

<b>Expenditure for approval prior to April 2015</b>	<b>Fit with Policy Priorities</b>
<p><b>Business Gateway:</b> Expenditure £245,000</p> <p>Business Gateway is a service that is provided across Scotland. In 2009 it was transferred by the Scottish Government with allotted budget to Local Authorities. Business Gateway provides advice and facilitates help from other agencies and lenders to business start-ups and existing small and medium enterprises. Supported by a national organisation, this invaluable service helps to deliver two of the measurable outcomes of the Ten Year Plan. The existing contract and associated Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Highland Council is due for renewal in April 2015. The period for the agreement is for 3 years with an option to extend to 5 years.</p> <p><b>Recommendation: Agree to</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>renew the contract and associated Service Level Agreement</b></li> <li>• <b>expenditure of £245,000 for the duration of the contract to 2017-18.</b></li> </ul>	<p>Business Gateway is the chief means of <b>business support</b> provided by the Council providing help to small and medium enterprises (SMEs). This is a tier 1 priority.</p> <p>Help is provided to start-up business and for businesses with growth plans. Approximately 130 business start-up each year. The challenge is to help them to trade successfully, survive and grow.</p> <p>Performance targets for Business Gateway are kept under review to ensure that they remain challenging. They work to a target of 1000 enquiries a year and of those, 450 will come from existing businesses. In the course of the current contract, Business Gateway met or exceeded all performance targets. They also work with the Moray Youth Employment Team and as a result of that joint work, over 100 young people have been placed in businesses across Moray, 90 new jobs have been created and advice on youth employment has been given by Business Gateway to 140 businesses. As part of their work Business Gateway provides workshops on upskilling and digital services and they plan to run 30 workshops on these topics for local businesses.</p> <p>Moray 2023 includes the following outcome measures  Business start-ups - Measure – grow from c 210 p.a. to 235 p.a.  Source- Committee of Scottish Bankers  Business 5 Year survival rate - Measure – grow from 55% to 61% p.a. Source Office of National Statistics</p> <p>NB these targets relate to all business not just those helped by</p>

	<p>Business Gateway: The trend for both measures has been down since 2011, mainly due to macro-economic changes, also the number of business start-ups tends to decline when there are employment alternatives. The downward trend in start-ups and survival rate is being raised with the MEP with a view to revising the targets for 2023.</p>
<p><b>Moray Economic Strategy (Media Services) Partner Contribution</b> Expenditure £25,000</p> <p>Over the last 18 months the Moray Economic Partnership has been supported by a media services provider. This service provides communications from professional journalists to promote Moray as a place to invest; communications to local regional and national audiences. The service was part funded by the Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) and Moray College UHI. Funding for the contact will end at the end of March. The contract has provision to extend for a further 12 months. The economic partnership has received regular updates on the media activities provided, most commonly articles in the Northern Scot, Press and Journal, Herald and the Scotsman, also coverage from BBC radio and television and STV. The service is presently supporting the bid for Moray Spaceport.</p> <p>MEP partners have been requested to continue making funding contributions</p> <p><b>Recommendation: To approve expenditure of £25,000.</b></p>	<p>Promotion of Moray as a place to live work, visit and invest. <b>Promotion and Inward Investment.</b> Promotion of Moray is a tier 1 priority</p> <p>For the 6 months May to October 2014 the service prepared media releases that were published in 33 articles, and other media.</p> <p>The value of this can be calculated with a measure used by the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (practitioners in professional public relations) which is to apply 2.5 times the advertising equivalent value. For the 6 months May to October 2014 that values is calculated at £115,048</p> <p>Current contractor Platform PR uses a media plan as the basis for engagement with the partnership; it is for the partners to help identify opportunities to promote the work of the partnership and to add value to existing media activities, for example the launch of the Tourism Strategy and the opening of the Elgin (Alexander Graham Bell) Life Science Centre. MEP quarterly agendas include a media services update.</p> <p>The focus of current work is to support the engagement required</p>

