c) the linked working between Me and My Learning and the Housing Foyer Project is noted; and
- (d) to note that East Midlands Councils has served notice to quit and to approve plans for the proposed change of use on the first floor of Phoenix House to Me and My Learning, together with a budget of £15K to enable the space to be made fit for this purpose.

3.0 KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 This committee considered the development of the first floor of Phoenix House as a Life/Business skills centre at its meetings on 10th April 2013, 10th July 2013 and 7th October 2013. At the meeting on 7th October an opportunity to bid for European Social Fund (ESF) money was identified, linked to our work with the Department for Work and Pensions as a Universal Credit Pilot authority. A high level outline bid was submitted and we now have the option to work up a full bid which needs to be completed by 31st December 2013. The total size of the funding pot is around £10 million and the formal call for bids is from the 9 English Local Authority Led Universal Credit Pilots.
- 3.2 The overarching aim is to provide a coordinated approach to life skills frameworks to enable vulnerable people to become more digitally, financially and socially independent. To achieve this we will work with providers, services, businesses and clients to make it seamless and easy for the most vulnerable people to get the extra support they need to maximise their chances of becoming more independent. Me and My learning will link into the Housing Foyer Project, to support 16-25 year olds with the life skills and training they require to be able to self- manage and live independently.

- 3.3 The deadline for the ESF Bid is 31st December 2013, with the aim being to get the centre up and running as soon as possible after February 2014 with the initial funding being sufficient to run through until approximately June 2015. Specifically this phase will be used to test our learning to engage with employers, stakeholders and most importantly to engage with service users and assess the difference that we can make to their lives. Beyond June 2015 there is every chance that we can achieve sustainability via funding likely to be channelled through the proposed Local Support Services Framework (linked to the proposed roll out of Universal Credit), together with other funding sources such as provider rentals.
- 3.4 A Partner Event was held on the 4th October, where 18 partners attended from the public and private sector, and which was designed to understand what Partners can offer to the Project, and raise the projects profile. There is a Community Event planned for 3rd December to speak with the Community on what delivery they would like to see within Me and My Learning, and start to understand some of the potential barriers for residents in finding employment.
- 3.5 This building is in the ownership of Melton Borough Council and has been successfully used over the summer for a similar purpose in preparing people for job opportunities with the new Sainsbury's development in Melton Mowbray.
- 3.6 East Midlands Councils current sponsor, Leicestershire County Council, have submitted formal written notice to quit Phoenix House from 1st April 2014 and this has been accepted by the Council. We are therefore assuming vacant possession of the first floor of Phoenix House from this date, save for Learn Direct who occupy F18 and F19 under a 5 year lease from September 2013, an occupation entirely complimentary to the proposed Learning and Skills Centre. Me and My Learning, with some small capital improvements, would ideally sit within the first floor of Phoenix House. If the ESF bid is successful, this should enable us to cover any lost rental and service charge income from East Midlands Councils. During this period we would explore how to cover this loss in a sustainable way over the longer term.

Understanding the Need

- 3.7 There is evidence of a clear need for this type of project as current information indicates that in 2012, 19.12% of Melton working age residents (approximately 6,000 people) were only educated to NVQ level 1 or below, compared to 17.04% in Leicestershire and 15.64% nationally. Melton is also below county and national averages for those trained to NVQ levels 2 and 3. This will be a barrier to people gaining employment or being able to earn sufficient money from employment to be able to cope financially, both now and in the future when welfare changes start to take full effect.
- 3.8 The Me and My Learning Centre will work with businesses to up skill residents, and ensure that those aged 19-64 years have access to courses that can help them to become more work ready or ready for better paid work. Me and My Learning will work with residents to support them with life skills to be able to manage socially, digitally and financially. Discussions with DWP have identified that acquisition of suitable life skills, such as managing money, managing tenancies, building self confidence or using digital devices are big gaps at present and what we hope to do is bring these types of services into the facility alongside more traditional work ready learning services.
- 3.9 Initial research has highlighted that between 750-900 families in Melton will either be families with complex need or demonstrating many of the signs of having complex needs. In depth research of 193 families specifically in Melton has shown 65% of them to have multiple needs such as poor educational attainment, unemployment, poverty, offending behaviour and poor health etc. There is significant evidence from the existing employment

and skills project that the approach suggested for Me and My Learning does work. On 6th November the Council hosted a visit by the Employment Minister and as part of that visit 5 clients talked very passionately about how their lives had been turned around during the last 12 months. Councillors are asked to consider whether they might find it useful for something similar to be staged for their benefit so that they can experience some of the positive outcomes being achieved for people.

- 3.10 Research from The Universal Credit Programme Analysis has highlighted the 4 highest challenges for those seeking work are; Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol, Learning Difficulties and Housing, and therefore, with multiple others such as transport, partners and services will be put in place to support these root causes to unemployment.
- 3.11 Creating Me and My Learning as a one stop shop, will improve skill levels, and support sustained employment by understanding the root causes of unemployment and enabling 'managability'.
- 3.12 The proposed Housing Foyer Project will support 26 Young People aged 16-25 years in new housing accommodation. The focus of the Foyer Project is to support Young People with Education, Training and Life Skills, with a view to them becoming contributing residents, and able to self-manage, leading independent lives. The Housing Foyer Project will focus on improved outcomes for Care Leavers, Offenders, Teenage Pregnancy Service and Surestart Children's Centre Programme. This Project together with the Learning and Skills Centre, will compliment each other through the education, skills and worklessness agenda.
- 3.13 To evaluate and monitor the Project, we aim to complete a single assessment of need, through a triage process within Me and My Learning, which will ensure that residents get the right services for their needs. This will ensure that we are able to monitor clients who come through the facility, and measure outcomes, such as financial or social outcomes.

