

BRECKLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report of: Cllr Sam Chapman Allen, Deputy Leader

To: Council, December 6th 2018

Author: Matthew Hogan, Executive Manager for Growth

Subject: External Funding Officer

Purpose: To seek council agreement to create a shared External Funding Officer post, as a means of supporting the council's activity in relation to identifying, applying for an securing external funding to support delivery of key council objectives/

Recommendation(s):

1. That Council approves the creation of a new shared External Funding Officer post, with a view to pursue the delivery of the expected benefits as captured within the main report.

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 External funding can usefully be defined as any money which the Council secures, extra to its annual allocation from central government and the money raised from council tax, business rates, investment, fees and charges, etc. either by itself or in partnership, which has been specifically bid for by the Council for a particular project.
- 1.2 Over future years, external funding will become increasingly important to Breckland and other local authorities for the delivery of key strategy programmes. As such, the application processes are becoming increasingly competitive. External funding also has the potential to support the revenue operating costs of the council, reducing the council's draw upon core sources of funding for local government.
- 1.3 Breckland has a successful track record of procuring external funding from a range of sources. This includes recent funding successes with respect of the Housing Infrastructure Fund and the Single Local Growth Fund, which have seen the authority bring significant levels of external funding into the authority to support corporately and strategically important projects.
- 1.4 However, these funding successes have often been the result of diverting officer resource away from other corporately important projects in order to focus upon the extensive level of complex work (often within a very short timescale) that such bids require in order to be successful.
- 1.5 Furthermore, whereas the authority has undoubtedly seen success in securing external funding, there are other funding sources available that the authority is yet to proactively tap into, given the constraints on officer capacity to invest the time required to identify funds, build relationships with the funding bodies, and then prepare funding applications that have a chance of securing a successful outcome.

- 1.6 For future years the Council will need a more pro-active approach to become even more effective and focussed at targeting priorities, identifying new sources of funding and ensuring the allocation of such resources result in maximum impact for the benefits of the Council and the district.
- 1.7 This includes being proactive in seeking funding as part of emerging and existing programmes that have the potential to make a significant positive impact on the delivery of local priorities. For example, the 2018 Autumn Budget announced a series of new funding opportunities for local authorities to bid into. These opportunities include funding related to the corporate priorities of the council, including but not exclusive to;
- £675m in funding to support the regeneration of high streets
 - £500m in funding for infrastructure to support housing growth
 - Future funding to support rural housing pressures
 - Funding to support air quality management issues
- 1.8 In addition to being well prepared to take advantage of these opportunities, there is a need to ensure that the authority is well placed to capitalise on opportunities to secure funding from other as-of-yet still under-utilised sources, such as;
- The Heritage Lottery Funding – a major fund to support heritage projects
 - The Big Lottery Fund – a major fund with a community development focus
 - Sport England Funding – a key fund for supporting major programmes linked to health and wellbeing.
 - The forthcoming UK Shared Prosperity Fund, which will replace European funding sources post March 2019 and will have a focus on economic development and growth.
 - LGA Funding through programmes such as the Housing Advisors Programme and the Digital Experts Programme
- 1.9 In response to these challenges and opportunities in respect of external funding, this paper seeks to secure agreement for the creation of a shared External Grants Officer post who will play a key role in assisting the authority in developing a more co-ordinated, proactive and appropriately resourced approach to identifying, bidding and securing external grant funding.
- 1.10 It is anticipated that having additional resources to support the council's engagement in bidding for funding through these and other sources, alongside a more robust and structured approach to external funding, will assist the authority in obtaining greater access to these funds and therefore contribute to Breckland's success in achieving the key strategic priorities set out in the Corporate Plan and accompanying Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 1.11 The key purpose of the post will be as follows –
- To develop, implement and manage a strategic approach to external funding in line with the council's purposes and objectives;
 - To build relationships with key external funding bodies, including those with whom the authority would benefit from developing a greater relationship (e.g. Sport England, the Heritage Lottery Fund etc...);
 - To raise additional resources through grants or funding and maximise their contribution to the development of both council's services and programmes;

- To provide significant 'added value' with respect of fund application processes, in terms of capacity, expertise and support.
- To co-ordinate action and give advice to other services who are seeking external funding for the benefit of the district or council, including external groups (e.g. community groups) where appropriate.

1.12 It is proposed that this post is shared (50:50) with South Holland District Council. South Holland is in a similar position to Breckland and would likewise benefit from a proactive and effective approach to fundraising, enabled through the creation of this new post. It is anticipated that the shared nature of the post will assist in delivering efficiencies in terms of the identification of funding opportunities, engagement with funding bodies, and the sharing of ideas and best practice in the formulating of funding applications.

1.13 If agreed, it is proposed that the External Funding Officer post is permanently recruited to the establishment, will form part of the Growth and Commercialisation Directorate reporting to the Shared Executive Manager for Growth, and be recruited to at a Breckland Grade 8 (or equivalent).

