



**Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning & Skills**

**Cabinet – 21 February 2019**

**FPR5 - Project Extension of European Social Funded (ESF) Cynnydd Project**

<b>Purpose:</b>	To comply with Financial Procedure Rule No.5 (Budgetary Control) - to monitor and control revenue budgets effectively.
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Quality In Education 2020
<b>Consultation:</b>	Access to Services, Finance, Procurement and Legal.
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>	It is recommended that:  1) Cabinet accept the additional European Social Fund (ESF) funds to extend the currently operating Cynnydd Project up to December 2022 (Phase 2).
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<b>Finance Officers:</b>	Aimee Dyer / Chris Davies
<b>Legal Officer:</b>	Debbie Smith
<b>Access to Services Officer:</b>	Catherine Window

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the successful outcome of the revised Business Plan as submitted by the Regional Lead, Pembrokeshire County Council to WEFO in early 2018. This revised Business Plan sought to extend the delivery of the Cynnydd Project and support for our most vulnerable learners until the end of the 2022 academic year. See Appendix A for the revised business plan.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 As required under Specific Objective 2 (To reduce the number of those at risk of becoming NEET, amongst 11-24 year olds) under Priority 3 of the 2014-2020 West Wales and the Valleys ESF Operational Programme, the Cynnydd project is targeted at those young people who are identified as being at the very greatest risk of becoming Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) and to reduce this risk.
- 2.2 The project has been operational since September 2016 following the approval of the project in May 2016. On the 21<sup>st</sup> April 2016, Cabinet approved a report to accept the ESF grant offer for the participation and delivery of the Cynnydd Project on the basis of a letter of commitment from WEFO, details referred to as Phase 1 throughout this report.
- 2.3 In July 2017 WEFO contacted the Regional Project Lead in Pembrokeshire to invite the submission of a revised Business Plan in order to access an additional £11.5m ESF funding for the region which would allow the project to be extended to 2022. The revised Business Plan was submitted in May 2018.
- 2.4 On the 14<sup>th</sup> November 2018, communications were received from the Regional Lead team of the approval from WEFO of the project extension with an additional regional funding budget of £11.5m ESF to continue the project until December 2022. As a result of the additional funding and duration, increased participant engagement and outcomes will be required. Please see Financial Implications section for these details.
- 2.5 A new funding agreement will be issued by WEFO, which will require Pembrokeshire County Council as the Regional Lead to return a signed copy of the letter. Joint beneficiaries (partners) are not required to sign new declarations. See Appendix B for a copy of the letter.
- 2.6 Each young person referred onto the project will be assessed on their attendance, attainment and behaviour. Every participant referred to the project will receive a tailored package of intervention appropriate to their individual needs; with the aim of preventing them from disengaging from education and enabling the young people to access further education or employment when they leave school.

- 2.7 Pembrokeshire County Council is the Regional Lead for the project. There are a total of 11 partners in this regional project namely: Pembrokeshire County Council, Pembrokeshire College, Ceredigion County Council, Ceredigion College, Carmarthen County Council, Coleg Sir Gar, Swansea Council, Gower College Swansea, Neath Port Talbot CBC, Neath Port Talbot College Group and Careers Wales.
- 2.8 To date the project has supported learners in Swansea via dedicated Cynnydd Learning Coaches, and additionally support via procured provision sourced primarily via a Regional Framework and Local Frameworks.
- 2.9 Going forward, lessons have been learned from support provisions that have been in high demand and worked well. As such, the regional framework will not continue to be used for the extended duration. A working group was established in April 2018, where feedback was gathered to inform what support provision would be needed to further support this cohort of learners.
- 2.10 In July 2018 a bespoke framework of support provisions for the Cynnydd Project in Swansea was advertised via Sell2Wales. As the award of these contracts was dependent on the outcome of the project extension approval, the tender returns were evaluated and a Contract Award report was completed and approved in readiness for award. At the time of this report, letters confirming the tender evaluation have been issued to all tenderers to inform them of the outcome and contracts issued. A list of provisions sought and providers engaged as part of this tender exercise can be found as Appendix C.
- 2.11 As a result of the project extension, the delivery model will remain unchanged, including allocation to participant allocation, devolved budget and outcome allocation, but has been calculated using VAP data from 2017/18 to make it as current as possible for the project duration. The External Funding Team will continue to lead the project in close collaboration with the Education Department. Each school will have a dedicated Learning Coach resource, and a devolved budget in order to access procured provision as referred and set out in an Memorandum of Understanding. The External Funding Team will continue to ensure compliance and eligibility is delivered to mitigate the risk to the authority.

