

REPORT TO:		Cabinet	
DATE:			
PORTFOLIO:		Cllr Miles Parkinson OBE - Leader	
REPORT AUTHOR:		Steve Riley – Executive Director (Environment)	
TITLE OF REPORT:		Appointment of an external expert consultant to work on the Council’s Levelling Up Fund bid.	
EXEMPT REPORT (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A)	Options	Not applicable	
KEY DECISION:	No	If yes, date of publication:	

1. **Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To seek approval to waive the Council’s Contracts Procedure Rules for the appointment of a suitably experienced consultant to develop, write and lead on the Council’s bid into the Government’s Levelling Up Fund.

2. **Recommendations**

- 2.1 That Cabinet agrees to waive the Contracts Procedure Rules and grants delegated authority to the Executive Director (Environment), following consultation with the Executive Director (Legal & Democratic Services) to agree the terms of the agreement, to appoint an external consultant as set out in paragraph 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7 of the report.

3. **Reasons for Recommendations and Background**

- 3.1 The Levelling Up Fund was announced at the 2020 Spending Review and will focus on capital investment in local infrastructure projects that require up to £20m of funding and builds on prior programmes such as the ‘Local Growth Fund’ and ‘Towns Fund’.
- 3.2 Within the Fund guidance, the Government is expecting bidding authorities to have consulted with their local Member of Parliament as well as a range of relevant local stakeholders across the full geography of a place in developing and agreeing their proposals and submitted bid.
- 3.3 The first round of the Fund will focus on three themes: smaller transport projects that make a genuine difference to local areas; town centre and high street regeneration; and support for maintaining and expanding the UK’s world-leading portfolio of cultural and heritage assets. Eligible Local Authorities must submit their bids to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government by noon on Friday 18 June 2021.

- 3.4 First Round funding will prioritise projects which are able to demonstrate investment or begin delivery on the ground within the 2021-22 financial year and all funding provided by the Fund to be spent by 31st March 2024. It is therefore essential that projects proposed and agreed are as close to 'oven ready' or are realistically deliverable by the Council and any stakeholder partners.
- 3.5 It is recognised that the Council does not have the specific knowledge or experienced staff 'in house' to produce a first class bid submission into the Government's Levelling Up Fund. However, three external consultants have been identified as 'experts' in delivering successful bids and have experience in understanding how the relevant Government Funding departments judge successful bids.
- 3.6 The three consultants who have been identified to the Council are;
- Bradshaw Advisory, 83 Ducie Street, Manchester, England, M1 2JQ
 - Genecon, Joseph's Well, Hanover Walk, Leeds, LS3 1AB
 - Hatch, Faulkner House, Faulkner Street, Manchester, M1 4AN
- 3.7 Waiving the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, means the successful consultant can be appointed and quickly commence work, as we avoid the longer time involved in running a formal tendering exercise. We will of course consider which proposal is the most advantageous and provides any added value to the Council, which should ensure value for money. The tight timescale for bid submission also means that this matter needs to proceed by way of emergency approval, as we cannot wait until the next scheduled Cabinet meeting.

4. Alternative Options considered and Reasons for Rejection

- 4.1 It is important that the appointment is undertaken quickly if the Council is to have any realistic opportunity in achieving the wish to submit a Round 1 bid.
- 4.2 The alternative would be to delay the Council's submission until later rounds are announced. However, there is no information on future dates and it is the Leader of the Council, Hyndburn MP and wider stakeholder group's wish that the Council submit a Round 1 bid.

5. Consultations

- 5.1 A steering group comprising of the Leader of the Council, Leader of the Opposition, MP and approximately 15 partners who represent a wide range of Companies / Local Business Organisations, Leisure, Education, Police, Regional Development, Community Groups, Lancashire County Council etc. have come together to decide how best to use the Council's £150,000 Economic Recovery Fund.
- 5.2 The Steering Group were in agreement to use the fund and appoint a suitably experienced consultant to develop, prepare and write a bid on behalf of the Council for submission into Round 1 of the Government's Levelling Up Fund.

6. Implications

Financial implications (including any future financial commitments for the Council)	<p>The Council had set aside £150,000 from the Additional Restrictions Grant to create an Economic Recovery fund and will use this fund to cover the cost of the consultant's work.</p> <p>By submitting a bid into Round 1, the Council could forfeit an opportunity to receive a flat £125,000 of capacity funding from the Levelling Up Fund that will be allocated to all eligible local authorities to support the development of bids for later rounds of the fund. However, at the moment there are no details, dates or guidance for the later funding rounds.</p>
Legal and human rights implications	<p>The approval to waive the Council's Contracts Procedure Rules is required in order to fulfil our legal obligations in relation to procurement procedures.</p> <p>A suitable deed of appointment will be entered into with the selected consultant.</p> <p>There are no human rights implications for this report.</p>
Assessment of risk	<p>Not appointing the external consultant quickly will most likely result in the Council not being able to submit a bid into Round 1.</p>
Equality and diversity implications <i>A Customer First Analysis should be completed in relation to policy decisions and should be attached as an appendix to the report.</i>	<p>N/A for this report</p>

7. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985: List of Background Papers

7.1 *Copies of documents included in this list must be open to inspection and, in the case of reports to Cabinet, must be published on the website.*