

Record of operational decision

Decision title:	Decision to allocate 100K of the COVID Recovery funding to set up a one stop shop for Employment Advice
Date of decision:	31.10.21
Decision maker:	Paul Smith
Authority for delegated decision:	<p>Decision taken by Cabinet to approve the COVID 19 Recovery Plan on 24th June 2021: That authority be delegated to the Director of Economy and Place, Director Adults and Communities, Director Children and Families and Director of Public Health be authorised to take all operational decisions to implement recommendation including, but not limited to, the procurement and commissioning of the identified projects (as set out in the detailed action plan)</p> <p>http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ielssueDetails.aspx?IId=50037702&PlanId=0&Opt=3#A158109</p>
Ward:	Countywide
Consultation:	<p>The COVID Recovery Plan was approved by Cabinet on 24th June which provides funding of £6m to support the economy, community wellbeing and organisation with recovery. The plan provided an overview of the schemes for delivery, which included 'Joined up for Jobs' this project is one element within the Joined up for Jobs scheme and all appropriate consultation was undertaken at this time.</p> <p>The section 151 officer has been consulted and supportive of the project.</p>
Decision made:	<p>To provide highly visible, clear, easy to navigate, signposting and information communications (in a variety of formats) for people at risk of, or in unemployment as a result of the impact of the pandemic, so they can access the help they need quickly and easily, in order to prevent further escalation of their situation.</p> <p>Additional customer service resource and capabilities will be recruited to provide advice, guidance and direction over the phone to residents unable to access web resources.</p> <p>There is already a wide variety of help available for those affected by unemployment both economically and mentally due to Covid-19, however, this help may not be as easy to find, to those who need it, as it could be. A targeted communication campaign would help people know where to look for the information, advice and guidance they need. The initial phase of this project will be to identify and map the best information pulling this together into one place so that residents can easily access the advice.</p> <p>HOOPLE will employ an employment coach who will provide intensive support and training as appropriate to individuals aged 25 plus, looking for work. Building on the support that HOOPLE currently deliver for Kick -start. The aim of which is to help individuals to access jobs and enter and sustain employment and provide support to employers The employment coach will work with key referral agencies including Jobcentre plus, voluntary and community organisations and other agencies that support adults who are unemployed. The Youth Employment Hub will support individuals aged 16 up to the age of 25.</p>

The below table shows a breakdown of the costs:

Description	Cost £
2 x customer service operatives – temp 6 month contract costs also include training	27,000
Website and promotional package	3,000
1 x Website development officer temp contract	7,000
Hoople	50,000

Reasons for decision:

The global Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting measures taken to reduce the spread of the virus have had an unprecedented impact on the national and local economy and on people’s wellbeing and mental (as well as physical) health. Nationally the magnitude of the recession caused by the pandemic is unprecedented, GDP declined by 9.8% in 2020 the steepest drop since records began in 1948.

The pandemic has also had a severe impact on people’s mental health and wellbeing, due to long periods of anxiety, isolation, and uncertainty. The Herefordshire Community Wellbeing Survey 2021 found 28% of people reported high levels of anxiety, 32% experienced drop in household income, 33% doing less exercise, and 30% sleeping less well. Wellbeing is lowest in those living in the most deprived areas.

The council has worked across all directorates to support businesses, residents and communities throughout the pandemic to remain as safe as possible and to prevent and reduce spread of infection and protect those most vulnerable in our society.

Our focus now moves towards recovery. Over the coming months the true impact of the pandemic will become better known for the economy, community wellbeing and organisation.

To support the recovery cabinet approved a £6.1m COVID Recovery Plan which includes the economy, community wellbeing and organisation. The recovery plan now focuses on the immediate impactful actions we need to take in the short term. Our priorities are to:

- **Establish Safe and Welcoming Places**
- **Support Business Viability and Resilience,**
- **Support Employment**
- **Support Wellbeing.**

There has been a significant reduction in employment opportunities because of COVID-19. Many businesses couldn’t operate in the usual way and had to cut costs by furloughing their employees or letting them go. As a result many people have lost their job or part of their income. It is likely there will be more losses in the months to come.

For individuals who have lost their job or are at risk of losing their job, the consequences are enormous. People are worried about how they will pay their bills, feed their families and keep debt collectors at bay. Linked to this, the number of people suffering from stress and anxiety, as well as more complicated mental health issues, has risen during the pandemic.

Much of the government Covid-19 support available during the pandemic is coming to an end over the coming months (furlough, eviction ban etc.) This is likely to drive a significant increase in residents requiring support.

Linking with our successful ‘Money on your Mind’ programme, Joined Up For Jobs will offer a one stop shop with easy to navigate information and

	<p>officers skilled to provide vital support.</p> <p>Skills and training are at the core of our economic recovery. Whether that's helping residents keep their jobs, find new opportunities or join the workforce for the first time.</p>
<p>Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:</p>	<p>The COVID recovery plan budget allocation must be committed within the 2021/22 financial year.</p> <p>The one stop advice shop project is aiming to provide highly visible, clear, easy to navigate, signposting and information communications in a variety of formats for people at risk of, or in unemployment as a result of the impact of the pandemic, so they can access the help they need quickly and easily, in order to prevent further escalation of their situation. This will be available to all of Herefordshire's residents in a range of formats including fully accessible web pages, printed materials, social media and also telephone support ensuring that this can be accessed by all. In addition the employment coach will provide intensive support and training one to one or in groups, as appropriate, to individuals aged 25 and over who have lost their job due to the pandemic, to support them back into work. They will work with partners and Talk Community Hubs across the county. Please note this project will complement the Youth Employment Hub which supports young people aged 16 to 24. Although not specifically targeted at individuals with a protected characteristic, ongoing monitoring and the evaluation of the project will capture how effective it has been in engaging and supporting.</p>
<p>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</p>	<p>The option of not doing this was considered but rejected, on the basis that at the time of writing unemployment is high. There is likely to be strong ongoing demand for the services provided and it will aid the recovery of the local economy.</p>
<p>Details of any declarations of interest made:</p>	<p>N/A</p>

Signed

Paul Smith

Date: 4 November 2021