

Eden District Council

Executive

3 September 2019

**Pilot Business Growth Programme**

<b>Portfolio:</b>	Commercial Services
<b>Report from:</b>	Assistant Director Planning and Economic Development
<b>Wards:</b>	All Wards
<b>OPEN PUBLIC ITEM</b>	

**1 Purpose**

- 1.1 This report sets out a proposal to develop a Pilot Business Growth Programme with the aim of assisting new and existing businesses within Eden to access advice and support to meet their business needs.

**2 Recommendation**

- 2.1 That a supplementary estimate of £17,000 is taken from the Business Rates Retention reserve and added to an existing Brexit budget of £17,000 to provide a sum of £34,000 to be used to develop a Pilot Business Growth Programme for Eden.

**3 Report Details**

- 3.1 The Council currently provides a range of business support and advice across a number of Council departments. In addition to this, the Council has previously chosen to supplement the offer for businesses by contracting in additional business support, primarily through the Cumbria Chamber of Commerce.
- 3.2 The new administration of the Council wish to continue the support given to new and existing businesses within Eden to help grow the local economy. As part of this aspiration, there is a wish to develop a Pilot Business Growth Programme, which will focus on complementary activities to support businesses in addition to what the Council currently provides.
- 3.3 In having regard to the desire to develop a Business Growth Programme, the Council must be mindful of its own limited budgets. The finance requested associated with this recommendation is to be used from a source of money provided by Central Government aimed at supporting businesses with their Brexit preparations. Given that recent events have indicated that a no deal Brexit is highly likely, it is recommended that the funding is used to provide advice and support to businesses to prepare for Brexit and to assist with planning for post Brexit business continuation strategies alongside general business advice and support.
- 3.4 Given the limited finance that is available it is recommended that the Council match fund Central Government's £17,000 Brexit funding with its own funding taken from reserves to create a pot of £34,000. A tender exercise will then be

carried out to ensure the Council gets maximum benefit from this level of funding. As a minimum requirement for the tender exercise it would be expected that support and advice on Brexit implications would be provided to businesses in and around the four Key Service Centres alongside general business advice and support. The exact criteria and outcomes expected of the tender exercise will be developed by officers.

- 3.5 This proposed use of the finance provided by Central Government would appear to meet the intention for which it was intended. Assisting new businesses to grow in Eden should lead to the creation of new jobs, supports growth of the overall rateable value of businesses in the District, and could lead to a higher level of retained business rates.
- 3.6 Once the tender exercise has been run, Members will be provided with an update as to whether there was an appetite from external providers to deliver the intended scheme.

## **4 Policy Framework**

4.1 The Council has four corporate priorities which are:

- Decent Homes for All;
- Strong Economy, Rich Environment;
- Thriving Communities; and
- Quality Council

4.2 This report meets Strong Economy, Rich Environment corporate priority.

## **5 Consultation**

5.1 The report has been shared with the lead Portfolio Holder who is content with the approach set out in the report.

## **6 Implications**

### **6.1 Financial and Resources**

6.1.1 Any decision to reduce or increase resources or alternatively increase income must be made within the context of the Council's stated priorities, as set out in its Council Plan 2015-19 as agreed at Council on 17 September 2015.

6.1.2 There will be a need for use of the Business Rates Retention Reserve with £17,000 to be taken to fund the Programme. As at 31 March 2019, there was £93k in the reserve, set aside to support economic development activity in the District. This will be used to match fund the grant received from Central Government to assist with Brexit preparations in 2019/20.

### **6.2 Legal**

6.2.1 The proposals within the report fall within the legal powers of the Council.

### **6.3 Human Resources**

6.3.1 There will be officer time expended in developing a tender exercise, assessing the tenders and if an appointment is made, in managing and monitoring the outcomes of the project.

## 6.4 Statutory Considerations

<b>Consideration:</b>	<b>Details of any implications and proposed measures to address:</b>
Equality and Diversity	There are no adverse equality and diversity implications arising from this report.
Health, Social Environmental and Economic Impact	There are no adverse health or environmental implications arising from this report. The project would be designed to benefit the economy by providing support to new and existing businesses which in turn generate employment opportunities for residents.
Crime and Disorder	There are no adverse crime and disorder implications arising from this report.
Children and Safeguarding	There are no adverse children and safeguarding implications arising from this report.

## 6.5 Risk Management

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Controls Required</b>
New and existing businesses fail to secure appropriate advice and support.	New and existing Eden businesses may be slow to start or develop as a result of not having access to timely advice and support.	The Council is able to and does offer advice to businesses but this is limited by resources available. Bringing in additional opportunities for advice and support from external sources allows more businesses to benefit.
The assigned finance does not meet the necessary outputs required.	Eden businesses do not benefit from the investment provided by the Council and as such fail to commence or develop their business aspirations.	Regular monitoring of the outputs ensures sufficient progress is being made and under performance can be addressed in a timely manner.

## 7 Other Options Considered

- 7.1 Members may choose not to invest in the pilot programme which may result in fewer new businesses starting up and businesses developing at a slower rate in Eden resulting in fewer employment opportunities being created.
- 7.2 Officers of the Council's Economic Development Team could receive training to deliver more and varied business support in Eden. The Council however would not be able to provide the level and breadth of resource that an external

provider would be likely able to provide and in addition, officers within the Economic Development Team are few in number and already work at capacity on a range of other work streams.

## **8 Reasons for the Decision/Recommendation**

- 8.1 Investing in the pilot programme means that the delivery of business advice and support will be enhanced within Eden.

### **Tracking Information**

<b>Governance Check</b>	<b>Date Considered</b>
<b>Chief Finance Officer (or Deputy)</b>	20 August 2019
<b>Monitoring Officer (or Deputy)</b>	20 August 2019
<b>Relevant Assistant Director</b>	21 August 2019

**Background Papers:** None

**Appendices:** None

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