

HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

Agenda Item 73
Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Interreg IVa Learning Cities Bid		
Date of Meeting:	18 January 2012		
Report of:	Strategic Director of Place		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Emma Gilbert	Tel: 29-1704
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Key Decision:	No		
Ward(s) affected:	Moulsecoomb and Bevendean; North Portslade		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 Brighton & Hove City Council is a partner in the Interreg IVa Learning Cities bid. The project is led by Centre Communal d'Action Sociale de Carvin (France) and involves 6 partners, from England, France and Belgium. The project aims to reduce inequality and social exclusion by fostering an increased engagement into lifelong and life wide learning for some of the most deprived and hardest to reach groups in the cities of Brighton and Hove, Carvin and Turnhout. The Project will develop and test activities dedicated to removing barriers and difficulties that particular groups experience in developing their education, skills and training, in order to improve their quality of life and promote active engagement in the community.
- 1.2 This report seeks approval and endorsement for participation in the Interreg IVa Learning Cities Project.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member for Housing approves and endorses city council participation in the Interreg Iva Learning Cities Project.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 Interreg IVa is an EU funding programme that supports cross-border cooperation projects between neighbouring regions, across a range of themes including: economic development, social cohesion, culture, and the environment. Interreg funds up to 50% of eligible project costs, and projects require at least two partner organisations from a minimum of two eligible EU countries. Brighton & Hove is eligible under two programmes: '2 Seas' involving parts of the UK, France, Belgium (Flanders) and the Netherlands; and 'France (Channel)–England'.
- 3.2 Interreg IVa is a priority funding stream for the city council and city partners, as set out in the corporate International Strategy. In the current economic climate, and following

the reduction of national and regional bidding opportunities, this EU funding programme has become increasingly important as a source of external funding. The July 2011 deadline saw a record number of local bids submitted, including five city council bids. Given the increased Interreg IVa bidding activity, reports on individual Interreg IVa bids are to be taken to the relevant Cabinet Member Meeting (CMM) for formal sign-off. In future, CMM approval will be sought at an earlier stage of bid development. This bid was already in appraisal when the additional CMM sign-off process was established.

- 3.3 The Learning Cities bid was submitted to the last deadline of the Interreg IVa 2 Seas programme on 8 July 2011. This is the final major 'open' bidding opportunity for the 2 Seas programme, although there may be smaller, targeted calls for proposals in 2012/13.
- 3.4 The bid was successfully appraised and agreed at the end of November, with formal notification received in early December 2011.
- 3.5 There are 3 key strands of the project that link together to achieve the overarching aims of the Learning Cities Project:
 1. Creating a citywide learning friendly environment;
 2. Fostering increased engagement and retention into lifelong and life wide learning for deprived and hardest to reach groups;
 3. Enabling progression into lifelong and life wide learning for deprived and hardest to reach groups.
- 3.6 Working in partnership with the Bridge Community Education Centre and Portslade Adult Learning, the funding provides the opportunity for Housing and Social Inclusion to carry out a range of targeted interventions with some of the City's hardest to reach communities to improve access to and engagement in learning, skills, employment and personal development opportunities.

Working with beneficiaries across all age groups, it is expected that the soft and hard outcomes achieved at an individual level will help to address some of the inequalities and exclusion experienced by a large number of our residents; whilst the indirect benefits eg staff training, development of peer mentors/learners within the community, better access to resources, improved networks and links, will provide a sustainable and lasting impact on the community beyond the life of the project.

- 3.7 The BHCC aspect of the bid funds:
 - 2x Learning and Participation Workers (LPW) - who sit in the Housing and Social Inclusion Delivery Unit. This role is 35% outreach (tenant visits; shadowing Tenancy Sustainment Officers and Housing Officers, door knocking, targeted approaches eg Housing centre, Children centres, schools, libraries, partner events); 35% one to one Information, advice and guidance and learner support; 30% delivery of learning/and progression activities in conjunction with the Bridge and Portslade Adult Learning
 - 1x basic skills tutor (one day per week) who can work between the Housing Centre/community locations delivering group literacy, numeracy, ICT sessions to residents

- A programme of staff training across all three partners to build capacity/skills in delivering services to residents: 6 x Motivational interviewing courses; 6 x Life skills coaching for support workers; Work focused coaching skills for staff; IAG qualification level 3 and PETALS teaching qualification level 4 (for key staff to build internal capacity to deliver training/IAG beyond the life of the project)
- All travel, subsistence and accommodation costs for the mandatory cross-border visits (based on the EU per dium allowances); staff travel for the L&P workers;
- Costs for the Study visits and activity events in Brighton and Hove
- Equipment and consumables; publicity; promotion; hospitality etc.

3.8 The partnership working with The Bridge and Portslade Adult Learning will bring additional value including peer mentoring programmes, volunteering and other progression activities; a range of Essential Life skills courses (World Health Organisation definition) and bridging activities, a community peer literacy project as well as a range of learner support and course activities.

