



Officer Non-Key Decision Report

Decision Date - 02/06/23

NON-KEY DECISION TAKEN BY THE: SERVICE DIRECTOR, ECONOMY, EMPLOYMENT AND PLANNING

Author: Melanie Roberts

Contact Details: melanie.roberts@somerset.gov.uk

Details of the decision:

That the Service Director for Economy, Employment and Planning approves:

- the commencement of a procurement process to allocate up to £400k, from the Community Learning Grant funding to secure a number of delivery partners, largely from VCSE sector, who will deliver elements of the community learning programme that can't be delivered by the core delivery partner.
- the appointment of an administrator to support contract/performance management and the claims process for this funding as there is no capacity within the team to absorb this.

Reasons for the decision:

In order to secure the services of localised delivery partners for provision to be in place from 1 September the procurement process will need to commence ahead of receipt of the formal grant offer from the Department for Education and ahead of finalising the delivery arrangements with our core provider. We will not enter into any contracts until the funding offer from DfE has been accepted by the Council.

Background to the decision:

Somerset Council (SC) were approached by the Department for Education (DfE) in November 2022 to discuss the possibility of the Community Learning Grant (CLG) being grant funded through SC for the 2023/24 academic year. This would bring the Council in line with other local authorities as Somerset is the only area where community learning provision is directly procured by the DfE. The total funding allocation has been confirmed as £2.524m for 2023/24. Further details of our approach for community learning in the coming year (a transition year) will be included in a forthcoming decision report.

In previous years Somerset Skills & Learning (SS&L) have been directly awarded the funding from DfE to deliver community learning in Somerset. Their delivery model has included a sub-contracting arrangement whereby around £400k of funding has been used to fund smaller, community-based organisations to deliver activity in the community where

it would not provide value for money for SS&L to try and do this themselves. SS&L have an established Community Learning Partnership for this purpose. Localised delivery is especially important in some of our more rural areas and among the harder to reach population to ensure a wider participation reach for our communities.

As the new funding recipient, Somerset Council, will need to lead on this and will need to contract directly with these local delivery partners. We have allocated £400k from the grant for this purpose. In previous years around 80 applications have been made for the funding with around 20 organisations being successful and receiving funding of between £5k and £30k. We anticipate similar volumes and values for the upcoming process.

To ensure the provision is ready to roll out from 1 September the procurement process will need to commence ahead of receiving, and signing, the formal funding offer from the DfE. However, we will not enter into any contracts with delivery partners until the governance decision to accept the funding has been taken. This is currently planned for June/July but is dependent upon DfE timeframes for releasing documentation. Consultations will however commence based on draft information which will also set out how we plan to approach delivery in the 2023/24 academic year.

SS&L still have residual funding from the 2022/23 academic year grant, and we are therefore working in partnership with them to develop the specifications and documentation to ensure close alignment with the wider community learning programme. We plan to launch the procurement early in June, subject to approval of this report. SS&L will support the delivery partners, as in previous years, to submit their bids for funding. Bids will be assessed through June/July with contracting taking place during August. These processes will ensure the Council's procurement requirements are met.

It was agreed for this transition year that the Council would directly resource the management and administration of the CLG. We anticipate that a full-time administrator will be required to manage the contracts, oversee performance, manage the claims process, and coordinate any reporting back to DfE. As this is a new programme, and requirements will grow over time, we are considering whether we can offer this position as an apprenticeship. We are therefore seeking approval for budget for up to the equivalent value of a full-time G12. In future years (from August 2024) this post, and any other resource requirements, will be funded via a top slice from the CLG so this funding request is for up to 1 year (dependent on the appointment date).

Background papers:

None

Compliance section:

| | |
|--|--------------------------|
| Members consulted; members informed: | Yes |
| Officer consultations completed: | Yes |
| Senior (including statutory) officer sign off completed | Yes |
| Public / other consultations undertaken | not considered necessary |
| Do you have sufficient budget or additional funding available and approval to commit this budget or funding and has this been confirmed with the appropriate Finance Service or Service Manager? | No |
| Are there any legal considerations to be made? | Yes |
| Has Legal Services been consulted (specific requirement for changes in service delivery, procurement, contracts, or property matters)? | Yes |
| Are there any TUPE implications arising? | No |
| Has HR/Workforce been consulted? | not considered necessary |
| Is the decision likely to lead to a procurement exercise or contract award / change? | Yes |
| Has the Commercial and Procurement Team been consulted? | Yes |
| Service Finance Lead Officer / Manager consulted for commissioning? | No |
| Are there any risks arising? (liaise with Pam Pursley / Angela Farmer regarding these) | No |
| Have mitigating actions already been taken? | not considered necessary |
| Have all Due Regard (equalities) implications been considered? (liaise with Tom Rutland regarding these) | Yes |
| If ticked 'No' or 'not considered necessary' for any of the above, please provide your justification below: | |
| HR will be consulted in respect of the relevant recruitment process. | |
| There are no risks in respect of taking this decision. | |

| Member consultation completed: | Name(s) | Date |
|--|----------------|-------------|
| Relevant Local Unitary Councillors consulted where decision directly affects their division. | N/A | |
| Relevant Executive Member(s) consulted (if applicable) | Ros Wyke | 23/05/23 |
| Opposition Spokesperson informed (if applicable) | N/A | |
| Chairman of relevant Scrutiny informed (if applicable) | N/A | |

Decision Maker

I am aware of the details of this decision, have considered the reasons, options, representations, and consultation responses (where applicable) and give my approval / agreement to its implementation.

Signed by relevant Service Manager / Executive Director:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Hickson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large 'P' and 'H'.

Name: Paul Hickson

Post: Service Director for Economy, Employment and Planning

Date: 2nd June 2023

Note – a copy of this signed decision should be sent to David Clark / Scott Wooldridge, Monitoring Officer, Democratic Services