

RECORD OF DELEGATED OFFICER DECISION

Key Decision ✓

SUBJECT: Building Resilience, Prosperity and Wellbeing of Local Small and Medium Sized Enterprises through European Structural Funds

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

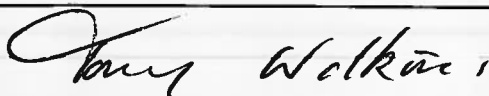
In accordance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation, this report has been prepared to accompany the intended officer decision of the Director of Human Resources as described below;

The purpose of the report is to approve the submission of a business case to the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) to seek to expand the Council's HR Service to provide an enhanced well being service to council staff and to offer small and medium sized organisations, within the County Borough, HR advice and guidance to help these organisations become more effective employers and to help them expand their operations.

DELEGATED DECISION:

It was **AGREED:**

1. To submit a project business plan that seeks approval for a total project cost of £1.910M to the Welsh European Funding Office for structural funds to provide an enhanced well being service to council staff and to offer small and medium sized organisations, within the County Borough HR advice and guidance to help these organisations become more effective employers and to help them expand their operations;
2. To note that the sum of Council match funding of £0.097M can be accommodated within existing available resources



Chief Officer Signature

Tony Wilkins

Print Name

Date

24.10.17

The decision is taken in accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government Act, 2000 (Executive Functions) and in the terms set out in Section 5 of Part 3 of the Council's Constitution



CONSULTATION

A. Morgan

19/10/17

CONSULTEE CABINET MEMBER SIGNATURE

DATE

[Signature]

19/10/17

CONSULTEE OFFICER SIGNATURE (if required)

DATE

CALL IN PROCEDURE RULES.

IS THE DECISION DEEMED URGENT AND NOT SUBJECT TO CALL-IN BY THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:

NO ✓

Reason for urgency:.....

If deemed urgent - signature of Mayor or Deputy Mayor or Head of Paid Service confirming agreement that the proposed decision is reasonable in all the circumstances for it being treated as a matter of urgency, in accordance with the overview and scrutiny procedure rule 17.2:

.....
(Mayor)

.....
(Dated)

NB - If this is a reconsidered decision then the decision Cannot be Called In and the decision will take effect from the date the decision is signed.



FOR CABINET OFFICE USE ONLY

PUBLICATION & IMPLEMENTATION DATES

PUBLICATION

Publication on the Councils Website:- 24th October 2017

DATE

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

Note: This decision will not come into force and may not be implemented until the expiry of 5 clear working days after its publication to enable it to be the subject to the Call-In Procedure in Rule 17.1 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

Subject to Call In the implementation date will be 1st November 2017.

DATE



Secretary to the Cabinet Signature

CHRISTIAN JS HANGAN
Print Name

24/10/17.
Date



KEY DELEGATED DECISION

REPORT TO ACCOMPANY A DECISION OF THE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES

OCTOBER 2017

BUILDING RESILIENCE, PROSPERITY AND WELLBEING OF LOCAL SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZED ENTERPRISES THROUGH EUROPEAN STRUCTURAL FUNDS

Author(s): Wendy Edwards, Head of Community Learning
Syd Dennis, ESF Programme Manager

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to approve the submission of a business case to the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) to seek to expand the Council's HR Service to provide an enhanced well being service to council staff and to offer small and medium sized organisations, within the County Borough, HR advice and guidance to help these organisations become more effective employers and to help them expand their operations.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Consider and agree to submit a project business plan that seeks approval for a total project cost of £1.910M to the Welsh European Funding Office for structural funds to provide an enhanced well being service to council staff and to offer small and medium sized organisations, within the County Borough HR advice and guidance to help these organisations become more effective employers and to help them expand their operations;
- 2.2 Notes that the sum of Council match funding of £0.097M can be accommodated within existing available resources.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The project provides an opportunity for the Council to provide specific human resource support and guidance to local micro, small and medium-sized businesses that are unlikely to have a dedicated human resource professional within their organisations with a view to enhancing their equality and diversity policies and the support that is



provided to their employees who have work limiting health conditions or who are underemployed. In addition, the project will also increase the capacity and capability of the Council's in-house team to enhance the support available to its own staff that have work limiting health conditions and/or who are underemployed (Underemployment is the under-use of a worker due to a job that does not use the workers skills, or is part time, or leaves the worker idle. Examples include workers on a phased return to work following a significant period away from work, holding a part-time job/reduced hours contract or, in some instances, a zero hours contract despite desiring full-time work. It also includes workers who are over-qualified, having education, experience, or skills beyond the requirements of the job).

4 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 £20.9 million is available in West Wales and the Valleys under Priority 1 Specific Objective 3 (SO3) to reduce underemployment or absence rates for employed individuals with work limiting health conditions and/or barriers to sustainable engagement with the labour market.
- 4.2 A meeting of Chief Officers and Service Managers from Human Resources, Education and Lifelong Learning, Public Health and Protection, Regeneration and Planning and Community Services was held on 18th May to consider the call for proposals. There was agreement that WEFO funding under Priority 1 SO3 offered a potential opportunity to add value and further capacity to provision that is currently being delivered by HR to support Council staff who have work limiting health conditions and are at risk of sickness absence. It was also agreed that, if sufficient funding could be attracted, the skills and expertise of the HR department could be expanded to provide advice and support to targeted micro, small and medium-sized enterprises within the county that have no, or insufficient access, to HR services within their own businesses.
- 4.3 Further to the meeting, the officers submitted an Operational Logic Table to WEFO, along with a Supporting Information Document. The Operational Logic Table is a short document designed to briefly outline the proposed project, its aim and output indicators and targets that would be addressed. Its purpose is to enable WEFO to decide whether the proposal is of sufficient interest to be progressed to the next stage of development.
- 4.4 On 30th August 2017, WEFO indicated that they were happy for the Council to move into the business planning stage to either:
 - Continue to develop our plans as a stand alone project or;



- Become part of a Regional bid with other Councils in the South East Wales region.