	<p>with decision makers and communications for the UK Spaceport bid. If Moray is selected to make a bid for the spaceport, public relations and communications support will be essential to a successful bid. The bidding process and a decision will continue beyond the general election. £25,000 will allow the agency to continue this work after March, but if Moray is selected, some additional funding may be required to give Moray the best chance of success.</p>
<p><b>The Moray Town Partnership (MTP):</b></p> <p>The MTP project was established in 2009 by this Committee for 5 years. It approved expenditure of £60,000 pa.</p> <p>The 2005 Donaldson “Towns Promotion and Development” report and the Moray 2020 report recognised the importance of the 4 towns of Buckie, Forres, Keith and Lossiemouth to the economy of Moray, in particular how they have a complementary role to the area’s largest town, Elgin, and that the development of the four towns would help create a mini-city region strategically located between Aberdeen and Inverness.</p> <p>With ongoing projects in Elgin such as the Elgin BID and developing projects arising from the Elgin City for the Future report, the MTP project was set up to assist economic development in Moray’s other main towns.</p> <p>The agreed aims were to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Develop the economies of the four towns</li> <li>•Foster a network of the four towns that can exchange ideas and solutions</li> <li>•assess the health of the towns’ economies</li> </ul>	<p>The overall purpose of the MTP project was: “to enhance the economic prosperity, vitality and viability of the towns of Buckie, Forres, Keith and Lossiemouth through co-operation and implementation of agreed action plans.”</p> <p>The project fits well with the Moray Economic Strategy with its focus on economic development and aiming to increase footfall and decrease vacancies in the town.</p> <p>Extending MTP could help to maintain vibrant town centres; this is a tier 2 policy objective.</p> <p>In Buckie the project has helped to fund the Fishwives Walk, a walking trail between Keith and Buckie, promotional materials, to investigate providing wifi, Christmas Lights and support for community initiatives and events.</p> <p>In Keith the project has funded signage, advertising and promotional materials, town marketing, development of the “In Keith” brand, including the establishment of a promotional website and for a feasibility study to reuse the Institute building.</p>

- Provide strategic support and guidance and to promote, deliver and advise on identified initiatives
- Promote the four towns for tourism and as retail destinations

The project aimed to increase footfall, decrease business vacancies and increase employment in the towns.

With the Council's agreement to support the extension of Elgin BID for another five years, the MTP member towns wish to extend the MTP project. BID is tied to a 5 year cycle but MTP is not. In recognition of this, funding is meantime recommended until 2018. MTP member towns also wish to be allowed to carry over any annual underspend to the next financial year; this would allow more time to plan and deliver projects and allow more costly projects to be undertaken. If the Committee is minded to agree that facility, it is recommended that spend is monitored annually by the Council to minimise spending slippage.

In determining whether to approve this funding, committee will wish to assess the request against the project aims. If the committee is not minded to agree this request, an alternative could be to replace funding for MTP with a regeneration challenge fund giving all communities the opportunity to bid for funding to the local economy through the provision of infrastructure or activities. A report setting out a framework for such a fund could be submitted to a future meeting of the committee.

In Lossiemouth the project has funded advertising and promotional materials to attract visitors, works to a footpath linking two beaches and part funding to regenerate Covesea lighthouse as a visitor destination and centre and also relative to the Lossie Development Trust.

In Forres the project funded advertising and promotional materials the IT system upgrade for the Credit Union, contributions to the Findhorn Bay Arts festival and the Pipe Band Championships, a Chinese New Year event, the production of maps and welcome to Forres signs.

Taking in this new programme forward MTP should review the participation and representation from each town to ensure that the projects identified and selected are representative of the communities view and priorities.

