CAB1815 FOR DECISION WARD(S): ALL

CABINET

18 March 2009

PRINCIPAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

23 March 2009

USE OF LOCAL AUTHORITY BUSINESS GROWTH INCENTIVE (LABGI) RECEIPTS FOR:

A) RECESSION SUPPORT FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES, AND

B) TRANSFER TO PROPERTY FUND

REPORT OF HEAD OF ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL SERVICES

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RECENT REFERENCES:

None

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

At Council on 19 February, the Leader proposed in his speech to "earmark within [the Council's] LABGI resources a sum of £400,000, specifically to support projects directly related to the health of the local economy, businesses and employment." This paper sets out further information and estimated costs for a programme of measures designed to support local businesses during the current recession, in line with other councils around the county and country. The report seeks Member approval for the overall allocation of £400,000 from the Council's accumulated unallocated LABGI receipts of £897,000.

Under the Council Constitution Access to Information Procedure Rules (Rule 15.1 – General Exception), this is a key decision which has not been included in the Forward Plan. This is because the Leader's announcement at Full Council was made after the Forward Plan was issued. Under this procedure the Chairman of the Principal Scrutiny Committee has been informed.

In addition, the paper seeks approval for a second proposal from Council to transfer a further £100,000 from the unallocated LABGI receipts to the Property Fund so to support essential maintenance and improvement works on its non-housing properties.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

TO CABINET AND COUNCIL:

- 1 That the allocation of £400,000 from the City Council's LABGI receipts be approved to provide a programme of recession support for businesses based in the Winchester District;
- 2 That the initiatives in the table below be approved, at an estimated cost of £300,000 from the allocation above:

Reference	Initiative	Estimated cost
а	Training courses for businesses	£8,000
b	Back to work training	£8,000
С	Support for city festivals	£30,000
d	Bishops Waltham Pocket Guide	£ 8,000
e	Administration of the three schemes below (0.2FTE for 8 months)	£5,000
f	Business rate relief	£35,000
g	Business start-up grants	£50,000
h	Village/community shop grants (<i>capital funding</i> : to be spent over two years)	£80,000
i	15 day target for payment of	£ 1,000

TOTAL		£300,000
Contingency allowance		£5,000
	City centre retail promotion	£30,000
k	Smarter working centres (Capital)	£40,000
j	Apprenticeships	No additional cost
	invoices	

- 3 That the further initiatives in support of businesses at a total cost of £100,000 (from the allocation in recommendation 1) be approved, to be implemented by Cabinet and in consultation with Principal Scrutiny Committee.
- 4 That an additional allocation of £100,000 be allocated from LABGI receipts to the Council's Property Fund to support essential maintenance and improvement works on the Council's non-housing properties.

TO CABINET

- 5 That, subject to Council approval of recommendations 1-3 above:
 - 5.1 the Head of Economic and Cultural Services:
 - a) be authorised to implement schemes a, b, c, d, e, i, j and I above with immediate effect:
 - b) finalise details for the implementation of schemes f, g and h above through the Portfolio Holder Decision Notice procedure;
 - c) bring a further, detailed report on scheme k above to Cabinet for formal approval.

5.2 and that the Head of Finance be authorised to make the consequential changes to the Revenue budgets and the Capital programme.

6 That a further monitoring report be brought to Cabinet in October in relation to the progress of all the recession support measures identified in this report.

TO PRINCIPAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:

7 Members consider this report and refer any observations for consideration by Council or Cabinet as appropriate.

<u>CABINET</u>

18 March 2009

PRINCIPAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

23 MARCH 2009

USE OF LOCAL AUTHORITY BUSINESS GROWTH INCENTIVE (LABGI) RECEIPTS FOR:

A) RECESSION SUPPORT FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES, AND

B) TRANSFER TO PROPERTY FUND

Report of Head of Economic and Cultural Services

DETAIL:

- 1 Introduction
- The current economic downturn is the constant focus of Government and 1.1 media at the moment. There has been recent speculation in the local press about Winchester's ability to withstand a recession, but there are already signs that it is not immune: the number of claimants for job seeker's allowance has risen from 576 last June to 911 this January (a 50% increase, albeit on a small base). Business Link reports that although the number of business start-ups is about 30% up for 2008/09 over 2007/08, the number of established businesses requiring intensive assistance in 2008/09 is around 35% up on the previous year. In December 2008, every retailer in Whiteley Village experienced a downturn in business, ranging from 0.1% to 28% and a total of ten companies went into administration during 2008. On a more anecdotal basis, a public poll on the City Council's own website indicates that around 28% of respondents are 'struggling a bit' and 14% are 'really struggling'. The success of the business community has a direct impact on the wellbeing of residents, a fact recognised by the immense national and global effort being directed into supporting the economy at this time.
- 1.2 At Full Council on 19 February, the Leader proposed in his speech to "earmark within [the Council's] LABGI resources a sum of £400,000, specifically to support projects directly related to the health of the local economy, businesses and employment."
- 1.3 This paper sets out the further information on the projects proposed to support local businesses, along with estimated costs. It seeks Member approval for the overall allocation of £400,000 from the Council's unallocated LABGI receipts of £897,000 to provide a programme of recession support for businesses based in the Winchester District, subject to further detailed reports and approvals referred to elsewhere in this report.