4.5 Both of the above options were fully explored by officers and after receiving further information from the South East Wales Region, it became apparent that their proposed project differs considerably both in content and scale to Rhondda Cynon Taf's proposed project. Of particular concern was that the impact of going with the Region would be that Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council would have to reduce participant numbers from 2,903 to 600 of which only 120 would be Local Authority/Public sector employees compared to 580 Local Authority/Public sector employees in our proposed project. This would dilute the impact of our project and to an unacceptable degree.

5 PROPOSAL

5.1 It is proposed to have 2 parts to the project – one focussing on services that could be enhanced for Council staff; the other focussing on the support that could be provided to MSMEs by the Council's HR service.

5.2 Part One – Well-being in Work Programme

This will involve 3 distinct strands as follows:

- **Strand 1 – Prevention** - Focus on implementation of a range of actions to reduce the likelihood of employees being absent from work or reducing their working hours as a result of work-limiting health conditions. This would include the development of a health surveillance service; an ergonomics service offering musculoskeletal advice and assessment; and appropriate access to consultative supervision for areas of work that have an additional emotional demand (such as social workers/teachers/care workers etc);
- **Strand 2 – Intervention** - Adds value to existing arrangements by increasing capacity to provide interventions to support an individual's return to work for those affected by long term absence from work, or to address underemployment, within RCTCBC;
- **Strand 3 - Education** - Focus on providing managers with training, advice and support particularly on sensitive issues such as mental health, so that they are better able to provide the kind of support required by their staff to maintain attendance at work.

5.3 Part Two – Supporting well-being in local businesses



This will consist of 2 strands:

- **Strand 1** - Utilises RCTCBC knowledge and skills to support micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in their approach to absence management and underemployed people by reviewing a business's sickness policies, risk assessments and health promotion and supporting the development of equality and diversity strategies and monitoring systems to address health-related issues within the workforce.
- **Strand 2** – Utilises RCTCBC knowledge and skills to support micro, small and medium enterprises in their approach to absence management and underemployment by supporting the development of 1:1 mentoring and coaching to those affected by long term absence from work or underemployment. This Project would link to the current ESF Projects providing support to people economically inactive or unemployed, who are no longer eligible for support once they have gained employed status.

5.4 If the application is successful through each stage it is anticipated that the project would be implemented between April 2018 and June 2020.

5.5 At the end of the project, the Council would seek to sell its HR Services to local businesses and other organisations after having proved the economic benefit of the services to those organisations.

6 PROGRAMME TARGETS

6.1 Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council is proposing to engage with 2,903 participants in total (580 public sector and 2,323 private sector) although this will be subject to some change as negotiations, and WEFO approval, confirm the final intervention rate.

7 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 This project has the potential to further enhance the Council's provision of support for employees who may be adversely affected due to ill-health and it will help to address the increasing need for additional mental health support for staff. Consequently, it will have a positive effect on equality and diversity within the workplace. It will also support micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in Rhondda Cynon Taf to develop equality and diversity policies that will benefit employees who have work-limiting health conditions and potentially increase the diversity of their workplaces.



8 CONSULTATION

- 8.1 All relevant Council services have been consulted and the project has been designed to reflect areas of need identified from a range of sources.

9 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 9.1 The financial models used by WEFO are complex. Effectively, WEFO could approve a total project cost of up to £2.450M, however the WEFO funding would be capped at £1.813M. Current estimates indicate that the project can be delivered for £1.910M, leaving a shortfall in funding, and therefore a contribution requirement from the Council of £0.097M as match funding.
- 9.2 If approved, for every £1 of RCT funding the project will draw down £18.71, with 95% of the funds being provided by WEFO and 5% by the Council.
- 9.3 Subject to Cabinet agreeing to submit a bid to WEFO for this project, the £0.097M Council match funding requirement can be accommodated within existing available resources.

10 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 10.1 There are no legal implications arising from these proposals. However, it will be necessary to ensure that the project is implemented in accordance with WEFO guidance.

11 LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/ SIP.

- 11.1 This proposed project aligns well with two of the Council's main priorities – 'promoting independence and positive lives for everyone', and 'building a strong economy.' In particular, it will support the Council to become more efficient by reducing and/or preventing sickness absences through improved support for Council staff. It will also enable the Council to use its professional expertise in the Human Resource and Equalities Services to provide advice and support for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, so that they can improve the support available to their employees who have work limiting health conditions or barriers to sustainable employment.
- 11.2 The application is consistent with the Council's stated intention to apply for ESF funding when possible.



12 CONCLUSION

- 12.1 This report has outlined the proposed project and seeks approval to proceed to the business planning stage of the WEFO application process and for the required amount of cash match-funding to be identified to support the project.