

Equality Impact Assessment

Reference: EQIA196339958

Submitted: 15 April 2020 16:03 PM

Executive summary

Title of policy or decision: Inward Investment Future Plans - extension of contract

Describe the main aims, objectives and purpose of the policy (or decision): The decision seeks agreement to extend an existing contract between Essex County Council ("ECC") and The Let's Do Business Group Limited ("LDBG") for 12 months and vary funding provisions pursuant to the extension and variation provisions in the contract.

ECC has a contract with LDBG dated 24 May 2017 for Inward Investment services and management of Ongar Business Centre. The ERDF element of funding for this contract (contributing approximately 50%) expires on 30 April 2020 and the original intention was to allow the contract to expire, with LDBG managing any redundancies. However it was decided to extend and vary the contract with LDBG pursuant to the terms of the contract - extend to enable ECC to run a fully compliant procurement process which will be subject to a separate decision and vary to enable funding to be used from a different source following an end to the ERDF funding.

As a result of COVID-19 UK citizens were told to avoid non-essential travel on 16 March 2020 and nightclubs, theatres, cinemas, gyms and leisure centres were told to close "as soon as they reasonably can" on 20 March 2020. These directions by HM Government have already had a severe and unprecedented impact on the UK economy, including in Essex. The future situation is highly uncertain, but this will certainly represent a significant and sustained period of disruption for the businesses and local economies in Essex.

In response, ECC's Economic Growth team has been repositioned as a COVID-19 Business Response team for the foreseeable future, requiring additional and specialist business support resources in the short to medium term. The organisation's corporate functions have been refocused on priorities such as Community Shield and experienced an increase in workload, constraining options for putting in place the required provision without a gap in service.

In order to provide additional and specialist business support resources to ECC during a pandemic and to enable ECC to re-procure a longer term in this unprecedented situation, it is proposed to extend the LDBG contract for 12 months, as provided for in the contract terms and to vary the contract by replacing the 50% of ERDF funding of £303,500.

Whilst the terms of the contract would remain the same, the services provided and Performance Standards will be improved to reflect the end of the ERDF funding and achievement of the associated targets, rebalance of activity carried out to date, and; current market conditions. This would involve: monitoring and filtering of business support enquiries; low-intensity business support signposting to support available from central government, lower tier authorities and partners; medium-intensity business support to safeguard jobs and maintain productivity through the COVID-19 pandemic; high-intensity business support to realise any opportunities through the COVID-19 pandemic and in preparedness for the subsequent economic recovery; gathering and analysing market intelligence, and; communications.

What outcome(s) are you hoping to achieve?: Enable inclusive economic growth

Which strategic priorities does this support? - Enable inclusive economic growth: Help people in Essex prosper by increasing their skills, Enable Essex to attract and grow large firms in high growth industries, Target

economic development to areas of opportunity

Is this a new policy (or decision) or a change to an existing policy, practice or project?: a change to an existing policy, practice or project

Please provide a link to the document / website / resource to which this EqIA relates: n/a

Please upload any documents which relate to this EqIA, for example decision documents: n/a

Assessing the equality impact

Use this section to record how you have assessed any potential impact on the communities likely to be affected by the policy (or decision): As this is a continuation to an existing contract, it does not have any impact on the wider community.

Does or will the policy or decision affect:

Service users: No

Employees: No

The wider community or groups of people, particularly where there are areas of known inequalities: No

Which geographical areas of Essex does or will the policy or decision affect?: All Essex

Will the policy or decision influence how organisations operate?: No

Will the policy or decision involve substantial changes in resources?: No

Is this policy or decision associated with any of the Council's other policies?: Yes

Description of impact

Description of Impact. If there is an impact on a specific protected group tick box, otherwise leave blank. You will be given the opportunity to rate identified impacts as positive, negative or neutral on the next page: No impact on any of the above groups

I confirm that I have considered the potential impact on all of the protected characteristics: I confirm that I have considered the potential impact on all of the protected characteristics

Describe any actions that have already been taken to mitigate negative impacts on any of the protected characteristics: This decision does not have any impact on any of the protected characteristics groups

Action plan to address and monitor adverse impacts

Does your EqIA indicate that the policy or decision would have a medium or high adverse impact on one or more equality groups?: No

Details of person completing the form

I confirm that this has been completed based on the best information available and in following ECC guidance: I confirm that this has been completed based on the best information available and in following ECC guidance

Date EqIA completed: 15/04/2020

Name of person completing the EqIA: Dominique Keogh

Email address of person completing the EqIA: Dominique.Keogh@essex.gov.uk

Your function: Economy, Localities & Public Health

Your service area: Economic Growth

Your team: Economic Growth

Are you submitting this EqIA on behalf of another function, service area or team?: No

Email address of Head of Service: dawn.redpath@essex.gov.uk