

Report title	Youth Employment Hub – Year 2 Funding	
Decision designation	AMBER	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Christopher Burden Education, Skills and Work	
Key decision	Yes	
In forward plan	Yes	
Wards affected	All Wards	
Accountable Director	Emma Bennett, Executive Director of Families	
Originating service	Skills	
Accountable employee	Sue Lindup Tel Email	Skills and Employability Manager 07766473146 Sue.lindup@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by	Education Leadership Team Strategic Executive Board	2 February 2023 7 February 2023

Recommendations for decision:

The Cabinet (Resources Panel) is recommended to:

1. Delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Work and the Cabinet Member for Resources and Digital City, in consultation with the Director of Finance, Executive Director of Families and the Chief Operating Officer to:
 - a. Approve the Council entering into the required grant agreement with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to continue to deliver the Youth Employment Hub in Wolverhampton to support young people aged 16-24 years old into employment and training opportunities.
 - b. Approve the creation of the necessary supplementary revenue budgets to deliver the project.
 - c. Approve the Council entering into any agreements necessary for it manage the Hub at agreed premises in the city centre.

- d. Approve the continuation of such funding arrangements with DWP at the end of 12 month period should further funding be made available by DWP Flexible Support Fund to support the ongoing delivery of a Youth Employment Hub in Wolverhampton city centre.

Recommendations for noting:

The Cabinet (Resources) Panel is asked to note:

1. That European Social Fund (ESF) funded Black Country Impact key workers will be based at the Hub and will provide support to young people at the Hub. Black Country Impact funding has been approved to be continued for another year until October 2023.
2. That Wolves at Work 18-24 funded recruitment staff will operate from the Hub to support young people to access job opportunities. This project is currently in place until March 2024.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To seek approval to receive grants from DWP's Flexible Support Fund to continue to manage and deliver the Youth Hub in Wolverhampton city centre.
- 1.2 The Council has previously received funding from DWP's Flexible Support Fund to deliver the Youth Hub for one year. Year 2 funding will mean that the Hub can be delivered for a further year up until April 2024.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Youth Employment Hubs are a Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) led initiative intended to support young people aged 16 to 24, who are claiming benefits (Universal Credit and Job Seekers Allowance) and have significant barriers to employment. The aim is to provide a young person with a standalone, distinctive, individual package of support that will include mentoring to move them closer to or into work.
- 2.2 Wolverhampton's Youth Hub opened on 1 October 2021 at the Way Youth Zone in Wolverhampton City Centre as a collaborative project between the Council, DWP and the Way to support young people into employment.
- 2.3 In its first year of operation, from 1 October 2021 – 30 September 2022, the Youth Hub enrolled 394 young people and moved 29% into work. This performance is **above** the forecasted target for the year of 300 young people and 20% into work which is part of the Year 1 funding agreement with DWP Flexible Support Fund.
- 2.4 Funding from the DWP Flexible Support Fund ended in September 2022, and the Youth Hub continues to operate on reserves funding and through existing staff funded by the Council and DWP. Funding for room hire and premises is wholly funded by the Council's budgets.
- 2.5 In November 2021, the Council launched its Wolves at Work 18-24 initiative to respond to the scale of youth unemployment in our city. The Youth Hub has played a fundamental role in delivering this strategy by supporting young people into employment. Staff funded from Wolves at Work 18-24 have also provided a regular presence at the Hub ensuring that new job opportunities are communicated within the Hub and attending Jobs Fairs and events to promote opportunities to young people.
- 2.6 The Youth Employment Hub fulfils Our City, Our Plan priority to support more local people into more jobs and training ensuring that young people, particularly those who are 16-29 years old are assisted in their career pathway and into employment.

3.0 Progress and Options for delivering the Youth Hub in Year 2

- 3.1 It is proposed to continue to deliver the Youth Hub at The Way Youth Zone in Wolverhampton.
- 3.2 Due to the success of the Youth Hub in Year 1, DWP have requested that we increase the number of referrals to the Hub from 300 to 500 young people in Year 2. This will also

include an increase in the requirement to move young people into work from a target of 20% to 30%. We estimate that this is achievable through close working relationships with the two feeder Job Centres in the city centre, i.e. Molineux House and Wulfrun.

- 3.3 The Skills Team will also accept referrals for young people who require transitional support and may not be claiming Universal Credit and are therefore not eligible under the DWP criteria. This group of young people may be economically inactive but choose not to claim benefits for a number of reasons. We would also offer appropriate signposting to jobs for those young people who are currently employed, self employed, on zero hours contracts and are still in education and training. We will aim to provide support through our existing resources to ensure that no young person is left behind and unable to access support.
- 3.4 Through our Youth Summits and drop in events organised by the Wolves at Work 18-24 team, consultation has taken place with over 450 young people. This consultation has identified that young people want to be able to access face to face support when looking for jobs and training opportunities. The Youth Hub has provided this support through its physical presence in the city centre and we anticipate that a move into a more central location will meet the needs of even more young people within our city.
- 3.5 Through our own evaluation of young people's experience of the Youth Hub and its activities over the past year, we have identified that young people value the face to face work that we offer in a friendly accessible city centre location. They also value the variety of opportunities for training and access to employers that have been made available to them through their weekly interactions with staff at the Youth Hub and by attending the bi-monthly Jobs Fairs which have taken place.