### 3. Financial Implications

#### 3.1 Summary of Grant Award for Swansea, and Participant Allocation

	<b>Total Project Cost</b>	<b>Total ESF Grant</b>	<b>Total Match Funding Required</b>	<b>Participant allocation</b>
<b>Phase 1 (2016-2018)</b>	£2,358,684	£1,651,079 (70%)	£707,605 (30%)	780
<b>Phase 2 (2018-2022)</b>	£2,353,232	£1,647,262 (70%)	£705,970 (30%)	520
<b>TOTAL for both Phases (2016-2022)</b>	<b>£4,711,916</b>	<b>£3,298,341</b>	<b>£1,413,575</b>	<b>1300</b>

#### 3.2 Summary of expected Outcomes

	<b>Gaining a Qualification upon leaving</b>	<b>Reduced Risk of Becoming NEET</b>
<b>Phase 1 (2016-2018)</b>	56	390
<b>Phase 2 (2018-2022)</b>	25	325
<b>TOTAL for both Phases (2016-2022)</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>715</b>

3.3 One of the fundamental changes to the revised business plan is the inclusion of being in EET (in education, employment or training) as evidence to support being at reduced risk of becoming of NEET outcome. This not only ratifies the work the young people and their support network have achieved for the vulnerable learners, but also improve the success of achieving or succeeding the WEFO targets.

3.4 Costs have and will continue to be charged to revenue cost centre 49106.

- 3.5 The staff time contribution to match funding will continue to be provided, alike Phase 1 requirements, by key workers in schools who already work with this cohort of young people. They will continue to support these pupils and refer them into Cynnydd intervention as required.
- 3.6 There will be no future revenue implications arising from the schemes other than potential redundancy costs that are included within the staff costs budget headings at the cessation and ultimate delivery of the scheme.
- 3.7 The grant must be claimed in accordance with the grant terms and conditions, as set out in the letter, Appendix B.

#### **4. Legal Implications**

- 4.1 Documentation prepared to support implementation of current collaborative arrangements will need to be reviewed against updated WEFO and related Welsh Government guidance, taking into account lessons learned from current implementation arrangements.
- 4.2 Generally the terms attached to EU Grant funding are legally binding and should be formally recorded in an appropriate document/contract with external delivery partners as required, to ensure that relevant risks and liabilities are transferred as appropriate as per existing SLA.
- 4.3 Procurement rules (both EU and the Council's) will have to be fully complied with in all respects, whether in relation to inter-authority services or the procurement of services from external delivery agents.
- 4.4 The Council will have to comply with all Conditions attached to the offer letters from Welsh European Funding Office.
- 4.5 The Council, together with all Authorities participating in this project, will need to ensure compliance with European state aid rules.
- 4.6 Any documentation entered into as referred to in this Report will have to contain any necessary clauses required by the Chief Legal Officer and Chief Finance Officer to protect the Council's interests so far as they are able.

#### **5. Equality and Engagement Implications**

- 5.1 The Cynnydd Business Plan details in specific ways how the equality issues are addressed as cross-cutting themes throughout implementation of the project.

These cross-cutting themes are:

- Equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming;
- Welsh language;
- Sustainable development; and
- Tackling poverty and social exclusion.

5.2 The Council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (Wales) and must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Our Equality Impact Assessment process ensures that we have paid due regard to the above

5.3 The City and County of Swansea will ensure it adheres to its duties in line with the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Duty for Wales. In addition, the City and County of Swansea will ensure that the UNCRC are embedded into policy and practice and due regard will be given to Children's Rights in the delivery of this project. As such, the Access to Services Team has confirmed that there is no requirement to undertake the City and County of Swansea's Equality Impact Assessment Process.

**Background Papers:** None.

**Appendices:**

- Appendix A** Revised Business Plan
- Appendix B** Signed Grant Offer Letter
- Appendix C** Framework provisions and appointed providers