2.0 OPTIONS

2.1 **Do nothing (Not Recommended)** - Under this option, the External Funding Officer will not be created. The expected benefits set out in Section 4 will not be met.

2.2 **Approve the increase to the establishment and the creation of a new External Funding Officer post (Recommended)** – Under this option, the post will be created (subject to similar formal approval being secured by South Holland District Council) and recruitment will commence in earnest. It is anticipated that a post holder will be in place before the end of the 2018/19 financial year.

3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

3.1 As a Council, Breckland needs a robust and co-ordinated approach towards external funding so that it is able to compete effectively for finite resources and adapt quickly to changes in funding regimes. This will involve building on current expertise and past experience as well as the development of new and improved ways of attracting resources.

3.2 The External Funding Officer post will provide the basis for a consistent and standardised approach towards the identification, acquisition and deployment of external funds.

4.0 EXPECTED BENEFITS

4.1 The principal expected benefit to the Council is the acquisition of more external funding from a greater range of sources for the benefit of the Council and the district as a whole. It is anticipated that this will be achieved through the delivery of a number of other benefits, including greater proactive engagement in identifying funding, greater levels of engagement with funding bodies, 'value add' through additional capacity and expertise to support funding applications, and the sharing of expertise and generation of efficiencies through working with a partner authority. The success of this post will be judged on its ability to attract funds to support the delivery of key strategic projects in Breckland.

4.2 In addition, there will be the expected benefit effective and efficient use of resources to best deliver the objectives set out in the Corporate Plan and the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Carbon Footprint / Environmental Issues

5.1.1 The report author considers that there are no implications.

5.2 Constitution & Legal

5.2.1 Constitutionally, a permanent increase to the establishment is a matter for Full Council to determine.

5.3 Contracts

5.3.1 The report author considers that there are no implications.

5.4 Corporate Priorities

5.4.1 As detailed above, this proposal will support delivery of all the objectives set out in the Corporate Plan and the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

5.5 Crime and Disorder

5.5.1 The report author considers that there are no implications.

5.6 Equality and Diversity / Human Rights

5.6.1 All relevant legislation will be adhered to in recruitment to this post.

5.7 Financial

5.7.1 It is proposed that the External Funding Officer post is permanently recruited to the establishment at a Breckland Grade 8 (or equivalent) and that the costs are shared 50:50 between Breckland Council and South Holland District Council

5.7.2 The total annual cost, including salary and all necessary on-costs (travel allowances, corporate overhead, pension cover) will be a maximum of £40,636 in 2019/20. Therefore the cost to Breckland inclusive of on-costs in 2019/20 would be £20,318 per annum and for South Holland £20,318 inclusive of on costs.

5.7.3 The post represents an increase in the funded establishment. However, it is anticipated that this additional cost will be offset through the delivery of the objectives of the post, which are to increase the levels of external grant secured by the authority to deliver the programmes and priorities associated with the council's Corporate Plan. Furthermore, given the competitive process relating to grant applications and the reliance upon wider public sector finances as a source of external grant, it is difficult at this stage to quantify at the outset the potential net cost/benefit of the introduction of this post. However, the effectiveness of the post and the postholder will be kept under close review to monitor a) the delivery of the expected benefits and b) to ensure that the authority receives an appropriate return on investment.

5.8 **Health & Wellbeing**

5.8.1 The report author considers that there are no implications, other than the matter that the post holder will likely play a key role in supporting funding applications for strategically important projects that support health and wellbeing agenda within Breckland. This includes potential funds through bodies such as Sport England and the Big Lottery Fund.

5.9 **Reputation**

5.9.1 The report author considers that there are no implications.

5.10 **Risk Management**

5.10.1 Risk relating to the activity of this post will be managed through existing risk management channels within the authority.

5.11 **Safeguarding**

5.11.1 All relevant legislation will be adhered to in recruitment to this post.

5.12 **Staffing**

5.12.1 Increase to the establishments at Breckland Council and South Holland District Council of 1 FTE (shared), split 50:50.

5.13 **Stakeholders / Consultation / Timescales**

5.13.1 As the proposed post will be shared with South Holland District Council, there is a need for similar formal endorsement of the creation of the role to be provided in South Holland. Informal discussions have taken place with members in South Holland concerning the creation of such a post, which have been positively received. A formal report is due to be considered by members in South Holland for a decision on November 28th.

5.14 **Transformation Programme**

5.14.1 The report author considers that there are no implications.

5.15 **Other**

5.15.1 The report author considers that there are no implications.

6.0 **WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED**

6.1 All wards

7.0 **ACRONYMS**

7.1 Not applicable

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Key Decision: No

Exempt Decision: No

This report refers to a Discretionary Service