1.4 In addition, the paper refers to a Member proposal at the same Council meeting to transfer a further £100,000 to the Property Fund, and seeks authorisation to implement this proposal.

2 <u>The Support Programme</u>

2.1 The Leader indicated a number of forms which the programme of support might take. To ensure rapid and effective delivery as well as best use of resources, officers are seeking to work with other agencies including Hampshire County Council, Business Link and Winchester City Centre Partnership (incorporating the Business Improvement District or BID). Proposals are listed below in the approximate order of implementation, which will inevitably depend on their complexity and the approvals processes suggested (where relevant).

2.2 Short to Medium Term

- a) Bespoke training for businesses: we will provide a range of bespoke training opportunities including business skills. Previous courses have been oversubscribed, indicating a high level of demand, and other Hampshire districts are already responding to this demand. All courses will be free to attend and delivered in venues throughout the district. A two day course entitled 'Growing through Recession' had already been planned for 25 and 26 March from economic development budgets in order to help meet LPSA2 targets. Topics for this and future training events include human resources and employment/redundancy issues, sales and marketing, funding and cash flow, and business efficiency. Potential delivery partners would be Business Link, Train to Gain, Job Centre Plus and Sparsholt College. A maximum of 15 delegates can attend a training course. A budget of £8,000 would enable the promotion and delivery of 8 targeted courses in the spring and autumn of 2009 benefiting a minimum of 120 businesses.
- b) Back to work training: with the number of people being made redundant likely to grow over the coming year, the Council and its partners listed above could also usefully provide 'employability' courses which are currently in short supply, according to Business Link colleagues. Again, courses will be free to attend and delivered across the District. They would, for example, include CV writing, networking and interview skills. Such courses would typically be aimed at management level workers living within the Winchester District, where current training provision shows signs of weakness. Again, a budget of £8,000 would enable the promotion and delivery of 8 one-day courses in 2009, benefiting 120 local people.
- c) Support for city festivals: Quite apart from their popularity with the local community, Winchester's mix of innovative festivals generates a significant number of visitors, who spend around £19 per day or £200 per person per night according to research into the Hat Fair carried out in 2008. The Council is exploring, with festival organisers and Arts Council England, South East how to improve this economic return through better co-ordination,

management and marketing. It is proposed the Council allocate £15,000 to support this process in 2009/10, together with the same amount in 2010/11. These resources should in particular be used to provide better co-ordinated management support – thus reducing staff time expended by Council officers – and an improved and co-ordinated marketing campaign for Winchester's summer festivals. This not only has the potential to increase visitor numbers and spend considerably, benefiting many city centre businesses, but can also help lever in support from other organisations.

- d) Bishops Waltham Pocket Guide: Partnership working between the tourism service and parish councils has led to the production of Pocket Guides for both Alresford and Wickham. These serve as essential visitor guides, both attracting visitors to the market towns and encouraging them to spend money in local shops and attractions during their visit. They also act as business directories for local residents, raising awareness of the range of shops and services offered in both locations. The Wickham guide – published last September - was funded by LABGI monies, and it would be desirable to add a sister publication for Bishops Waltham funded from the same source to encourage local shopping. Discussions are currently in hand with the parish council about the concept. The cost would be approximately £8,000.
- 2.3 <u>Medium Term</u>: three of the four schemes in this section are grant schemes. Each one requires careful management against a pre-agreed set of criteria, and the time for processing and following through such grants is not something which can be absorbed in existing staff workloads. Given that these initiatives need to be delivered fast, effectively and consistently there is a strong case for introducing some additional staff hours to manage all three schemes with supervision from the appropriate service manager. It is therefore proposed that the budget includes provision for one day a week of a grade 5 post with directly relevant experience, for a period of eight months from April 2009. This would require a budget of approximately £5,000 including on-costs.
 - a) Business rate relief: The Council collects £44m annually in national Non-Domestic Rates on behalf of the Treasury. There are a number of business rate relief schemes available, including relief for
 - i) hardship cases, and
 - *ii)* small businesses.

