

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Skills@Work (ESF PROGRAMME)</b>
<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>Individual Member Decision</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>15<sup>th</sup> February 2017</b>
<b>DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:</b>	<b>Abergavenny</b>

**1. PURPOSE:**

- 1.1 To provide a progress update on the European Social Fund (ESF) Skills@Work programme and to request approval for MCC to act as lead sponsor in the development, approval and delivery of this regional funding opportunity.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 To approve the request for MCC to act as lead sponsor in the ESF funded Skills@Work programme which will include the use of MCC Officer time as match funding for the initiative.
- 2.2 To approve the appointment of officers as required, 100% funded through ESF, to manage and deliver activity for the duration of the programme.

**3. KEY ISSUES:**

- 3.1 As recognised in the operational programme of the ESF for the 2014 – 2020 programme period, investing in skills is a key driver in the development of a modern knowledge-based economy in responding and adapting to economic changes. There is a strong correlation between qualification and skills, employment and earnings. For those in part-time work who are more likely to have low skills, the role of skills development in addressing in-work poverty is emphasised, particularly in up-skilling those with no or basic skills, to support them to progress within the labour market.
- 3.2 The initial proposal for this initiative was led by Newport CC in 2014 however due to complications with FE institutions and the withdrawal of NCC as lead sponsor, the initiative did not progress. As a result, officers from MCC and Monmouthshire Housing Association met with WEFO in December 2016 in an attempt to resurrect the initiative. Further to this a meeting of all prospective partners took place on Monday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2017 at which it was agreed by all partners that MCC assume the lead sponsor role in order for the initiative to progress.
- 3.3 The purpose of the three year initiative is to increase the ownership of generic, transferable skills at all levels from basic to level 2 across the workforce of the region through community provision, thereby improving the opportunities for currently low skilled workers to sustain employment and increase earnings potential. This is a particular issue in Monmouthshire given that the 2016 median gross pay for women working full-time was £399.90 below the welsh average of £448.50 and the county is currently ranked 21<sup>st</sup> out of 22 local authorities in this measure.
- 3.4 Community based provision will focus on supporting reluctant learners to engage with flexible learning opportunities outside of the workplace and will offer a range of provision including literacy, numeracy, ICT and other generic transferable skills resulting in an eligible qualification from basic to level 2. Basic literacy and numeracy skills acquisition will also form a key area to improve the mobility of the workforce and sustainable employment.
- 3.5 The partners involved are Monmouthshire CC, Vale of Glamorgan CC, Cardiff CC, Newport CC and Monmouthshire Housing Association, The total value of the

initiative is likely to be in excess of £3 million. More precise forecasting of the project value will become available during the business planning phase, and regular update reports including staffing and financial arrangements will be presented to the Economy and Development Select Committee as the initiative progresses.

**4. REASONS:**

- 4.1 As recognised in the ESF operational programme 2014 – 2020, investing in skills is a key driver in the development of a modern knowledge-based economy and in responding and adapting to economic changes. There is a strong correlation between qualification and skills, employment and earnings, with those in part-time work more likely to have low skills, emphasising the role of skills development in addressing in-work poverty and up-skilling those with no or basic skills to support them to progress within the labour market.

**5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:**

- 5.1 Although there are no cash implications for the Authority for this initiative when the offer of grant is accepted, MCC will assume full legal and financial responsibility for the entire operation. Therefore in order to mitigate any external risk an all partner service level agreement will be put in place
- 5.2 The use of MCC Officer time as match funding for the initiative.

**6. CONSULTEES:**

Senior Leadership Team  
Cabinet

**7. BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

- a) Project overview – Appendix 1

**8. FUTURE GENERATIONS IMPLICATIONS:**

The significant equality impacts identified in the assessment (Appendix 2) are summarised below for members' consideration:

- 8.1 The Skills@Work programme will increase the ownership of generic, transferable skills at all levels from basic to level 2 across the workforce of the region through community provision, thereby improving the opportunities for currently low skilled workers to sustain employment and increase earnings potential.
- 8.2 This regional programme will take a strategic approach to ensure a clear focus and alignment to regional priorities such as the LSkiP employment and skills plan and the Cardiff Capital Region.

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## **Appendix One – Project Overview**

The Skills@Work project aims to increase the ownership of generic, transferable skills at all levels from basic to level 2 across the workforce of the region through community provision, thereby improving the opportunities for currently low skilled workers to sustain employment and increase earnings potential.

Community based provision will focus on supporting reluctant learners to engage with flexible learning opportunities outside of the workplace and will offer a range of provision including literacy, numeracy, ICT and other generic transferable skills resulting in an eligible qualification from basic to level 2. Basic literacy and numeracy skills acquisition will form a key area to improve the mobility of the workforce and sustainable employment.

Lead Sponsor                      Monmouthshire CC

Joint Sponsors                  Cardiff CC

   Monmouthshire CC

   Vale of Glamorgan CC

   Newport CC

   Monmouthshire Housing Association

The project is applying for ESF funds through Priority 2 - Skills for Growth under specific objective 1; To increase the skills levels, including work relevant skills, of those in the workforce with no or low skills.