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##### Cheshire & Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership

**Performance and Investment Committee**

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| **Title: ESIF update** | **Agenda item: 7** |
| **Prepared by: Francis Lee** | **Date of Report: 24th January 2018** |

**European Structural and Investment Funds Update**

The LEP Board recently agreed that to meet our condensed timescale for delivery of European Structural and Investment Funds required by Government following BREXIT that we should focus our efforts and secure additional capacity to actively support partners to bring forward projects more swiftly, particularly in support of the European Social Fund which has seen few new projects.

The board therefore agreed to make £100,000 available from the Enterprise Zone income, to enable a wider team to be put in place under Mark Livesey to drive the development of projects and the submission of bids and calls to meet the government’s BREXIT timetable.

The existing LEP ESIF Team will therefore be complemented by officers from within the sub-region who are already drawing down technical assistance funding. (Tim Smith from Warrington and Co joined us last week and the University of Chester are also providing an officer Maud Duthie) to work alongside those already seconded to the LEP from Cheshire West and Chester.

The LEP has also issued a call for tenders to support the delivery of ESIF and five bids were received by 23rd December. Interviews will take place next week, with a view to having the complete team in place by the week commencing 22nd January.

The immediate priority will be to work up viable projects, predominantly to access European Social Funding, and to ensure suitable bids are submitted by the summer which are able to draw down the remaining European funds.

As a reminder, the Government had originally stated that funds needed to be committed by December 2020, but following the Brexit vote this was brought forward to March 2019. To date, Cheshire and Warrington LEP’s two officers have successfully invested half of the £112m (€127m) including 14 active ERDF projects and 7 ESF projects and a further 15+ ERDF Projects worth over £20m now under development. The focus with the additional resources will therefore be on making sure that we get those ERDF Projects over the line and that we make the same progress with the European Social Fund.