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Cabinet Member for Jobs and Regeneration

9 October, 2019

**Name of Cabinet Member:**

Cabinet Member for Jobs and Regeneration - Councillor J O'Boyle

**Director Approving Submission of the report:**

Deputy Chief Executive (Place)

**Ward(s) affected:**

All

**Title:**

Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership Growth Hub Funding 2019-2022.

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**Is this a key decision?**

**No** - Although the proposals affect more than two electoral wards, the impact is not expected to be significant.

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**Executive Summary:**

The purpose of this report is to seek approval for match funding allocation to be utilised as a contribution to the Coventry & Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership (CWLEP) Growth Hub.

The Growth Hub was established in 2014 as part of the Coventry & Warwickshire five-year City Deal agreement. It has grown to become the agreed "one-stop shop" for businesses, providing a single point of contact and has supported thousands of business across the region to access funding, to protect and create jobs, tap into supply chains, increase production and reach their full potential.

Between April 2014 and March 2019, the Growth Hub has engaged with a total of 4030 businesses and assisted 1626 businesses. During the same period, the Growth Hub have helped to create over 1974 jobs and safeguarded a further 740. The business support activity provided by the Growth Hub has meant that it has been able to lever in over £32m in private sector investment with a Gross Value Added (GVA) of £74m.

Over the next three years, if the contribution from CCC is approved, it is expected that the Growth Hub will continue to provide support to Coventry businesses and will be expected to engage with a minimum of 900 businesses, assist over 360 businesses, create 390 new jobs and lever in £18m in private sector investment.

The funding arrangement for the CWLEP Growth Hub requires reviewing in the context that this is the last year of the agreed "City Deal".

The City Deal was established in 2014 and CCC's initial contribution to the CWLEP Growth Hub was £482,52 for the first two years. Subsequent years contribution was £178,281, £187,303 and £302,477 respectively bringing the total CCC contribution over the five years to £1,150,582.

In light of this being the last year of the City Deal, the CWLEP Growth Hub are requesting a total Coventry City Council (CCC) contribution of **£386,560** spread over three years, a significant reduction from previous years. In return, it is expected that the Growth Hub will continue to provide the front face of business support within the Coventry & Warwickshire area. It is expected that the Growth Hub will provide to CCC annual quantitative and qualitative information with a particular focus on levels of business engagements, referrals to Coventry City Councils programmes and evidence of joint working with CCC.

**Recommendations:**

That the Cabinet Member for Jobs and Regeneration:

1. Approves the three-year funding allocation of £128,000 per year (rising to £130,560 in year 3) for 2019-2022 to the CWLEP Growth Hub.
2. Delegates authority to the Director Business, Investment and Culture and Section 151 officer to enter into a grant aid agreement with the CWLEP Growth Hub to deliver the agreed outcomes

**List of Appendices included:**

None.

**Background papers:**

City Deal - Wave 2 Growth Hub Regional Growth Fund Bid

**Other useful documents**

None

**Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?**

No

**Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?**

No

**Will this report go to Council?**

No

Report Title: **Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership Growth Hub Funding 2019-2022.**

**1. Context (or background)**

- 1.1 The Growth Hub was established by the CWLEP and Government in 2014 as part of the Coventry & Warwickshire 5-year City Deal agreement. It has grown to become the agreed “one-stop shop” for businesses, providing a single point of contact and has supported thousands of business across the region to access funding, to protect and create jobs, tap into supply chains, increase production and reach their full potential.
- 1.2 The Government remains committed to the development of Growth Hubs as part of their Industrial Strategy as they are “determined to promote strong, sustainable and balanced growth across the country, helping all of our cities, towns and counties reach their full potential. Growth Hubs will be critical to this and will play a key role”.
- 1.3 Between April 2014 and March 2019, the Growth Hub has engaged with a total of 4030 businesses and assisted 1,626 businesses. During the same period, the Growth have helped to create 1,974 jobs and safeguarded a further 741 jobs. The business support activity provided by the Growth hub has been able to lever £32m of private sector investment with a Gross Value Added (GVA) value of £74m.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.4 Over the next three years, if funding is approved, it is expected that the Growth Hub will continue to provide support to Coventry businesses and will be expected to engage with a minimum of 900 businesses, assist over 360 businesses, create 390 jobs and lever in £18m of private sector investment.
- 1.5 The City Deal was established in 2014 and CCC’s contribution to CWLEP Growth Hub over the 5 years is shown in table 1 below.

