

**Report to: Place and Economic Development Committee, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2021**

**Report of: Managing Director**

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**Subject: ALLOCATION OF FUNDING FOR POST EP4116 (SKILLS OFFICER)**

**1. Recommendation**

- 1.1 **That the Committee notes the proposal to fund the post of Skills Officer from 1 April 2022.**
- 1.2 **That the Committee recommends to the Policy and Resources Committee that the post is funded from reserves for 2022-23.**

**2. Background**

- 2.1 The Skills Officer post was created in a temporary capacity in July 2017. The role delivers a range of support to local businesses and employees and has a current work plan agreed at the July PED Committee Meeting.
- 2.2 At the March 2021 PED committee meeting, this committee agreed to recommend that the Policy & Resources Committee approve the allocation of £50,000 from the Additional Restrictions Grant fund to temporarily cover the costs of this role in light of the key role played in Covid-recovery efforts.
- 2.3 The recommendation was supported at the Policy & Resources Committee March 2021 meeting where it was identified that further funding would be required from 1 April 2022.

**3. Preferred Option**

- 3.1 The preferred option is to fund the post from reserves in line with the above recommendation. This is a one-year solution, pending the appointment of the new Head of Service for Economic Development and the review of the current Employment and Skills Strategy.
- 3.2 The Skills Officer is responsible for the delivery of the objectives of the Employment and Skills Strategy, supporting jobs and business growth in the city through business engagement, as well as facilitating local employment, training, and education for residents.
- 3.3 The current priorities for the role are to:
  - Support ongoing implementation of the Worcestershire Coronavirus Economic Recovery Plan (Employment & Skills) including the DWP Youth Hub

- Support development of the business case for the Town Investment Plan Community Skills and Enterprise project with specific regard to matching external revenue funding
- Establish a standard process for securing economic benefits from development and the Council's Capital Programmes such as the Future High Streets Improvement scheme
- Deliver the final year of the skills enabling budget programme.
- Review the current Employment and Skills Strategy

3.4 In 2022-23, the Skills Officer priorities will be to:

- Seek and support bids for external funding particularly in regard to revenue match for the Towns Fund Community Skills and Enterprise project
- Work on projects related to the ongoing recovery of the economy from the impacts of Covid-19, including supporting the training and development of young people and those communities most impacted
- Work with Council officers, partners and the construction industry to maximise social value and economic benefits from the Council's capital programme
- Launch and Year 1 delivery of the refreshed Employment and Skills Strategy 2022 – 2026 (due at PED Committee in March 2022)

#### **4. Alternative Options Considered**

4.1 The alternative option is not to fund this post. This is not recommended as it would require the reallocation of other staff members to deliver the outputs currently required of this role and lead to a reduction in the services delivered by the Economic Development team towards the objectives of the City Plan and key regeneration projects. It will also minimise the positive economic impacts delivered by this role.

#### **5. Implications**

##### **5.1 Financial and Budgetary Implications**

The post is identified on the 2020-21 Pay Chart as being PTC grade which has a salary range of £32,555 to £36,524. The annual cost for the post is £47,960, including on-costs.

The post is required to support the development of businesses within the city by helping to ensure that skilled employees are able to engage with the businesses that need them. The role also currently forms part of the Covid recovery programme and will help to secure the economic prosperity of the city in the coming year. It is therefore appropriate to fund the post from the Business Rates Risk Reserve as the work will reduce the risk of loss of business rates income which would otherwise fall to that reserve.

The reserve has an estimated balance of £3.392m at 31 March 2022, of which £1.4m is required to be retained under existing policies and the remainder is required to mitigate risk of business rates appeals and loss of income.

## 5.2 Legal and Governance Implications

There are no legal or governance implications arising from this report.

## 5.3 Risk Implications

If resources are not allocated, this will impact on the ability of the Council to deliver the objectives of the City Plan and other priorities within the Economic Development Service.

## 5.4 Corporate/Policy Implications

The role funded by the proposed resource allocation will support delivery of emerging City Plan outcomes including:

### Prosperous City

- A highly skilled workforce, with the experience and the right type of qualifications that city employers need
- Increase in high value and better paid jobs in the city
- Increase in number of graduates remaining in the city to live and work
- Increase in number of disabled people able to work

### Stronger and Connected Communities

- Increased use of technology by all communities
- Sustainable neighbourhood infrastructure (facilities)

## 5.5 Equality Implications

An equality impact assessment will form part of the delivery plan for the role in 2022-23 to ensure accessibility for training and skills development.

## 5.6 Human Resources Implications

The postholder has been in the role since July 2017

## 5.7 Health and Safety Implications

There are no health and safety implications directly arising from this report.

## 5.8 Social, Environmental and Economic Implications

The delivery of the Employment and Skills Strategy and action plans directly supports jobs and business growth in the city through business engagement, as well as facilitating local employment, training, and education for residents.

**Ward(s):** All  
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**Background Papers:** Worcester City Employment and Skills Strategy  
Worcester City Plan  
PED Committee Report, 8 March 2021  
P&R Committee Report, 23 March 2021  
PED Committee Report, 26 July 2021