The 2014 Town Centre Health Checks show that the 4 towns would benefit from continued support:

In Buckie town centre vacancies have increased significantly since 2012. 11 vacant units and a vacancy rate of 13.92% was recorded in 2014 whereas in 2012 there were just 4 units and a vacancy rate of 4.82%. This is around the average vacancy rate for Scotland which has been reported at 13.7% by the BBC/Local Data Company on 2 December 2014 but higher than the 10% generally used in Scotland to indicate the relative health of a town centre. Generally pedestrian flow recorded in 2014 was lower than 2012.

In Keith town centre vacancies have dropped since 2012 with 6

<p><b>Recommendation:</b></p> <p>i) <b>To approve expenditure of £60,000 per annum 2015-16 to 2017-18; and</b></p> <p>ii) <b>To allow any annual underspend of the MTP budget to be carried forward to the next financial year subject to annual monitoring of expenditure;</b></p>	<p>units recorded in 2014 compared to 10 in 2012. This means the vacancy rate is now 8% which is lower than the 12.6% recorded in 2012. Pedestrian flow recorded in 2014 was generally lower than 2012.</p> <p>In Lossiemouth there are 8 vacant units giving a vacancy rate of 16%. This is an increase of two units since 2012. Pedestrian flow on Clifton Road was lower than 2012 but higher on Queen Street.</p> <p>In Forres Vacancy rates at July 2014 have dropped compared to 2012. 8 vacant units and a vacancy rate of 8.16% was recorded in 2014 compared to 10 units and 9.8% in 2012. Pedestrian flow was higher than 2012, with the biggest increases recorded on the Saturday.</p>
<p><b>Visitor Information Support:</b> Expenditure £33, 500</p> <p>It is proposed to continue the provision of visitor information services at Elgin Library. In 2012 the Council made savings ending the service level agreement with VisitScotland to provide visitor information services. The Council transferred resources to the Falconer Museum for the provision of visitor information at Forres and the committee agreed pending the proposed relocation of that service to Grant Lodge to fund the provision of visitor information services at Elgin Library until the end of 20114/15. Frontline services have been provided through temporary staff based at Elgin Library, supported by permanent library staff. Given that alternative uses for Grant Lodge are now being considered, the Committee is requested to confirm that the existing arrangement be continued until a suitable</p>	<p>The tourism/visitor economy is a key sector for growth. This activity supports Moray as a place to live and visit, it <b>supports the visitor economy</b>. Visitor information &amp; orientation is a tier 3 policy priority.</p> <p>In 2014-15 the Visitor Information Point dealt with 17,500 visitors and enquiries, the service being available during library opening hours and on Sundays in the peak season. The extension to evening provision at no additional cost has been particularly beneficial. The service supports tourist information in all libraries and has developed an effective range of visitor information “listings” that encourages visitors to spend more time in Moray. This includes, for example, family attractions, natural heritage attractions, heritage attractions, FAQs. It has been particularly effective in gathering visitor intelligence in relation to place of</p>

alternative is identified. A review will be undertaken with a view to options being presented to members within this 12 month period. Meantime the funding proposed provides for the transfer of £33,500 from the Economic Development budget to the Library Services budget to continue to provide the existing visitor information service.

To replace this with an equivalent service provided by another party would add the costs of accommodation to the cost of staffing. With the service currently being provided from the Library, there is no additional cost for accommodation. To provide appropriate accommodation privately would cost in the order of £25,000.

**Recommendation: To approve expenditure of £33,500 in 2015-16**

origin, nature of enquiry, type of accommodation required, predominant foreign languages etc. During 2013/14 it worked with Elgin BID to establish visitor information provision in 7 retail/visitor attractions, including training by VIP staff.

While the ambition may be to increase the provision of information for visitors to Moray through electronic means, evidence collected shows there is still a high demand for person to person interaction, for example to book visitor accommodation when visiting the area. Data collected shows that whilst down from 2013-14, during 2014-15 there were the following number of enquiries at the visitor information point in Elgin Library: Regarding Moray 2,197, Rest of Scotland 890, UK, 1,044, World 2,855. Intelligence for visitors on what's on and where to visit is collected and shared across the library network.