

Cherwell District Council

Lead Member Decision

18 November 2019

Appointing a Director, from Cherwell District Council (CDC) to the new Bicester Vision Community Interest Company (CIC) and providing grant funding to the CIC

Report of Assistant Director – Growth and Economy

This report is public

Purpose of report

To confirm the decision made by the Leader of the Council to appoint the Lead Member for Economy Regeneration and Property to serve as a Director representing Cherwell District Council (CDC) on the board of the newly incorporated Community Interest Company (CIC) Bicester Vision. In addition, the report also determines the ongoing arrangements concerning the provision of grant funding to the Bicester Vision.

1.0 Recommendations

The Leader of the Council is recommended:

- 1.1 To appoint the Lead Member for Economy Regeneration and Property as a director to the newly established CIC, Bicester Vision, representing the interests of CDC.
- 1.2 To note that a senior officer (Assistant Director – Growth and Economy or equivalent or superior) will attend the Bicester Vision board meetings as an observer, and to provide support to the designated CDC board representative.
- 1.3 To agree and formalise the ongoing arrangements for the provision of grant funding to Bicester Vision of £15,000.00 (fifteen thousand pounds) per annum over the next 3 years, the first payment to be made on [DATE] for the period [DATE] to [DATE].
- 1.4 To delegate authority to the Assistant Director – Growth and Economy to negotiate and complete a grant agreement to govern the provision of such grant funding, in the form, or substantially the form, attached at Appendix A to this report, with Bicester Vision and to agree any minor variations to the terms of such grant agreement from time to time.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Bicester Vision was established some ten years ago as an informal public-private sector partnership with the aim to “support and guide Bicester through a period of dramatic growth and change and to ensure that Bicester is an ambitious town and community with a sustainable economy that benefits all”.
- 2.2 It has been fulfilling these objectives and is now seen as a valuable body, which is well-regarded by the community and business community of Bicester.
- 2.3 Over time, it has developed into a membership body and this has enabled it to raise funds over and above public sector “anchor” grant funding which has been provided by CDC, Bicester Town Council and Oxfordshire County Council as well as OxLEP. CDC has historically contributed £15,000.00 (fifteen thousand pounds) on a rolling annual basis to fund Bicester Vision.
- 2.4 CDC has always actively participated in Bicester Vision and the intention is that this should continue when the CIC is incorporated by formalising the involvement of CDC in the CIC. The Lead Member for Economy Regeneration and Property and the Assistant Director – Growth and Economy currently attend Bicester Vision’s monthly meetings (as well as various supplementary partnership meetings).
- 2.5 Bicester Vision now wishes to turn itself in an incorporated body and it has decided to become a CIC.
- 2.6 It was originally envisaged that the funding would be provided on a three-year cycle, but the arrangement has continued beyond that period due to the success of Bicester Vision, and the Council’s continued commitment to the development and prosperity of Bicester town. The incorporation of the CIC provides an opportune moment to formalise the funding regime based upon the terms of a grant agreement as there is now a legal body with which CDC can contract for the first time in Bicester Vision’s existence.
- 2.7 It is recommended that the Assistant Director – Growth and Economy be delegated the authority to negotiate and complete a grant funding agreement and make necessary minor adjustments to it from time to time, in conjunction with advice from the Council’s legal service.
- 2.8 In return for continuing the funding arrangement, and as a condition of the grant funding agreement, CDC would require that Bicester Vision allows CDC to nominate a director to the board and that, prior to the anniversary of the third payment, a presentation should be given by Bicester Vision to the Executive explaining how the CIC’s activities and business plans contribute towards CDC’s corporate objectives and priorities which would allow CDC to determine whether it wishes to continue to provide grant funding to the CIC in the future.

3.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 It is concluded that Bicester Vision should be supported in its ambition of becoming a CIC and that CDC should:

- a) Accept appointment as a Director on the newly created CIC's board, subject to approval by the Leader.
- b) Provide officer support (Assistant Director – Growth and Economy or equivalent or superior) as observer to the CIC's board.
- c) Agree and formalise the ongoing arrangements for the provision of grant funding to Bicester Vision of £15,000.00 (fifteen thousand pounds) per annum for 3 years from [DATE].
- d) Delegate authority to the Assistant Director – Growth and Economy to negotiate and complete a grant agreement to govern the provision of such grant funding, in the form, or substantially the form, attached at Appendix A to this report, with Bicester Vision and to agree any minor variations to the terms of such grant agreement from time to time.

5.0 Consultation

There have been no consultations in relation to this decision

6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

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

Option 1: Withdraw support for Bicester Vision – this option was rejected because CDC wishes to continue supporting Bicester Vision.

Option 2: Explore other options for incorporation – Bicester Vision explored various options and vehicles and it was felt that a CIC would be the best fit with their objectives.

7.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

- 7.1 There is already a sum of £15K built into the base budget.

Comments checked by:

Kelly Wheeler, Finance Business Partner, 01295 221570,
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Legal Implications

- 7.2 There are no legal implications arising directly as a result of this report. The legal service will provide any advice or assistance required in order to negotiate and complete the grant funding agreement detailed in the report.

Comments checked by:

Christopher Mace, Solicitor, 01295 221808,
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Risk analysis

7.3 Risks of not proceeding:

Risk	Mitigation/remedy
Losing the ability to influence a key partnership organisation.	Participate in the CIC, on the basis proposed in the report.

7.4 Risks of proceeding:

Risk	Mitigation/remedy
Vote on an issue at odds with CDC policy.	Ensure that vote against item is clearly recorded in the Board minute book.
Organisation takes a direction that is no longer in alignment with CDC policies or values.	Option remains to leave the organisation and withdraw funding and support
Not adhering to the grant agreement and funding timetable.	It behoves CDC and Bicester Vision to work together and maintain the conditions of the funding agreement. A senior officer will assigned the responsibility of ensuring that this happens.

These risks will be managed as part of the operational risk register associated with Bicester vision and escalated as and when necessary to the Leadership Risk Register.

Comments checked by:

Louise Tustian, Acting Performance and Communications Manager, 01295 221786, Louise.tustian@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

8.0 Decision Information

Key Decision: NO

Reason Non-Key: Below finance and community threshold limits

Wards Affected

All Bicester wards

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

District of opportunity and growth, Thriving communities and wellbeing.

Lead Councillor

Councillor Lynn Pratt, Lead Member for Economy Regeneration and Property

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
A	Draft funding agreement
Background Papers	
None	
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