

Cherwell District Council

Executive

2 December 2013

<p>Transformation Bid Acceptance and Accountable Body Arrangements</p>

Report of Chief Executive

This report is public

Purpose of report

To delegate authority to formally accept the offer of government funding under the Transformation Challenge Award, agree the accountable body arrangements, delegate the necessary authority to enable draw down and utilisation of the funding and establish a Joint Working Group of elected members.

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 To delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, to accept the offer of funding as set out in Appendix 2, subject to the detailed Terms and Conditions of the Grant.
- 1.2 To agree that, subject to the agreement of Stratford-on-Avon district council (decision due 2 December 2013) and following the agreement of South Northamptonshire Council (given on 14 October 2013) Cherwell District Council, be accountable body for the Transformation Challenge Award funding.
- 1.3 To delegate authority to the Chief Executive (Cherwell District and South Northamptonshire Councils) in consultation with the Chief Executive (Stratford-on-Avon District Council), the Director of Resources (Cherwell District and South Northamptonshire Councils) and the Assistant Chief Executive (Stratford-on-Avon District Council) to:
 - (i) secure the formal draw down of the grant funding from Department of Communities and Local Government and
 - (ii) allocate the funding for appropriate purposes in pursuance of the submitted bid (Appendix1) and consistent with the grant conditions.
- 1.4 To appoint 2 Councillors and 2 substitutes to the Transformation Joint Working Group.

- 1.5 To agree that the Terms of Reference of the Transformation Joint Working Group be considered at its first meeting and then recommended to Executive/ Cabinet for approval.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 Earlier this year, the Department of Communities and Local Government announced the creation of the Transformational Challenge fund and invited applications from councils and other public sector bodies to receive funding from the pot of £7m. The guidance issued at the time specifically referred to joint working and was encouraging new and innovative approaches to generating efficiencies. A report was presented to the 19 June 2013 meeting of the 3 Way Joint Arrangements Steering Group which supported officers submitting bids to support the three way working between Stratford-on-Avon District Council, Cherwell District Council and South Northamptonshire Council. Urgency powers were used at Stratford-on-Avon District Council and at South Northamptonshire Council and Cherwell District Council approval was sought from the Cabinet (8 July 2013) and the Executive (1 July 2013) to progress the submissions. Six joint bids were submitted covering a range of activities including ICT, procurement and another to support the programme office costs of driving and managing the changes associated with extending shared services working across the three councils.

3.0 Report Details

- 3.1 The councils were informed on 9 October 2013 that the latter submission had been one of 18 successful bids out of a total of 145 (Appendix 2) bids submitted nationwide. The councils have been awarded the full amount sought, £366,932. At the time of publication of this report, the Department of Communities and Local Government has yet to send a formal offer letter setting out the terms and conditions of the funding. In the interests of moving forward with due speed, it is recommended that the Chief Executive be given delegated authority as set out in recommendation 1.1 above.
- 3.2 A report was presented to the meeting of the 3 Way Joint Arrangements Steering Group on 16 October 2013 which set out the proposal for the next stage including resourcing and governance. This report sets out the first stage of that governance process.
- 3.3 In order to receive the funding it is necessary for all three councils to formally accept the bid and agree to the terms and conditions. Additionally it is necessary for one of the 3 councils to act as accountable body for the funding and for delegations to be put in place to ensure that these funds can be drawn down in pursuance of the objectives of the bid and in accordance with the terms and conditions.
- 3.4 Any of the three councils could act as accountable body and the Chief Executives have agreed that subject to member approval, Cherwell District Council should be the accountable body in this instance. This report also sets out arrangements for delegation to the Chief Executive (Cherwell District and South Northamptonshire

Councils) in consultation with the Chief Executive (Stratford-on-Avon District Council), Director of Resources (Cherwell District and South Northamptonshire Councils) and the Assistant Chief Executive (Stratford-on-Avon District Council) to allocate the funding for appropriate purposes in pursuance of the submitted bid (Appendix 1) and consistent with the grant conditions as set out Appendix 2 to this report.

- 3.5 In order for this to take place, the Chief Executive of Stratford-on-Avon District Council will designate the Chief Executive (Cherwell District and South Northamptonshire Councils) as an officer of Stratford-on-Avon District Council for the purposes of all matters relating to the Transformation Challenge Award and delegate to her authority to release the monies for relevant purposes in compliance with the grant offer and its terms and conditions.
- 3.6 In order to establish the transformation team referred to in the bid, a number of secondments will take place. While secondments are within the powers of the Heads of Paid Service (Chief Executives), in order to enable the team members to operate on behalf of the councils who are not their employer a Section 113 agreement is required (Section 113, Local Government Act 1972). In order to enable the team to begin work as quickly as possible it is envisaged that, if necessary, the Chief Executives will in accordance with the respective urgency procedures for each Council authorise an interim Section 113 agreement, pending all 3 councils agreeing a Section 113 agreement at their December meetings.
- 3.7 This report also asks for nominations from Executive for two representatives (and two substitutes) to serve on a Transformation Joint Working Group, who at their first meeting will consider their terms of reference and refer these back to Executive and Cabinets for approval. Two members of each of the three Councils will be appointed to the Working Group.

4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 Given the unique opportunity provided by the Transformation Challenge Award and the need to ensure that appropriate governance arrangements are in place, it is recommended that Executive support the recommendations as set out in the report.

5.0 Consultation

3 Way Joint Arrangements
Steering Group

This report has been prepared at the request of
the 3 Way Joint Arrangements Steering Group

6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 5.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: To agree the recommendations and accept the funding. This option is perceived to be in the best interests of the Council.

Option 2: Not to accept to the funding. This would not be in the interests of the council, will prohibit the achievement of savings and carries reputational risks for the council.

7.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

- 7.1 All costs incurred in creating the transformation team will be met through the Transformation Challenge Award. It is envisaged that through collaborative working brought about by the team, there will be savings delivered in support services considered of around 10-20%

Comments checked by:

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Legal Implications

- 7.2 The proposals set out in this report, coupled with the urgent action outlined in paragraph 3.6 above, provide appropriate governance arrangements to ensure the discharge of responsibilities in pursuance of the terms and conditions of the grant as set out by the Department for Communities and Local Government. The arrangements are also in accordance with the Local Government Acts 1972 and 2000.

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8.0 Decision Information

Key Decision

Financial Threshold Met: Yes

Community Impact Threshold Met: No

Wards Affected

All

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

An accessible Value for money Council: Explore further opportunities with partners to share or provide services, reducing costs and maximising income (Cherwell District Council)

Enhance performance: Deliver the Council's transformation programme (South Northamptonshire Council)

Great value for money (Stratford-on-Avon District Council)

Lead Councillors

Councillor Nicholas Turner (CDC), Councillor Ian McCord (SNC), Councillor Stephen Thirlwell (SDC).

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
1	Transformation Bid
2	Offer Letter
Background Papers	
None	
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