



Black Country Executive Joint Committee
Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton

REPORT OF THE CITY DEAL AND GROWTH DEAL ADVISORY BOARD

TO

BLACK COUNTRY EXECUTIVE JOINT COMMITTEE

ON

25 NOVEMBER 2015

WALSALL COLLEGE - IMPROVING ENGINEERING CAPACITY

Key Decision:	Yes
Forward Plan:	Yes

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To request that the Joint Committee approves move to contracting and subsequent award of Grant Agreement by the Accountable Body for the Growth Deal (Walsall Council) for the 'Walsall College – Improving Engineering Capacity' project from within the Local Growth Fund (LGF) Programme. The project has been identified, evaluated and recommended to proceed by the Programme Office, endorsed by the Working Group and Advisory Board, and received LEP Board endorsement on the 21 September 2015.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Joint Committee grants approval to the Accountable Body for the Growth Deal (Walsall Council) to proceed to a Grant Agreement with Walsall College to the grant value of £200k to deliver the Local Growth Fund (LGF) elements of the 'Walsall College – Improving Engineering Capacity Project' with delivery to commence in the 2015/16 financial year.

3. REPORT DETAIL

- 3.1 The Joint Committee received and endorsed a report on 15 June 2015 setting out the new processes to be adopted for the evaluation and approval of new projects entering the Local Growth Fund process. The LEP secretariat is currently in the transition stage from the old processes to the new arrangements as LEP Theme boards are established and membership recruited.
- 3.2 These Theme Boards are still being established, so to ensure the secretariat is still able to meet the commitments of the programme, notably achievement of the spend targets for this 2015/16 financial year, it is continuing with elements of the previous processes including drawing on the expert staff available to assess the proposed projects lifecycle the business case against the HM treasury 5 Case Model, resulting in proposals that can then move through the LEP board and onto the Joint Committee for approval.
- 3.3 The Walsall College – Improving Engineering Capacity Project has been through this process, the details of which were reported to the City Deal and Growth Deal Advisory Board on 9 November 2015. The funding is available within the LGF programme and delivery will commence during the 2015/16 period. The application is for £200k of grant support.
- 3.4 The aim of this capital investment is to deliver Welding and Hydraulics / Pneumatics equipment with the required building installation and adaptation costs providing high specification facilities to service the gap between supply and demand for engineering skills for the benefit of young people, unemployed adults and employers in Walsall and the wider Black Country. This investment will allow the College to address the current skills deficiencies, succession planning and recruitment challenges faced by engineering employers.
- 3.5 It will provide a solution to both the initial training requirements for school leavers as well as, unemployed and existing workforce including apprenticeships. Any individual will be able to undertake any of the qualifications, subject to meeting any entry criteria. The investment will unlock the barrier for unemployed people to access the training they need to take up labour market opportunities and allow the College to offer a block release delivery model to employers, currently unable to do with the existing equipment.
- 3.6 **Start date:** The new equipment will be purchased in **December 2015** with installation complete by March 2016. Marketing and promotion of new training provision is to take place January 2016.
- 3.7 **Headline Outputs Include:** 47 additional Apprenticeships. 759 Learners Assisted.
- 3.8 **Funding Profile:** Total Project Investment - £510k, LGF requested - £200k, Match Funding - £310k applicants own funds.
- The full amount is profiled to spend in 2015/16.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The costs associated with this proposal forms part of the LGF programme and will be covered by allocations from government associated with this programme. This includes the use of any interest accrued by the Accountable Body to cover costs associated with the delivery of Accountable Body functions, as approved by its (Walsall Council) Cabinet on the 29th October 2014.
- 4.2 The applicant (Walsall College) will utilise its processes and procedures to ensure that best value is achieved and that all EU State Aid rules and regulations are met by all beneficiaries of LGF funding.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Growth Deal has standard Grant Agreement templates in place which will be utilised by the Accountable Body (Walsall Council), and include all conditions passed onto the LEP by Government, together with all terms, conditions, performance measures and sanctions as required by the approvals/conditions received from Government or approved by the LEP Board or the Joint Committee.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk is being managed through the on-going assessment of individual projects and their ability to deliver the required spending profiles and outcomes for the programme as required or agreed with Government and set into place by the LEP Board or the Joint Committee.

7. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

None at the time of drafting.

8. CONSULTATION

Extensive stakeholder consultation has been undertaken with the College's employer partners who are currently receiving training provision from Walsall College. These employer partners have been consulted on their views in regard to the potential for the College to offer new and additional pathways within the engineering curriculum. Some of our Fabricator/Welding employers the College is currently working with, namely MacNeillies, Staffordshire Fabrications and Feldman Fabrications, have advised the College that they would welcome the opportunity to be able to train their staff in this area through the College, as opposed to having to deliver the training themselves. Apprentices within these companies study mainly machining due to the College not having a welding pathway. These employers have cited their demand for the welding pathway should the College be able to offer it.

Back Ground papers

Revised Process for Evaluation of Local Growth Fund bids - Joint Committee Paper 17th June 2015

The Black Country Strategic Economic Plan (SEP)

Walsall College Improving Engineering Capacity Outline Business Case

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