

# **Proposed Decision to be made by the Deputy Leader (Finance and Property) on or after 18 May 2018**

## **Addition to the Capital Programme for works to implement the Warwickshire County Council Business Centres Strategy**

### **Recommendation**

That the Deputy Leader (Finance and Property) agrees to an addition to the Capital Programme of the sum of up to £150,000, funded from the Business Centres Reserves, to enable a number of investments to improve and develop the services and facilities within the Council's Business Centres Portfolio.

### **1.0 Background**

- 1.1 Warwickshire County Council's Business Centre Portfolio currently comprises of 233 units located across 8 sites. They provide a valuable addition to the business support landscape within the county through the provision of small, affordable and flexible units (which are underprovided by the market).
- 1.2 The Business Centres also currently make a positive net revenue contribution to the County Council through the income they generate. A new Business Centres Strategy was adopted in 2016, which seeks to further maximise the potential of our Business Centres both to support local economic growth and to generate increased revenue generation for the County Council. The strategy also identifies the need and potential to increase our Business Centres portfolio in the medium term.
- 1.3 This is in line with our strategy to maximise the income opportunities that the Business Centres can provide, and to ensure that they fully support the growth and development of small businesses within the county, linking directly to OOP2020 saving CG-TE-16.
- 1.4 To deliver our Business Centres Strategy, we need to make some strategic investments to both enhance our assets, and to maximise their income generating potential. These investments include:
  - the reconfiguring some of the units within the centres to provide more appropriate incubator space for new or early phase businesses;
  - making improvements to the existing facilities to ensure we provide a quality offer;

- new signage and branding as part of a coherent and co-ordinated marketing and communications plan to raise awareness and profile of the Centres.

## **2.0 Proposal**

- 2.1 To enable us to make timely and effective capital investments in an efficient manner, it is proposed that we create a new Block Header within the Capital Programme to cover the work needed to implement the Business Centres Strategy. This Block Header will then have a number of sub-projects underneath relating to the different activities, and resources will be drawn down from the Business Centres Reserves as and when required.
- 2.2 Decisions to make investments will be guided by the Business Centres Strategy, and undertaken in line with Contract Standing Orders. Funding will comply with capital spending rules and, in particular, will meet the minimum threshold of £6,000 for capital expenditure.

## **3.0 Financial Implications**

- 3.1 It is proposed that we seek to utilise a maximum of £150,000 to support our investment in the delivery of the strategy. Funding will be drawn down from the Business Centres Reserves Fund as required. At 31 December 2017, the Business Centres Reserves Fund stood at £640,000 and, whilst some of this is already earmarked to fund the Eliot Park carpark works, there will be more than sufficient funding remaining to cover these proposed investments.
- 3.2 The investments and spend are anticipated to be undertaken over the period 2018/19-2019/20.
- 3.3 These investments are directly linked to the One Organisational Plan and support a savings target of £70,000 by 2019/20, as per Ref No. CG-TE-16.

## **Background Papers**

None.

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This report was circulated to the following members prior to publication.

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