

Information Report for Members - November 2018

1. Introduction

Last year, the GLA and London Councils agreed with the Government for the city to pilot the retention of 100 per cent of business rates growth. This agreement will raise an additional £114 million for the Greater London Authority in 2018-19 with the GLA agreeing to add an additional £26million to make an overall fund totalling £140million.

From this income, a separate 'collective strategic investment' pot was also created. Boroughs were allowed to bid for the money to support projects that will grow the capital's economy such as business space, transport infrastructure and schemes to bring new housing on stream.

To manage this process, an agreement was made between the GLA, City of London and 32 London boroughs which agreed that the City of London Corporation would act as the lead authority.

2. West London Alliance Bid

Applications from single boroughs were not eligible for funding. Therefore, Harrow Council was part of a 7 borough WLA application for funds. The WLA submitted 3 funding bids for Digital Connectivity, Skills and Employment, and West London Orbital. Harrow were part of the former 2 bids, but had no financial interest in the West London Rail Orbital line, as it would not run through Harrow.

The WLA has been awarded a total of £11.3m for Digital Connectivity and Skills and Employment projects. Final contracts between the City of London and the WLA have yet to be signed but performance management claims (to the WLA and ultimately the SIP Panel) will be required.

Digital Connectivity: Harrow's share is circa £1.1m for investment to lay full fibre optic cable from TfL stations to public buildings, providing a major extension of the high speed fibre network and in particular into areas affected by persistently slow internet speeds - so called "not-spots"- that are also located in growth zones.

Specifically, public buildings including libraries, schools, public and council offices located in such slow-broadband areas will be connected directly to the super-fast fibre network from their local TfL station, which are all currently being equipped with high speed fibre nodes by TfL as part of its modernisation plans. TfL have agreed that this bid can leverage that programme by using the same contractor to connect those stations to public buildings identified through this bid to the network as part of the same programme. The new lengths of high-speed fibre "spine" and the associated new street cabinets installed will enable private providers to, for the first time, viably and competitively connect business and residential properties in the vicinity (approximately 250 metres) around the public building to the network. This will have a transformative effect on internet speeds in the areas affected.

The project links directly to the delivery of the West London Vision for Growth and aligns closely with national strategy, including the Government's Local Full Fibre Networks (LFFN) programme

The funding will also support the delivery of the Council's emerging Digital Strategy, which seeks to:

- Create the conditions for economic growth and sustainable communities
- Build online services around citizens and businesses

- Enable the delivery of value for money services through flexible and secure technology

TFL will manage the procurement of the contractor to lay the cable for the Digital Connectivity programme and therefore £1m of funding will not flow directly to Harrow Council.

As yet, there has not been a decision on which public buildings will be linked into the network with this funding. A draft list was submitted as part of the bid but the actual buildings will need to be decided based on costs of installation, council priorities and decisions on the preferred routes of connection to the buildings.

In addition, there will be a £100k pot of money made directly the council to fund any costs of “making good” the highway that has been dug up for cable.

For further information, please contact David Sklair, External Funding Manager Email:

david.sklair@harrow.gov.uk

Skills and Employment: £480,000 will be allocated directly to Harrow Council to deliver its Skills and Employment programme in line with our submission to the WLA.

Specific programmes within this proposal have been designed to increase productivity, reduce barriers to participation, enable progression, and improve attainment levels across two key areas: (i) Supporting individuals and (ii) Supporting businesses.

Supporting Individuals:

Harrow's Economic Development Team will use the funding to increase the skills of low-paid employed and self-employed workers and in turn increase their productivity. The project will finance career information, advice and guidance with vocational skills training lasting less than 12 months, and employment brokerage to support low paid residents break out of the low skills/low pay cycle endemic in Harrow's Labour Market. (Clients requiring training 12 months plus will be referred to apprenticeship provision). Clients will include all low paid and low skilled working age residents and employees of companies based in Harrow. Clients will include recipients of Housing Benefit, the housing element within Universal Credit, and also working age children in a household where the parent claims HB or Universal Credits.

For further information, please contact Victoria Isaacs Xcite Project Manager

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Supporting Businesses:

Harrow will use the funding to support the development of business skills of self employed, sole traders, and owner managers of micro businesses in Harrow. The proposal will fund the provision of training and one-to-one support for businesses to build their skills and knowledge with the aim of increasing the survival rates of these businesses and in turn increase business growth and sustainability. Business skills could include financial management, HR, logistics, stock control, market research, business planning, marketing, exporting, etc. Our business rate hardship scheme found financial management the biggest issue for claimants.

For further information, please contact Bali Rai, Economic Development Officer - Business Email: bali.rai@harrow.gov.uk