Phases

- 3.14 Pre Phase 1: developing further need and resources required to run the project. Working with stakeholders and users to source funding streams to make the project financially secure and deliver in the most optimum way to secure the desired outcomes. The ESF bid is now the main way of delivering this and a further report will be made to the next meeting of this Committee after we are notified of the outcome. A project Mandate is attached for approval in order to include this project in the 2014/15 capital programme
- 3.15 Phase 1: Subject to a successful outcome this phase will be to run the project with the ESF funding until June 2015, with a significant evaluation period included to further inform the business case post end of ESF funding. Initially new service provision from the Me and My Learning facility will be focused on developing Life Skills, and getting businesses in to run workshops/ talks to the local community, but we will also seek to attract other existing learning providers to use Phoenix House to deliver their services in order to support Work Readiness and get as much as possible delivered from the same building.
- 3.16 Phase 2: The aim will be to ensure a financially secure one stop learning and skills centre for all partners and residents to provide a coordinated approach to supporting people back to work from June 2015 onwards.

4.0 POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are clear links to some of the priorities in the Corporate Goals specifically:
1,2,3,4,5,8

- Support people and businesses through the economic downturn
- Meet the Economic needs of Borough
- Improving the well-being of vulnerable people

4.2 Links to national policy include:

- Can the Work Programme Work for all user groups?
- Local Support Service Framework covering local authority role in the roll out of Universal Credit
- Service Transformation: A better service for the citizen, a better deal for the Taxpayer

5.0 FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 To be able to access the European Social Fund, match funding is required to be identified. Capital is disallowed, and therefore cash is seen as the most appropriate alternative. The project is broadly about supporting working age adults to be able to live their lives more independently in the future and officers have focused on how we can divert resources from existing budgets into this initiative under this broad aim. We have identified through this process a total of £490K that could be used to match fund ESF monies, an approach that has received initial support in feedback from ESF officers at the DWP. The sums identified are as set out below;

- £200,000 Melton Surestart Programme
- £75,000 Housing Support
- £50,000 Health Budget
- £10,000 Economic Development
- £10,000 Voluntary Sector
- £100,000 Staff costs for management and monitoring
- £15,000 Community Safety
- £30,000 Youth Development Budgets
- **Total Match funding: £490,000**

5.2 To be able to use the first floor of Me and My Learning, it will include some capital spend of £15K to be able to remodel one section into 4 separate training rooms.

5.3 If we are successful with the ESF bid we will commission an evaluation and sustainability study, which will consider the effectiveness of the facility and develop ideas for ongoing sustainability.

5.4 In terms of ongoing sustainability we know there could be opportunities provided through some of the funding allocated to the Leicester, Leicestershire Economic Partnership as well as potentially via the Local Support Service Framework proposed by the DWP to underpin the rollout of Universal Credit. However, the best opportunity for ongoing funding streams is likely to be through the re-focussing of existing budgets to provide a more holistic way of providing these services in this joined up way.

5.5 At the meeting of this committee held on 7th October 2013 approval for charges relating to room hire at Phoenix house was given for a 6 month period only due to concerns raised at the meeting that the rates were too low and may unfairly compete with other venues. It was agreed that a review would be undertaken and reported back to members. This will be presented at the next meeting of this committee.

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods in consultation with the solicitor to the Council and head of central services ensure appropriate Legal and Property implications

are taken into account when developing documents relating to the occupancy of Phoenix House.

7.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY

7.1 No direct connection to community safety for the development phase. However, once into Phase 2, employment, raising aspirations and skill level could have an impact on ASB and improve quality of life for residents of the Borough.

8.0 EQUALITIES

8.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has not been completed, however, an equalities analysis has shown that through this targeted approach positive impact have been identified. During Phase 1, the evaluation and monitoring will include equalities impact. An EIA assessment will be completed as part of the Project Documentation for Transformation Board

9.0 RISKS

9.1 Probability

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Very High A				
High B				
Significant C				
Low D		1,2		
Very Low E				
Almost Impossible F				
	IV Neg- ligible	III Marg- inal	II Critical	I Catast- rophic

→
Impact

Risk No.	Description
1	Additional income assumed is not realised
2	Assumed Costs are too low
3	

10.0 CLIMATE CHANGE

10.1 No impact on climate change

11.0 CONSULTATION

11.1 Consultation is being planned for partners and the community. The community will be asked to inform delivery, as well as business.

12.0 WARDS AFFECTED

12.1 All residents within the Melton Borough will be able to access the Me and My Learning centre.

Contact Officer: Gemma Sanders/H Rai

Date: 13th November 2013

Appendices: Capital and Revenue costs of the Development Phase of the Me and My Learning Centre.

Background Papers: None

Reference: X drive/Committee/CSA/2013/14/071013/Learning and Skills centre