

Record of officer decision

Decision title:	Approval to award a contract to Loyal Free to implement and manage a bespoke App linked to local businesses that offers incentives and encouragement to shop and play locally.
Date of decision:	18 th March 2021
Decision maker:	Stephen Vickers, Director for Adults & Communities
Authority for delegated decision:	<p>“Talk Community Strategic Approach”</p> <p>Decision taken by cabinet to approve the Talk Community Strategic Approach on 24th September 2020:</p> <p>That authority be delegated to the director for adults and communities to take all operational decisions necessary to ensure adoption and implementation of the proposed Talk Community programme and plan.</p> <p>http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?Id=50032818&Opt=0</p>
Ward:	Countywide (excluding the Hereford BID area)
Consultation:	Cllr Pauline Crockett, Cllr Angela Tyler, Cllr David Summers, Cllr Liz Harvey, Cllr Gemma Davies have been consulted.
Decision made:	To award a contract to Loyal Free for the set up, hosting & maintenance of the app for the use across Herefordshire (excluding Hereford City as the Hereford BID area already have the app available) for a period of 3 Years at a total cost of £61,500 plus VAT.
Reasons for decision:	<p>In 2020, Covid-19 caused the largest contraction in the UK economy for over 300 years. Although the implementation of the vaccination programme and the announcement of the ‘lockdown road map’ by the government has offered more immediate hope about the road to recovery, the impact of the pandemic on businesses, jobs and households will continue to be felt in the months and years ahead.</p> <p>Already, we have seen the existing inequalities widening, with the low-paid and already vulnerable groups disproportionately affected across a range of socio-economic and health measures.</p> <p>Before the pandemic, the decline of the UK’s high streets is well documented. The growth of out-of-town shopping centres and internet shopping has led to absentee landlords, empty shops and a stifling of choice at the heart of our communities. The pandemic has therefore accelerated the need to think differently about how we design and create vibrant, thriving high streets across the county.</p>

	<p>The council recognises that our market towns and high streets play a critical role in the county's economy and in our communities. While the composition and size may vary, they are often a point of community focus and for generations have been the place where people go to shop, meet or work. They are an economic, social and cultural hub that shapes the vibrancy, wellbeing and prosperity of where we live and work. In addition, they are the key interface between the wider rural areas and connectivity to and from Hereford.</p> <p>Providing support to our market towns and high streets to enable recovery as soon as possible is therefore one of the Council's immediate priorities. Cabinet Members have a vision for Herefordshire to join the growing number of Councils and organisations that have a bespoke digital platform linked to local businesses that offers our residents incentives and encouragement to shop and play.</p> <p>Project management resource will be provided to support the implementation of the Loyal Free App</p>
Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:	None identified
Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:	<p>Do nothing;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A missed opportunity to restart and drive the retail and SME economy post lockdown • A continuous decline in the number of visitors to our Market Towns, High streets, heritage, cultural and tourist attractions post lockdown • A missed opportunity to positively contribute to local charities through 'give as you save' initiative • The potential threat of more local retail outlets and SMEs closing due to lack of demand. • A missed opportunity to embed the Talk Community.
Details of any declarations of interest made:	None

Signed..... Date:

Please ensure that signatures are redacted before publishing.