

Record of officer decision

Decision title:	Decision to appoint a consultant to undertake research and evaluation of the Marches Investment Fund Visitor Economy Project
Date of decision:	6 April 2021
Decision maker:	Director for Economy and Place
Authority for delegated decision:	<p>The Chief Executives Scheme of Delegation updated 29 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 27th May 2020, the funding offer letter was received on the 17th June 2020, and was signed by Andrew Lovegrove (S151 Officer) on the 30th 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>
Decision made:	<p>To undertake the procurement process to appoint a consultant to undertake research and evaluation of the Visitor Economy project.</p> <p>The value of this contract will be a maximum of £15,000.</p>
Reasons for decision:	<p>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. Many of these businesses have then faced a second period of lockdown in November 2020. This has 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 17th June, and the Cabinet Member for Environment Economy and Skills took a decision to accept the grant and implement the project on the 20th 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 business case for the Visitor Economy project identified the need for research and evaluation of the project that will benchmark and show the impact of the Visitor Economy project, in particular of the impact of the marketing and PR campaigns, to evidence return on investment and to inform future activity.</p>
<p>Highlight any associated risks / finance / legal / equality considerations:</p>	<p>Finance 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 27th May 2020, issuing a funding offer letter on the 17th July 2020. A cabinet member decision was taken on the 20th July to accept and implement the project, and the Section 151 Officer signed the offer letter on the 30th July.</p> <p>Risks The funds are only available for a limited period, to be committed by end of October 2020 and spend by end of July 2021 (an increased timeframe agreed by the LEP CEO and confirmed in writing via email on 08-02-2021).</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

Date: 6 April 2021

Richard Ball
Director for Economy and Place