4.0 Evaluation of alternative options

- 4.1 Option one would be to agree to Year 2 funding for the continuation of the city centre Youth Hub. This would ensure continuation of service to young people in our city and would ensure that the Council with its partners is able to offer this service to all young people within the city.
- 4.2 Option two would be to partially implement the Youth Hubs in the city. This would involve supporting the development of the Bilston Youth Hub at the College premises in Wellington Road only. If this were the case, young people outside of Bilston would not benefit from this facility. This would be a backward step, and whilst the development of a Youth Hub in Bilston is welcomed, it would not provide support to all young people in our city.
- 4.3 Option three would be to close the Youth Hub in the city centre. The Youth Hub has become part of the offer within the city centre supported jointly by the Council and DWP with a number of partners who are delivering their services regularly from the Youth Hub in the city centre. This would be a backward step and would not support the number of unemployed young people within our city who require our support on a daily basis.

5.0 Reasons for decision(s)

- 5.1 The city centre Youth Employment Hub performs a vital role in our Wolves at Work 18-24 work to support young people in their pathway into sustainable employment.
- 5.2 The Youth Hub provides a centrally located recognisable venue for young people to access services during the daytime, which can be extended to evenings and weekends once Council premises are secured.
- 5.3 The Youth Hub has over-achieved in its first year and is seen as a flagship Youth Hub in the West Midlands area. The model and working relationship between the Council, DWP and other partners has proved to be effective in moving young people into employment.
- 5.4 If the Council does not take the decision to continue to lead, manage and resource the Youth Hub in the city centre then it will be more difficult for young people to access the services they need.
- 5.5 The Council is aware of the opening of the Youth Hub at the College location in Bilston and is already collaborating in a joined up approach to delivering both Youth Hubs by sharing resources and skills within the Hubs. The Bilston Youth Hub will deal with a different and separate cohort of customers who will be referred from Bilston Job Centre, whereas the central Youth Hub will deal with customers from the two city centre Job Centres, Molineux House and Wulfrun.

6.0 Financial implications

- 6.1 The Council will be required to enter into a grant agreement with DWP to deliver the Youth Hub in Wolverhampton, for a period of 12 months. Delegated approval is sought in this report.
- 6.2 The grant awarded will cover the cost of employing two staff to manage, co-ordinate and deliver customer services facilities at the Youth Hub. The grant will also provide funding for activities including Jobs Fairs and ancillary costs such as stationery and cleaning.

6.3 The breakdown of the grant funding from DWP Flexible Support Fund is as follows:

Expenditure	Budget £
Youth Hub Project Co-ordinator (salary, NI, pension costs included)	51,530
Customer Services Officer (salary, NI, pension costs included)	30,030
Marketing and promotions	2,500
Jobs Fairs and activities	9,000
Cleaning Costs	6,000
Stationary	1,000
TOTAL FUNDING	100,060

6.4 The Council will continue to fund venue and facilities costs and to provide employment and skills staff to support the delivery at the Youth Employment Hub.

6.5 DWP will pay a grant to the Council monthly in arrears following the satisfactory completion of a Combined Monitoring and Claim form (CMCF). The CMCF will be completed monthly and will include details of progress against the minimum requirements of the grant, outcomes, targets and indicators.

6.6 The Council will also be required to complete a quarterly Statement of Grant Usage which will outline the actual expenditure made on the project. The final payment made by DWP to the Council will be adjusted to allow for any variance in expenditure that the Council has made during the grant period.

[AI/13012023/P]

7.0 Legal implications

7.1 The Council will be required to comply with the terms of the Grant Agreement from DWP, failing to comply with the terms may result in clawback of funding. In relation to any contractual relationships, the Council must comply with its constitution including the Contract Procedure Rules and the appropriate legislation.

[SZ/13122022/P]

8.0 Equalities implications

- 8.1 The Youth Hub will help to support the equalities implications on young people who have been disproportionately affected by the Covid-19 pandemic which has resulted in an accelerated increase in youth unemployment in the city. The scheme will provide the mechanism for moving more young people into sustainable employment.
- 8.2 There are currently 2,070 young people aged 18-24 years old claiming unemployment benefits. This means that Wolverhampton is in position 1 in the UK with a total of 10% of young people in this age group claiming benefits. This figure does not include those young people who do not claim benefits or who need additional support to access employment, education and training.

9.0 All other implications

- 9.1 The agreement of this funding will secure the continuation of two posts for a further 12 months within the Youth Hub, the Youth Hub Co-ordinator and the Youth Hub Customer Services Officer.
- 9.2 Recruitment into sustainable employment is one of the key indicators for a healthier lifestyle. This programme will support healthy lifestyles and will ensure that young people have access to relevant health and well being support within the Council and coaching and mentoring support as part of the programme.
- 9.3 All buildings that will be utilised to deliver the Youth Hub will receive a full health and safety assessment by the Council and DWP. All buildings will be Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant and ensure equality of access for customers.
- 9.4 Information governance has been considered as part of the information sharing requirements from DWP. This will form part of the contract with DWP.

10.0 Schedule of background papers

- 10.1 Cabinet (Resources) Panel – [Wolverhampton Youth Employment Hub](#) – 28 July 2021
- 10.2 Individual Executive Decision Notice – [Wolverhampton Youth Employment Hub](#) – 4 May 2022