**Table 1: Coventry City Council contribution to CWLEP Growth Hub**

<b>Year</b>	<b>CCC Contribution</b>
<b>April 2014 - March 2016</b>	£482,521
<b>April 2016 – March 2017</b>	£178,281
<b>April 2017 – March 2018</b>	£187,303
<b>April 2018 – March 2019</b>	£302,477
<b>Total CCC contribution</b>	£1,150,582

- 1.6 During 2017, the Growth Hub further enhanced their offer of business support and developed the concept of a Business Festival for the sub region. This was supported by the LEP and local authority partners, with each Authority committing a £5k contribution to the festival. Over 3000 local businesses attended the 2018 festival, with 86% reporting that the festival had a positive impact on their business. <sup>2</sup>
- 1.7 The Growth Hub has ambitious plans to ensure it continues to respond to the changing needs of business and to grow their existing portfolio of business support to local businesses.

<sup>1</sup> Growth Hub CRM Report

<sup>2</sup> Official Festival Report: Coventry and Warwickshire Business Festival 2018

- 1.8 Consequently, the Growth Hub Subsidiary Board has developed a proposed budget for the Growth Hub for the next three years (2019/20-2021/22). The profile blends together core funding with Business Festival contributions and allows for a 2% rise for inflation after two years.
- 1.9 Table 2 below outlines the intended ask per annum from Local Authorities including Coventry City Council:

**Table 2: Intended ask from CWLEP Growth Hub from Local Authorities**

Local Authority	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Warwickshire CC	£ 128,000	£ 128,000	£ 130,560
Coventry CC	£ 128,000	£ 128,000	£ 130,560
Nuneaton and Bedworth BC	£ 15,000	£ 15,000	£ 15,300
Warwick DC	£ 15,000	£ 15,000	£ 15,300
Rugby BC	£ 15,000	£ 15,000	£ 15,300
Hinckley/ Bosworth BC	£ 10,000	£ 10,000	£ 10,200
North Warks BC	£ 10,000	£ 10,000	£ 10,200
Stratford BC	£ 15,000	£ 15,000	£ 15,300
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>£ 336,000</b>	<b>£ 336,000</b>	<b>£ 342,720</b>

## 2. Options considered and recommended proposal

2.1 The options considered are:

2.2 Option 1 – Commit the full financial commitment of £386,560 for the full 3-year funding period to CWLEP Growth Hub (**Recommended**)

2.3 This option would see the Council commit to the full ask of £386,560 for the full three-year funding period, subject to annual performance and impact reviews. This is the recommended option as it would not only maintain the current level of business support but also seek to increase the volume of support and associated outcomes for Coventry businesses. It would also ensure that the Growth Hub is able to deliver against a sustainable business plan, supported by match funding from partners, investment by central government and future funding. This option would meet the core aims of the Council Plan of '*focusing on attracting businesses and jobs to the city so local people can take up new opportunities...and to maintain 'strong partnerships with businesses'*'. The Growth Hub is instrumental in providing support to local businesses and creating new jobs within the City.

2.4 Option 2 – Offer a reduced financial or shorter-term funding award to CWLEP Growth Hub (**Not Recommended**)

2.5 Coventry City Council (CCC) could offer the Growth Hub a reduced funding offer or commit to shorter term agreement. This option has been discounted because it will reduce the support offered to Coventry businesses, and places CCC at odds with other local authorities who are offering match funding allocation to ensure the current level of provision is maintained. It would also put the Hub at risk from a weaker funding profile if they cannot raise the necessary partner match to continue to deliver their business support services. The Growth Hub is also a delivery partner in the current ERDF programmes. Reduction in funding could jeopardise the Growth Hub's contractual obligations and increase the risk of not meeting its performance targets under ERDF. It could also affect the successful delivery of the ERDF Programme. In addition to this, CCC is in the process of submitting outline applications to extend current ERDF programmes from December 2021 to June 2023. The reduction in funding could put these extensions at risk if the Growth Hub is unable to provide match funding.

