
REPORT TO: Cabinet

DATE: 13 October 2016

HEADING: Place Enhancement Project: Appointment of Expert Advisers

**PORTFOLIO
HOLDER:**

KEY DECISION: NO

SUBJECT TO CALL-IN: YES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To seek approval to apply Contract Procedure Rule 66.6 to appoint an independent specialist marketing company, "Thinking Place", to provide advice to ADC in order to progress its Place objective.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- a) That Cabinet agrees to apply Contract Procedure Rule 66.6 to allow the appointment to proceed.
- b) That Cabinet agrees to approve use of funds from Section 106.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

Within the Corporate Plan, the Council has expressed an aspiration towards "Place Enhancement". This is about making Ashfield a location and destination of choice for business and visitors and as a desirable place to live for all of its residents. An early project has been to install improved attractive boundary signs at specific "gateway" sites in order to denote a sense of arrival and place.

As an initial stage in the development of the Place agenda, the Council wishes to procure expert advice in order to guide ADC on identification of strengths, assets, community engagement (including the business community) and to formulate a plan of action for moving forwards.

It is proposed to procure Thinking Place, because this company has recently been appointed by the new Nottinghamshire Place Marketing Organisation to undertake Place Making work on behalf of the N2 LEP region. It makes sense therefore for ADC not only to contribute to this work as a Regional partner, but also to use Thinking Place to undertake a more detailed study for Ashfield under our own Corporate Plan objective.

It has been decided after taking Legal advice that Contract Procedure Rule 66.6 may apply for the reasons stated above.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED (with reasons why not adopted)

- a) To go through the formal procurement process. This is not advised on value for money terms. If an unknown company was selected, there would necessarily be a learning curve and allied to this, their work would not be integrated with the Regional project described above. Not recommended.
- b) Appoint Thinking Place by applying Contract Procedure Rule 66.6. Recommended.

5. BACKGROUND

As stated above in paragraph 3, the Council has articulated within the Corporate Plan, an aspiration towards “Place Enhancement”. This is about making Ashfield a destination of choice for business, visitors and as a place to live. The first stage on this journey has been the establishment of improved boundary signs which are being installed across the district.

The next stage is to undertake a piece of work to identify the strengths and assets of the area, build a consensus within the community and business and thus to strengthen the district’s message and reach regionally and nationally.

A place marketing specialist can assist us in undertaking a review of our assets, advise on how best to leverage them, help to build consensus with other business and community stakeholders and then provide us with a visual identity and narrative that we can collectively sign up to and use.

Specific expectations of this specialise advice would include (not exhaustive):

- Research the perceptions of the area (both residents & non-residents, local businesses & businesses based outside of Ashfield);
- Identify the strengths and assets of Ashfield which could translate into a meaningful and positive narrative for both the local community and for business investment (including the visitor economy);
- Review and consider impacts on existing approaches to place marketing within the district, including those being developed by the Nottingham Place Marketing Organisation;
- Seek to address any perceived barriers to living/working or investing in Ashfield; demonstrate an understanding of the challenges that Ashfield and Mansfield face in terms of maximising opportunities for inward investment and community pride;
- Condense the Unique Selling Points (USPs) of the area into a simple concept, visual identity and language;
- Identify key messages and appropriate target market;
- Develop a common brand, visual identity and narrative for Ashfield as a destination for residents, visitors, existing visitors and new investors;
- Develop a brand, visual identity and narrative to engender pride and aspiration within the communities within Ashfield. This could be the same or different to the business-focussed brand but it is expected it would necessarily take into account the individual districts or areas to increase community relevance and support;
- Maximise stakeholder involvement and assist in securing the buy-in of key partners;
- Provide a costed implementation plan (the outline of which will be evaluated as part of the tendering process with Thinking Place).

6. IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Plan:

Place Enhancement is a key priority within the Corporate Plan.

Legal:

Contract Procedure Rule 66.6 (b) enables the Council to apply an exception to the usual procurement processes by approaching a single contractor because of the specialist nature of the proposed contract. Permission to apply the exception must be obtained from Cabinet or the relevant Portfolio Holder.

Financial:

Up to £15,000 is required for the study, which can be taken from Section 106 and there is therefore no requirement for General Fund expenditure. No further financial implications are envisaged within this project.

Health and Well-Being / Environmental Management and Sustainability:

No implications.

Human Resources:

No direct HR implications contained within this report.

Diversity/Equality:

No direct implications in the proposed study. However these issues will be taken account of in terms of, eg advice on accessibility.

Community Safety:

No implications.

Other Implications:

Communications: the report provides an opportunity for a press briefing. There is likely to be public interest in this issue and its outcome.

REASON(S) FOR URGENCY (if applicable)

Not applicable.

EXEMPT REPORT (if applicable)

Not applicable.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

REPORT AUTHOR AND CONTACT OFFICER

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The report should be signed off in the name of the relevant Chief Officer eg:

Rob Mitchell

CHIEF EXECUTIVE