

LIVERPOOL CITY REGION COMBINED AUTHORITY

To: Chief Executive
Date of Report: 26th August 2020
Authority/Authorities Affected: Liverpool City Region
EXEMPT/CONFIDENTIAL ITEM: No
KEY DECISION Yes

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR FOR COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT

ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR GROWTH PLATFORM TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL STAFF RESOURCE TO LOCAL GROWTH HUBS

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report seeks approval to provide £350,000 of funding to Growth Platform for additional human resource for Local Growth Hubs to strengthen the business support ecosystem within the Liverpool City Region and help businesses recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Chief Executive approves the allocation of £350,000 of funding from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority COVID-19 Resilience Fund (repurposed from the Brexit Resilience Fund) to Growth Platform for the purpose of providing additional human resource for Local Growth Hubs to refocus outwards and proactively engage businesses who were previously not accessing business support, providing COVID-19 specific advice; and identifying businesses suitable for “high intensity” support.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Liverpool City Region Local Enterprise Partnership secured funding from BEIS for 2020/21 to continue to provide a “Local Growth Hub Service” in the Liverpool City Region. Growth Platform proposes a new enhanced contract to commence immediately upon receipt of funding, up to 31 March 2021, providing additional resource from the Combined Authority to strengthen the business support ecosystem. This would be procured through an OJEU compliant process.
- 3.2 Growth Platform currently provides £50,000 per annum to each of the 7 contracted local providers who provide local business support. This provides a basic level of support, but in view of the limits on capacity on these organisations through the

COVID-19 pandemic and the significant needs of businesses arising from the crisis, repurposed funds from the Combined Authority would match this with a further £50,000 per each local provider.

- 3.3 The Combined Authority funding would be used to provide additional human resource to Local Growth Hubs; to refocus outwards and proactively engage businesses not previously accessing business support. Support and advice will include a business diagnostic with a broker; attendance at a support workshop provided by Growth Platform, or referral to high-intensity business support schemes and programmes in the LCR business support ecosystem.
- 3.4 The repurposing of £5,000,000 of the Brexit Resilience Fund as a COVID-19 Resilience Fund was approved by way of a decision taken by the Combined Authority Chief Executive on 8th April 2020. This decision gave the Chief Executive delegated authority to approve individual funding decisions of up to £1,000,000 from the Fund, and this is the basis on which Chief Executive approval of £350,000 additional funding for the Growth Platform is sought.

4. INVESTMENT PANEL CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 The Internal Investment Panel considered this request for additional funding on 28th May 2020 and supporting information provided by Growth Platform. The Panel recommended that additional funding totalling £350,000 is to be provided to Growth Platform to provide them the funding for the Local Growth Hubs. This funding will cover the period up to 31st March 2021.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

This additional funding will be drawn from the Combined Authority's £5,000,000 COVID-19 Resilience Fund which comprises of monies repurposed from the Brexit Resilience Fund.

5.2 Human Resources

It is not anticipated that this decision will have any material human resources implication for the Combined Authority.

5.3 Physical Assets

It is not anticipated that this decision will have any material physical asset implications for the Combined Authority.

5.4 Information Technology

It is not anticipated that this decision will have any material information technology implications for the Combined Authority.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Legal Services will prepare a short form Grant Funding Agreement to transfer the £350,000 funding from the Combined Authority to the Growth Platform for the purposes set out in this report.

7. RISKS AND MITIGATION

- 7.1 Risks relating to the project and potential mitigations continue to be identified and monitored by Growth Platform, including Combined Authority representatives. The additional funding proposed in this report will help to mitigate risks to businesses within the City Region arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic.

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Grant Funding Agreement will require the Growth Platform to consider equality and diversity implications in how the funding is utilised and support is provided.

9. PRIVACY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no privacy implications associated with this report.

10. COMMUNICATION ISSUES

- 10.1 Regular liaison will take place between the Combined Authority communications team and Growth Platform to ensure that a joined-up pro-active approach to communication is adopted.

11. CONCLUSION

- 11.1 This report presents the proposed funding for Growth Platform, and seeks approval, to the Chief Executive to proceed with the finalisation of the grant funding agreement in consultation with the Combined Authority Monitoring Officer and Combined Authority Treasurer, which will support businesses within the Liverpool City Region in their recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Appendices:

Appendix One – Report to Internal Investment Panel (Restricted)