

Chichester District Council

CABINET

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Chichester in Partnership – Choose Work Project

1. Contacts

Cabinet Member:

Myles Cullen - Cabinet Member for Commercial Services

Telephone: 01243 573850

E-mail: mcullen@chichester.gov.uk

Report Authors:

Amy Loaring, Partnerships Officer

Tel: 01243 534726 E-mail: aloaring@chichester.gov.uk

Stephen Oates, Economic Development Manager

Tel: 01243 534600 Email: soates@chichester.gov.uk

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That funding of up to £30,000 is allocated from the New Homes Bonus**
- 2.2 That the Executive Director for Support Services and the Economy, in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Commercial Services, be authorised to finalise the scheme based on partner contributions, including the Department for Work and Pensions, up to a total of £80,000.**

3. Background

- 3.1 In September 2011, following a rise in the number Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants from just over 900 in January 2006 to just over 1,690 by January 2010, Chichester in Partnership identified that rising long term unemployment is a growing issue for the district and can have an impact on the quality of life. A strategy was developed by Chichester District Council's Economic Development Service and the Partnership's officer in consultation with numerous partner organisations including Job Centre Plus, West Sussex County Council, Royal British Legion Industries, Coast to Capital and Chichester Chamber of Commerce and Industry.
- 3.2 The 'Getting People into Work' Strategy was approved by Chichester in Partnership in May 2012 and adopted by Chichester District Council's Cabinet in June 2012. The Strategy was recently updated by the Worklessness task and finish group and reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.3 In 2012, the Partnership successfully applied for a Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) grant of £20,000 to employ a part time Work Experience Coordinator for two years, with CDC paying the on costs. Emulating a successful scheme in Horsham, CDC's project is called 'Choose Work'.

- 3.4 A Choose Work Coordinator was employed in January 2013. The post is hosted by Chichester District Council on behalf of Chichester in Partnership. The Work Experience Coordinator works closely with the local Jobcentre Plus to provide good quality work experience for the unemployed across the district. This part of the strategy is monitored by Chichester in Partnership and the DWP. The outcomes planned for the project over two years were:
- a) At least 80 work experience placements (40 per year) created and completed
 - b) At least 25 local businesses/organisations recruited to offer a minimum of two work placements each
- 3.5 Against these outcomes, in the first year of the project a total of 120 people have benefitted from some form of interaction with the work experience coordinator, with 49 people officially signed on to the programme. 47% of people who have been on the programme have found employment. Only 14 are still claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA). 30 companies have offered work placements, including CDC. A return on investment calculation indicates that this project saves the public purse an estimated £118,388 a year - ten times the original investment.
- 3.6 At the start of year 2 a successful bid for extra funding (£5,795.25) was made to the DWP to increase the Coordinator's hours. Higher targets (on top of the original year 2 targets) have been set and these include:
- Recruiting a minimum of 5 additional local businesses/organisations to offer and complete a minimum of 2 work placements each
 - Complete a minimum of 15 further work experience placements elsewhere
- 3.7 This project has found that it is not just the work experience that is helping the participants. The Choose Work Coordinator also offers mentoring and coaching to the individuals. In order to verify the usefulness of this work, the University of Chichester undertook a full evaluation of the project. This found that "it is clear the Choose Work Programme has been effective in providing an holistic approach to enabling people into work. Each individual is treated as such with attention given to finding out their hopes and aspirations and the challenges they face on the way. These challenges can be numerous and not immediately apparent." The full evaluation can be found in Appendix 1.
- 3.8 The Choose Work brand has developed a positive reputation within the local job centre, within DWP and with local job seekers. Referrals are now often made by word of mouth. Chichester in Partnership has committed £1,000 to market the project over the next year specifically to get more local businesses involved. Other councils have enquired about using the brand name, but we will only allow this if their offer is to the same standard as ours. The Partnership is also investing £500 in the development of a local peer support network for participants of the Choose Work Scheme.
- 3.9 The Choose Work Coordinator has found that some participants suffer from low level mental health problems (e.g. anxiety, depression, confidence issues). Such issues prevent them from getting work but are not bad enough to receive

medical assistance. Helping people with low level mental health needs is now a priority for Chichester in Partnership. From May 2014 Chichester Wellbeing is funding a number of Choose Work workshops called 'Choose Your Future', the outcomes of which will be reported to Chichester in Partnership and the DWP to consider future funding for this.

4 Outcomes to be achieved

- 4.1 The primary aim of the strategy is to reduce the length of time individuals are out of work. As evidenced in Chichester in Partnerships' Getting People into Work Strategy, the longer a person is out of work, the more difficult it becomes to secure employment and the greater the impact it has on other issues such as health and wellbeing.
- 4.2 The intended outcome is to support people into paid employment. Although targets have yet to be set in conjunction with the Department of Work and Pensions, we anticipate that each year 75 unemployed residents will undertake a Choose Work placement. Based on current performance, but bearing in mind we will be dealing with harder-to-reach individuals, we expect at least 40% to then secure employment.
- 4.3 Assisting people into work has a wide range of benefits and positive knock-on effects for the economy and society as a whole. Delivering the strategy supports both the council's own strategic priorities for the economy and for community wellbeing as well as those set out in Chichester District's Sustainable Community Strategy.