3.9

Partnership working with the cities of Carvin and Turnhout will provide us with models of good practise in improving educational attainment with a particular focus on families and children, and reducing school dropout /exclusions.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

4.1 Local and international partnership opportunities were considered through the partnership search process, local forums and the International networking event held in Brighton in March 2011.

4.2 Consultation will form a key part of the ongoing evaluation process throughout the life of the project. The Community Engagement Framework will be implemented for all consultation processes.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 Financial Implications:

The total value of the Interreg IVa bid is £2,084,543 with 50% matchfunding being requested from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Each partner organisation is required to match fund 50% of their requested budget.

The total bid for Brighton and Hove City Council is £517,115 so match funding required is £258,557.50. This match funding has been identified from existing resources within the Housing Revenue Account budgets for 2011/12 and will be included within the HRA budget strategies for 2012/13 and beyond. The funding from ERDF of £258,557.50 will flow to the HRA over the period of the project to be used to fund the other half of this project. It is anticipated that there will be no additional costs to the HRA but this project does commit the HRA to this expenditure for the duration of the project. Care must be taken to ensure that no long term commitments or contractual arrangements are entered into (such as employment contracts) that would commit the HRA to extra expenditure after ERDF funding ceases.

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 Participation in the Learning Cities Project is within the Council's powers, and the Cabinet Member for Housing is the relevant Cabinet Member for formal sign off of this project, partly funded by the HRA. As the Lead Partner Carvin will sign a funding contract with the funding body, and will be legally accountable for the funds drawn down. However, before any funds are drawn down, the Council will be required to sign an agreement with the Lead Partner and the other parties involved in the project, setting out the relationship between them, and confirming the contribution to the project which the individual parties will make. Once the partnership agreement has been signed, the Council will be legally obliged to comply with its terms.

No individual's human rights will be adversely affected by the report's recommendation. The fostering of increased engagement into lifelong and life wide learning is compatible with the Right to Education.

Lawyer Consulted: Name Liz Woodley

Date: 5.1.2012

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 An Equalities Impact assessment will be carried out as part of the project implementation

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 The Learning City project management and implementation will achieve environmental performance through cross-border visits combining different purposes to avoid unnecessary additional journeys; Use of ICT facilities (eg Skype, email etc) and the centralised development of shared resources such as the Website and the Moodle platform will reduce printing and paper editions.

Aspects of the Project will include the design and settlement of a "learning space model". Existing or new build structures will be improved in terms of functionality and service delivery programme eg Carvin's new central library and digital learning centres; "Foredown Tower" - Visitor/Learning Centre, the Housing Centre (Brighton); Learning platforms (Turnhout). Common specifications will take environmental performance and sustainability into account (purchase of furniture, pedagogical resources etc...).

A key aspect of the project is to train and build staff and resident capacity to deliver support, information advice and guidance, and learning/progression activities; providing a sustainable model for the community beyond the life of the project.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 None

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 HRA is not grant funded and is ring fenced which makes it a more secure funding stream. The budgets for match were carefully identified in order to anticipate the impact of corporate reductions in funding and savings targets over the duration of the project. However, further cuts could occur in the future which could impact on the delivery of the project.

The ongoing project management, financial controls, planning and evaluation process outlined in the Interreg IVa Programme Manual and Partnership Agreements should provide early identification of any funding issues and enable partners to take all necessary actions to minimise the impact this may have.

Under the ERDF system payment claims are made retrospectively on a six monthly basis so partners will need to “forward fund” activities in advance. Delays in payments have been an element of other Interreg bids and the six month periods do not coincide with the Authority’s financial years. The impact on reconciliation will need to be considered.

Public Health Implications:

- 5.7 The project aims to reduce inequality and improve the health and wellbeing for residents in two of the most deprived areas of the city. Targeted interventions include a key focus on the World Health Organisation’s definition of essential life skills.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.8 The aims of the project links into and reflects the key priorities within the 2020 Sustainable Community Strategy, the City Performance Framework, the Council’s Corporate Plan, the City Employment and Skills Plan, Adult Learning Strategy, the draft Social Exclusion Strategy, Housing Strategy and the Housing Management Service Improvement Plan, and other key areas of work to ensure we are effectively meeting the needs of the city, and the Coalition government’s national priorities.

The project reflects the Intelligent Commissioning model currently being developed by Brighton & Hove City Council. The delivery model addresses service improvement and efficiency, encourages partnership working across sectors, agencies and services, and involves residents in meeting the needs and aspirations of the community as well as the individual.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 None

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 To ensure approval and endorsement of the city council’s participation in the Interreg IVa Learning Cities Project

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Learning Cities Interreg IVa Bid Financial breakdown by year

Documents in Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

1. Learning Cities Interreg IVa Bid
2. Interreg IVA "2 Seas Programme 2007-2013" Programme Manual
Guidance on Eligibility and Project Management
3. Guidance on First level Controls
4. Partnership Agreement between lead partner and project partners