2.6 Option 3 – Offer no funding award to CWLEP Growth Hub (**Not Recommended**)

2.7 This option would mean that the Growth Hub would have a substantial gap within its revenue forecasts over the next 3 financial years. The Growth Hub is also a delivery partner in the current European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)- programmes. This option would jeopardise the Growth Hub's contractual obligations and increase the risk of not meeting its performance targets which could affect the successful delivery of the ERDF programme. CCC is in the process of submitting outline applications to extend current ERDF programmes from December 2021 to June 2023. This could put these extensions at risk if the Growth Hub is unable to provide match funding and funding is not awarded.

### 3. **Results of consultation undertaken**

3.1 The Growth Hub regularly surveys and consults with its users. Customer satisfaction ratings from local businesses are included in the bi-annual reports to their core funders including the Department for Business, Enterprise and Industrial Strategy and Coventry City Council.

3.2 The Annual Business Festival requests workshop and activity ideas from the local business community to ensure that the event is tailored to local business need. The event also benefits from significant stakeholder and attendee engagement and a report is produced following the festival summarising key outputs and feedback from users. This in turn helps to shape future focus of Growth Hub work.

### 4. **Timetable for implementing this decision**

4.1 The decision on funding needs to be made as soon as the Council is able to, to allow the Growth Hub to confirm its programme of activity. The award and subsequent reporting will be managed from within the Economic Development Service. A Service Level Agreement will be produced between the Council and Coventry and Warwickshire Growth Hub outlining the timetable for grant payment and conditions on which the grant is allocated.

### 5. **Comments from Director of Finance and Corporate Services**

#### 5.1 **Financial implications**

Funding for Coventry's contribution to the CWLEP Growth Hub has historically been identified on a periodic basis from earmarked reserves. Should cabinet member wish to approve the recommendations, it is proposed that funding for the 3 year period up to 2021/22 continues to be funded from earmarked reserves. Any requirement for funding of subsequent years would require an additional approval.

The total cost of £386,560 will be paid in annual instalments as per the table in the executive summary. Performance of the Growth Hub against the Service Level Agreement (SLA) will be managed by the Economic Development Service

## 5.2 **Legal implications**

There are no direct legal implications associated with the contents of this report.

## 6. **Other implications**

None

### 6.1 **How will this contribute to the Council Plan ([www.coventry.gov.uk/councilplan/](http://www.coventry.gov.uk/councilplan/))?**

The request for funding contributes to the Council Plan by '*supporting business to grow through attracting inward investment; helping businesses expand and encouraging businesses to create jobs*'

### 6.2 **How is risk being managed?**

The award of the funding would be direct to the CWLEP Growth Hub, which is a fully owned subsidiary of the CWLEP. As such financial and operational concerns are delivered under the CWLEP'S own robust arrangements for governance and scrutiny. All funding decisions and financial issues are overseen by the CWLEPs Finance and Governance Group, which reports to each meeting of the main CWLEP Board. The Growth Hub has its own subsidiary Group which reports regularly into main CWLEP Board.

### 6.3 **What is the impact on the organisation?**

The Growth Hub would have a substantial gap within its revenue forecasts over the next three financial years and therefore a reduced offer of support to local businesses. The Growth Hub is also a partner in the current ERDF Programmes and as such contributes to its overall performance. Without this funding, the Growth Hub may be unable to deliver quality long-term business support within Coventry.

### 6.4 **Equality and Consultation Analysis (ECA)**

The Growth Hub provides support to all businesses within Coventry and Warwickshire. They have completed their own equality and access statements to ensure the service is accessible to all. As such there is no wider need for the Council to conduct any further equality impact assessments. The Growth Hub will be expected to provide an annual report on their activity to Coventry City, this will include further breakdowns of client groups accessing the service and the results of any stakeholder and wider engagement information about the work of the Growth Hub.

## 6.5 Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment

No implications.

## 6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

The CWLEP Growth Hub works with multiple delivery partners and supports a wide range of partner organisations. They are co-deliverers on a number of projects receiving funding from national and European sources including the ERDF Business Support Project. Without the Council's contribution to the Growth Hubs core funding, the business support currently offered to SME's in Coventry via the Growth Hub will be reduced. This may also impact on CCC who are currently the accountable body for ERDF programmes. The decision will impact on the Hub's revenue resources and business plans.

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