5. Proposal

- 5.1 The total cost of the project is £80,000. This will fund salaries for two part-time coordinators over three years, including the planned increase in employer's pension contributions and estimates on redundancy figures as at 31 December 2017. The cost of the current two-year scheme is £26,000 which is funding a salary for one part-time co-ordinator.
- 5.2 The proposed project is dependent on a successful application to the DWP for £50,000. DWP have been impressed with our track record and would look favourably upon any bid we developed. However competition for grants is high so demonstrating the council is willing to invest will prove our commitment and aid our bid. The new tranche of funding will be focussed on groups that face social injustice such as lone parents, Employment Support Allowance claimants, care leavers (i.e. people who have left a care service, such as young people just turning 17 in care homes or foster care), 50+, ex-offenders and unemployed people in rural areas. The number of people on ESA or incapacity benefits in Chichester currently stands at 2,580. This is a figure that has remained static for the last 3 years but is now an area of focus for Job Centre Plus and the DWP. These people need a lot more support to be ready for work which is why we need an improved service.
- 5.3 If the DWP bid is unsuccessful the project will end in January 2015, when current funding streams cease. In view of its success to date, Chichester in Partnership wishes to see the project continue for at least another 3 years.

- 5.4 It is recommended that Chichester District Council continue to offer support to this project by hosting the Choose Work Coordinator and contribute up to £30,000 funding from New Homes Bonus, equating to £10,000pa over 3 years. Alongside funding from DWP of £50,000, this option will provide a second part-time post at 16 hours a week. DWP have informed us that they would like us to do more work in the rural areas of the district to help support Job Centre Plus. Currently, in the working time available, our Choose Work Coordinator has difficulty engaging with people and businesses located in rural areas. Therefore, the new post is likely to concentrate on the rural areas of the district while the current post will concentrate on the Think Family Neighbourhood Areas and Chichester City. The funding from CDC will ensure that residents in need will have access to the project.
- 5.5 In addition partner organisations, such as Coast to Capital, will be asked to invest money into the project by focusing on specific areas or groups (e.g. CV courses, career guidance, life coaching and motivational workshops).

6. Alternatives that have been considered

- 6.1 Do nothing. This would not address the identified need, nor address the actions in the Getting People into Work Strategy.
- 6.2 The scheme could rely solely on DWP funding. However, this option risks the bid not being looked at favourably. In addition, DWP funding alone will provide a reduced service compared to the current service, restricting access to the Choose Work Scheme.
- 6.3 Chichester District Council could invest a reduced sum of £15,000. Assuming funding from DWP of £50,000, this option will keep the post at its current level of service for 3 years, although there would be some refocus on the hard to reach groups such as ESA claimants, lone parents, care leavers and 50+.

7. Resource and legal implications

- 7.1 If approved both posts will be managed by the existing resources of the Economic Development Service.
- 7.2 It is proposed that the CDC investment is sourced from the New Homes Bonus.
- 7.3 CDC is the lead partner on a number of these strategic outcomes. The monitoring and review is managed by Chichester in Partnership's Core Group.

8. Consultation

- 8.1 Partner organisations consulted in the development of this project include DWP; Women's Wisdom; Voluntary Action Arun and Chichester; Chichester Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Chichester College; University of Chichester; Royal British Legion Industries (a work programme provider); Action in Rural Sussex and West Sussex County Council. The DWP and Job Centre Plus are extremely supportive of this project and consider that it adds value to the work that they are doing.
- 8.2 Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report on the progress of the Getting People into Work Strategy which includes Choose Work. They

commented: "That Chichester in Partnership's progress to date against its work strategy action plan, and the excellent partnership work being carried out, be commended."

- 8.3 Chichester in Partnership wishes to see the project continue for at least another 3 years.

9. Community impact and corporate risks

- 9.1 The project has a positive impact on unemployed residents in our district by supporting them back into work. If individuals return to work they will not be claiming benefits and are less likely to demand other services such as health, police and housing.
- 9.2 Choose Work is having an impact on residents within the community by raising aspirations, offering career guidance and work experience, and supporting local businesses to employ local people.
- 9.3 Risks to CDC have been kept to a minimum. Estimates for potential redundancy costs, in the event that the scheme is not continued after three years, have been accounted for within the funding proposals

10 Other Implications

	Yes	No
Crime & Disorder:		✓
Climate Change:		✓
Human Rights and Equality Impact: By expanding the scheme we can ensure that any unemployed resident in Chichester can access the scheme irrelevant of what benefit they are claiming. It will also ensure that rural residents will have improved access to the scheme.	✓	
Safeguarding:		✓

11 Appendix

Appendix 1 – Evaluation of the Choose Work scheme on behalf of Chichester in Partnership (February 2014)

12 Background Papers:

Getting People into Work Strategy and original action plan

<http://www.chichesterinpartnership.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=20031>