



Portfolio Holder Decision Making Session

**Steve Charmley Deputy Leader and
Portfolio Holder for Business, ip&e,
Culture and Commissioning (North)**

10 August 2015 at 10:00 am

Item

Public

Women and Broadband Project

Responsible Officer: Andy Evans, Head of Economic Growth and Prosperity
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1.0 Summary

Shropshire Council, together with Staffordshire County Council and Telford and Wrekin Council have been awarded a grant sum £146,000 from The Government Equalities Office to commission services from Women in Rural Enterprise (part of Harper Adams University). The project objective is to encourage women in the respective counties to take advantage of faster broadband to improve their business opportunities. WiRE are a local and recommended delivery partner as defined in the outline bid process.

2.0 Recommendations

That the Portfolio Holder on behalf on Cabinet grants approval for Shropshire Council to act as accountable body for the delivery of the project Women in Rural Enterprise (WiRE) on behalf of Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin and Staffordshire County Councils.

REPORT

3.0 Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 3.1 There are no significant risks identified.
- 3.2 Shropshire Council will maintain responsibility for managing the delivery of the contract with WiRE and will be held accountable for the GEO grant conditions. There are no specific measurable outputs defined in the grant agreement that would raise a risk of grant 'claw back'.
- 3.3 The responsibility for project delivery is with WiRE who will be accountable to a Woman and Broadband (WAB) project board made up of representatives from all three authorities. The governance process will ensure that the benefits and in life project risks will be equally shared across the three county geographies.
- 3.4 The project bid process recommended delivery by specific partners that included WiRE and consequently no 'open' tendering process has been undertaken:

"Local bodies should develop and deliver projects in partnership with local networks (such as Women in Rural Enterprise or Chambers of Commerce) to build on existing resource and support for women's enterprise".

- 3.5 Utilising WiRE as the preferred delivery partner will build upon work undertaken as part of projects delivered in Shropshire and Staffordshire during 2014. An existing project framework

and brand has now been established with WiRE which will ensure that further value, economies of scale and demand will be achieved for this project.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 There are no financial implications on Shropshire Council's revenue or capital funds. WiRE will be responsible for project delivery and accountability to the WAB project board. The project will deliver £146k worth of project activities.

	Costs		Income / Savings	
	Revenue	Capital	Revenue	Capital
First financial year	146k		146k	
Full financial year	146k		146k	
One-off	146k		146k	
On-going annual	0		0	
WiRE Project Delivery	146k		0	
The Government Equalities Office Grant Funding	0		146k	
Total	146k		146k	

There are no direct financial implications for Shropshire Council aside from the Council Staff managing the scheme and submitting claims for payment. This staff time is not funded from the grant and will need to be absorbed within existing resources.

5.0 Background

5.1 In 2014 Shropshire Council was awarded a grant sum of £75k from the Department Culture Media and Sport to encourage women to take on the new digital technologies which are possible with superfast broadband, and is linked to Shropshire Council's broadband delivery programme. Shropshire Council contracted with WiRE for the project, following a granted procurement exemption based on their ability to deliver a niche service delivery.

5.2 The 2014 WAB project completed successful to time, cost and output and was subsequently held up as an exemplar by the GEO across the national programme of activity.

5.3 In 2015 the GEO made £1.1m available nationally for Broadband Projects to bid for a phase 2 project. Shropshire Council, together with Staffordshire, who also previously had contracted with WiRE, and Telford and Wrekin Council submitted a joint application for funding. The call was open to all 44 national broadband programmes. Shropshire's joint bid was one of only 16 that were successful in being awarded funding. The original bid was £150k with an offer received of £146k.

5.4 The project objectives are:

- Equip women with digital skills to enable them to use faster broadband technologies to develop market access and increase national and international sales
- Encourage and equip women to start a new business embracing "Lean" principles to create a future-proofed business based on cloud technologies
- Encourage and equip those businesses which are ready for growth to be digitally-led, embracing faster broadband technologies to develop market access and "Lean" principles to grow a future-proofed business based on cloud technologies
- Build a sustainable Community of Practice - a network of peers, mentors and experts to provide ongoing support, continual improvement, collaborative opportunities and associative working

5.5 The project will increase economic growth across the three Local Authority areas. National statistics clearly demonstrate the benefits of improving the local digital economy sector:

- The Internet economy in the UK is worth 8.3% of GDP – more than any other G20 country and twice the G20 average – and is projected to grow to 12.4% by 2016 (Boston Consulting Group, March 2012)
- Faster broadband is estimated to add £17 billion to the UK's economy by 2024 (SQW for DCMS, Nov 2013)

6.0 Additional Information

Not applicable

7.0 Conclusions

That the grant agreement is approved and a contract is signed with Harper Adams University as the preferred delivery partner.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information):

Key Decision: Yes

Included within Forward Plan: Yes / **No**

If a Key Decision and not included in the Forward Plan have the General Exception or Special Urgency Procedures been complied with: Yes / No

Name and Portfolio of Executive Member responsible for this area of responsibility:

Steve Charmley

Local Member:

Not applicable

Appendices:

Not applicable

Declaration of Interest

- I have no interest to declare in respect of this report

Signed Date

NAME:

PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR:

- I have to declare an interest in respect of this report

Signed Date

NAME:

PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR:

(Note: If you have an interest you should seek advice as to whether it is appropriate to make a decision in relation to this matter.)

For the reasons set out in the report, I agree the recommendation(s) in the report entitled

Signed

Portfolio Holder for

Date

If you have any additional comment which you would want actioned in connection with your decision you should discuss this with the report author and then set out your comment below before the report and pro-forma is returned to Democratic Services for processing.

Additional comment :

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Note: If you do not wish to approve the recommendations, or wish to make an alternative decision, it is important that you consult the report author, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Chief Executive and the Head of Finance, Governance and Assurance (S151 Officer) and, if there are staffing implications the Head of Human Resources (or their representatives) so that (1) you can be made aware of any further relevant considerations that you should take into account before making the decision and (2) your reasons for the decision can be properly identified and recorded, as required by law.

Note to Portfolio Holder: Your decision will now be published and communicated to all Members of Council. If the decision falls within the criteria for call-in, it will not be implemented until five working days have elapsed from publication.