

REPORT TO INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE – 8 JUNE 2022

REGIONAL ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP FUND

1 Executive Summary/Recommendations

1.1 This Report updates Committee on an allocation of funding from the Scottish Government to the Regional Economic Partnership. As the Accountable Body for the partnership, the funding was awarded to the Council which was required to submit a bid to the Government setting out proposed partnership activity which aligned with the fund criteria. The application submitted was based on activity carried out by Opportunity North East (ONE). As the cost of this activity is greater than £50,000, Committee approval is being sought to approve an award of £89,750.35 of funding to ONE.

1.2 The Committee is recommended to:

1.2.1 Note the award of Regional Economic Partnership funding to the Aberdeen City Region;

1.2.2 Approve a grant of £89,750.35 to Opportunity North East

2 Decision-Making Route

2.1 On 15 March 2022, the Council received a letter from the Scottish Government advising the allocation of £107,000 of funding to the Aberdeen City Region for the following purposes:

- **Development of Regional Economic Partnership or Collaboration** – This could include spend on resource, costs incurred developing the scope or governance of the partnership (e.g., creating a Terms of Reference), website development etc. with the end result being a functional regional partnership/collaboration, or closer to becoming such.
- **Creation of a Regional Economic Strategy** – This could include spend on resource (including graphics, publication etc.) as well as promotion of the strategy. We are including refreshes of previous Regional Economic Strategies and the creation of shorter-term regional economic plans within this theme.
- **Economic Analysis** – This could include analysis undertaken to support the development of an economic strategy or plan for your region. It could also include analysis carried out to create an economic baseline for your region. Costs to external consultants can be included and/or the staff costs of internal hubs that provide the region with this data.

- **Internationalisation Plans** – This could include work undertaken on the Regional Inward Investment Prospectus for the region or work carried out to encourage internationalisation of the Regional Economic Strategy.

2.2 As the Accountable Body for the Aberdeen City Region Deal, Aberdeenshire Council was tasked with preparing and submitting a bid for this funding in conjunction with the Regional Economic Partnership. Applications were to be submitted by 21 March and the deadline for spend was 31 March 2022.

2.3 Following consultation with the Regional Economic Partnership, a bid was prepared and submitted to the Scottish Government and approved. This was based on activity carried out by Opportunity North East (ONE), including:

- Communications to inform stakeholders and the wider public of Regional Economic Strategy progress, engagement opportunities and developments
- Developing communication resources to ensure consistent economic messaging across the region
- Wider stakeholder engagement events to inform strategy development
- Research into the region's digital sector
- Creation of a plan to support supply chain collaboration, product innovation and international market development.

2.4 Spend actually incurred on the above is £89,750.35. As the amount of the grant exceeds £50,000, approval is reserved to the relevant Policy Committee under 4.15.1 of the Financial Regulations and F.2.4 of the Committee Powers.

3 Discussion

3.1 The activities supported through the grant include:

- Creating communications to inform stakeholders and the wider public of Regional Economic Strategy progress, engagement opportunities and developments.
- Developing communication resources to ensure consistent economic messaging across the region.
- A series of events called 'Transforming our Region' to allow engagement with businesses and organisations across Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire to learn from their experiences and shape future growth and further diversification.
- Research into the region's digital base, including discovery work on the current base making up the digital sector to set base lines, and the current constraints for growth.
- Focus on a key sector to stimulate regional investment and growth through developing international markets.

- Creating a plan to support supply chain collaboration, product innovation and international market development.

4 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

4.1 The activities funded through the grant support the following Council priority

Pillar	Priority
Our Economy	Economy & Enterprise

4.2 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendations are agreed:

Subject	Yes	No	N/A
Financial	X		
Staffing		X	
Equalities and Fairer Duty Scotland		X	
Children and Young People's Rights and Wellbeing		X	
Climate Change and Sustainability		X	
Health and Wellbeing		X	
Town Centre First		X	

4.3 The financial implications of this Report is that the Council would commit £89,750.35 of funding from Regional Economic Partnership funding to ONE. This has been received from the Scottish Government and would need to be repaid if the grant award to ONE is not approved.

4.4 The screening section as part of Stage One of the Integrated Impact Assessment process has not identified the requirement for any further detailed assessments to be undertaken. This is because the activities undertaken through the project are unlikely to have an impact on any of assessment areas.

4.5 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a [Corporate Level](#):

- ACORP001 – Budget Pressures
- ACORP002 – Changes in government policy, legislation and regulation
- ACORP005 - Working with other organisations (e.g. supply chains, outsourcing and partnership working)

The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a [Strategic Level](#):

- BSSR003 - We live within our means and use public money to maximise outcomes for our communities

5 Scheme of Governance

- 5.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer withn Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this Report and their comments are incorporated within the report. They satisfied that the Report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.
- 5.2 The Committee is able to consider and take a decision on this item in terms of Section F.2.4 of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance as it relates to an Economic Development policy and resource matter.

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