



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
20th JANUARY 2016**

**BLACK COUNTRY LOCAL GROWTH DEAL - UNIVERSITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON
APPRENTICESHIP HUB
Grant Agreement Approval**

Key Decision:	Yes
Forward Plan:	Yes

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To request that the Joint Committee grants the approval, contracting and subsequent award of Grant Agreement by the Accountable Body for the Growth Deal (Walsall Council) for the 'University of Wolverhampton Apprenticeship Hub' project from within the Local Growth Fund (LGF) Programme.
- 1.2 The project has been endorsed by the Programme Management Office, the Advisory Board, the Working Group and received LEP Board approval on 23rd November 2015.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Joint Committee approves the Accountable Body for the Growth Deal (Walsall Council) to proceed to a Grant Agreement with University of Wolverhampton to the grant value of £200k to deliver the Local Growth Fund (LGF) elements of the Apprenticeship Hub - with delivery to commence in the 2015/16 financial year.

3. REPORT DETAIL

- 3.1 The Joint Committee received and endorsed a report on the 15th 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 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 Apprenticeship Hub project has been through this process, the details of which were reported to the City Deal and Growth Deal Advisory Board on 4th January 2016. 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 proposal is to convert a building, Feathers public house, to deliver a focal point for employers, prospective apprentices and their families, apprentices and University staff. By giving a physical presence to the University of Wolverhampton's "Apprenticeship Hub", the proposal will provide a "shop front" for higher and degree apprenticeships, presentation and meeting space, offices and the required infrastructure (including specialist equipment and digital technologies), to promote and facilitate apprenticeships in the region. It will also provide a venue through which the University of Wolverhampton can host meetings with Careers Advisors and Teachers from schools and colleges to assist in raising the profile of higher and degree apprenticeships as an alternative option to traditional degree level study.
- 3.5 The University will work with an identified network of local FE colleges and private providers to cover the Black Country areas and to provide seamless and integrated progression from Level 2/3 through to Degree apprenticeships at levels 6/7.
- 3.6 The scheme would deliver 700 new Apprenticeships by 20/21 and expects to result in at least 50% of apprenticeships becoming new jobs created.
- 3.7 Confirmation has been received from Paul Linton Chair of Skills Theme Board that approval to proceed is confirmed as there are benefits both in 'Regeneration' and 'Skills'.

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

- 5.1 The appropriate Grant Agreements are in place and 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

- 6.1 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

- 7.1 None at the time of drafting.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Extensive consultation and discussions have taken place with a range of stakeholders, to ensure that apprenticeships provision within the area is co-ordinated and streamlined. Discussions are currently underway with a number of FE Colleges, including Wolverhampton College, Walsall College, Telford College of Arts and Technology, Stourbridge College, Stafford College and South Staffs College, in order that curriculum planning and progression routes can be jointly developed to provide a seamless route into and through apprenticeships for employers and individual students. This will result in joint and linked provision, with different levels being offered by appropriate partners. The University has been approached directly by employers interested in higher and degree apprenticeships as well as by Further Education Colleges and Private Providers seeking progression routes into higher and degree apprenticeships on behalf of their employer groups. Progression routes have been investigated by Dudley College, Walsall College, Birmingham Metropolitan College, Telford College of Arts and Technology and In Comm Training.
- 8.2 The construction higher apprenticeship has been developed in consultation with a number of local and national organisations including EDF Energy, Carillion, Wolverhampton Homes, Redrow, CDM Demolition, Lovell, Wates Living Space and Thomas Vale. A new apprenticeship standard (Food Engineering) is in development in partnership with Harper Adams University and employers ABP, Butcher's Pet Care, Campden BRI, Dairy Crest, Dukes Hill Ham, Edmond Food, Faccenda, Florrette, Kraft/Heinz, PDM, Sirane and Walter Smith.
- 8.3 Faculties within the university have discussed the introduction of higher and degree apprenticeships with their respective advisory boards. As an example, employers on the Business Advisory Board and the Law Advisory Board endorsed the University's engagement with the apprenticeship agenda as part of a wider attempt to address both skills deficit issues in the local and regional economy and employability issues. Talbots Quality Solicitors identified a growing need in the local and regional legal sector for paralegal career pathways using an apprenticeship framework/standard.

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)

University of Wolverhampton Apprenticeship Hub Business Case

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