

Record of officer decision

Decision title:	To tender and appoint a consultant to undertake the delivery of a Visitor Website as part of the delivery of the Marches Investment Fund Visitor Economy Project
Date of decision:	26 November 2020
Decision maker:	Director for Economy and Place
Authority for delegated decision:	<p>The Chief Executives Scheme of Delegation updated 14 September 2020 Appendix 1 Line 45 Economic Development</p> <p>http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/documents/s50083046/Chief%20Executive%20Scheme%20of%20Delegation.pdf</p> <p>The Cabinet Member for Environment, Economy and Skills took a decision on the 20/7/20 to accept a grant from the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to support the soonest possible recovery of the visitor economy and to approve expenditure in delivering the project (http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=7015).</p> <p>The Marches LEP approved a £444,220 Marches Investment Fund grant to Herefordshire Council on the 27 May 2020, the funding offer letter was received on the 17 June 2020, and was signed by Andrew Lovegrove (S151 Officer) on the 30 July 2020.</p>
Ward:	Countywide
Consultation:	<p>A project Steering Group has been formed to guide the implementation of the project, including private sector representation (sectoral and geographic representatives from across the county). The Cabinet Member for Environment, Economy and Skills represents the council on the Steering Group, and the council's comms team attend as observers.</p> <p>The Steering Group have led the development of the tender specification to seek expert support to deliver the visitor website element of the approved project (developing and commenting on the brief) in accordance with the LEP's funding requirements, including the cabinet member.</p> <p>A sub-group of the steering group will participate in the tender evaluation and moderation process.</p>
Decision made:	<p>To undertake procurement and to appoint a consultant to undertake the delivery of a Visitor Website as a key element of the Marches Investment Fund Visitor Economy Project.</p> <p>The value of this contract will be a maximum of £75,000 and will cover the cost of development of the new visitor website, together with SEO support for an initial 3 month period, and full hosting and maintenance support for 12 months</p>
Reasons for decision:	The Herefordshire visitor economy has been severely impacted by Covid 19 and the resulting lockdown. Tourism accommodation and attractions, cultural venues, hospitality businesses, non-essential retailers were instructed by government to close for circa 3 months during the start of their usual peak season period. This has

	<p>significantly threatened the viability of these businesses, and put at risk of redundancy the large numbers of people they employ.</p> <p>In May the Marches LEP allocated £444,220 to Herefordshire to support Covid 19 economic recovery, subject to the development of a business case. Herefordshire Council in partnership with the Herefordshire Business Board established and submitted a business case focussed on supporting the soonest possible recovery of the visitor economy. Shropshire Council (as the accountable body) on behalf of the Marches LEP issued a funding offer letter to Herefordshire Council on the 17 June, and the Cabinet Member for Environment Economy and Skills took a decision to accept the grant and implement the project on the 20 June.</p> <p>Recognising the need to engage with visitor economy businesses to co-ordinate delivery and to seek relevant expertise, a project steering group was formed in June 2020.</p> <p>The development of a modern visitor website, with a range of new content and functionality in order to compete with similar destinations has been identified as a critical by the project steering group and in the marketing plan. Recognising the need to seek appropriate expertise to deliver the visitor website the procurement will be taken in accordance with the council's contract procedure rules.</p>
<p>Highlight any associated risks / finance / legal / equality considerations:</p>	<p>Finance</p> <p>The Marches LEP approved a grant of £444,220 for a visitor economy marketing and PR campaign to support the soonest possible recovery of a key sector of the Herefordshire economy on the 27 May, issuing a funding offer letter on the 17 July. A cabinet member decision was taken on the 20 July to accept and implement the project, and the Section 151 Officer signed the offer letter on the 30 July.</p> <p>Risks</p> <p>The funds are only available for a limited period, to be committed by end of October 2020 and spend by end of March 2021 (timeframe agreed by the LEP CEO).</p> <p>The funds have been provided to support the recovery of the Herefordshire visitor economy.</p>
<p>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</p>	<p>The council could have decided not to implement the project, rejecting the offer of the available grant funds. This would have led to those businesses severely impacted by Covid 19 not receiving the support they need, which could result in high levels of business closure and redundancies.</p>
<p>Details of any declarations of interest made:</p>	<p>None</p>

Signed

Richard Ball
 Director for Economy & Place

Date: 26 November 2020