Small business relief is automatically applicable to all qualifying businesses, and can be applied for on-line at any time. It is fully funded by Government. As a statutory national scheme, no changes are required to the existing policy or criteria. The main activity in relation to this scheme would be awarenessraising and possibly practical assistance to businesses in completing the application form.

Hardship relief is, by contrast, a discretionary grant. The Council is required to contribute to this, normally at a rate of 25% of the total relief offered. In addition to awareness-raising and practical assistance, therefore, there is a need for the LABGI allocation to fund the Council contribution. The criteria for

this scheme are currently being reviewed by officers, and will be brought forward for approval through the Portfolio Holder Decision Notice process.

A budget of £35,000 is proposed to support these grant schemes. Allowing a small amount (£2,000) for marketing of the schemes to raise awareness, this would make at least £132,000 available for hardship relief (the full cost of the NNDR for one calendar year for around 50 small businesses, very broadly speaking) and – theoretically - a limitless number of applications to the small business scheme.

- b) Business grants scheme: While banks continue to be reluctant to lend, it may be difficult for would-be entrepreneurs to find the funds with which to set up a new business. However, entrepreneurship is important in ensuring a vibrant and diverse economy for the future. It is proposed that the City Council provides a start-up grant scheme on similar lines to that run by Test Valley Borough Council and East Hampshire District Council, offering £1,000 to any business start-up within the Winchester District subject to agreed criteria. Provision is being made for 50 grants, making a budget of £50,000. This would be available for businesses to apply for during the 2009/10 financial year, after which the scheme would be reviewed.
- c) Village/community shops: village shops are a vital asset for our rural communities, and we have seen at least three (West Meon, Sparsholt and Cheriton) taken into community ownership for the good of the wider population in recent times. We propose to make grants available to support such schemes, which fall outside the terms of our regular community grants programmes. Such grants would contribute towards capital costs associated with a community purchase or with refurbishment (building works, fixtures and fittings) and not towards running costs. Criteria would be drawn up for the scheme, for approval through the Portfolio Holder Decision Notice process, and these would make clear that the fund is finite and will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. Provision is proposed for a minimum of four grants, probably spread over two financial years, at a maximum of £20,000, making a budget of £80,000.

3 Other Council Support for Businesses

- 3.1 Members may wish to be reassured that the above programme is additional to the support already provided by officers across the Council for new and established businesses of all sizes. Successful initiatives in which the Council has already invested such as the Winchester Business Centre, the Winchester BID, Basepoint and *LEADER* funding to develop the rural economy will all play a valuable part in supporting the district's business community during the recession.
- 3.2 The City Council also has in place a *Procurement Concordat for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises*, signed jointly with other local authorities in Hampshire, that makes a commitment to making the Council's procurement processes 'friendly' towards local small to medium businesses opportunities.

- *Invoice payment*: Another immediate initiative which could be taken by the 3.3 Council would be to increase the speed with which it pays invoices from external suppliers. The current target is 30 calendar days, although the average payment time for Council invoices is currently 15 days from receipt with 69% of invoices paid within this time. The Council generally has a good reputation for paying invoices. Without introducing an additional payment run or missing out on important pre-payment checks (eg post-works inspection visits by Property Services staff) it would be difficult to reduce the corporate standard from 30 days. However, we could aim to increase the percentage paid within 15 calendar days from 69% to 75%. Finance has estimated that it would cost the City Council around £1,000 in lost interest during 2009/10 based on current rates to put this measure in place. However, this measure would be an important gesture of the Council's commitment to helping other businesses with their cash flow, so it is proposed to set a new target of paying 75% of all invoices within fifteen days with immediate effect until the end of March 2010, when the target will be reviewed, at a cost of £1,000.
- 3.4 <u>Apprenticeships</u>: Following discussions with Train to Gain a national programme for promoting skills development the Council could also consider supporting the national apprenticeship scheme, by identifying certain vacant posts as suited to 'trainees'. These trainees would be drawn from those currently unemployed, who would benefit from the apprenticeship programme which offers employment alongside structured skills development. In return for the employer's contribution of employment and a salary, Train to Gain offers tailored training for the apprentice to enhance their development and provide an early return on the employer's investment. This would not require any additional funding as posts offered would be established posts which had become vacant and reviewed through the vacancy management process.
- 3.5 Land for Possible Business Development: The Council currently has an opportunity to acquire land in one of the Town's commercial zones. This could include provision of affordable workspace for start-up knowledge and creative industries, or permit relocation of activity from other premises. Further details are given in exempt paper CAB 1810 on this agenda.

4 Support for External Initiatives

- 4.1 There are a number of plans already being developed by our partner agencies and stakeholders which could be enhanced or brought forward through a cash contribution from the City Council. Two such initiatives are:
 - a) *Smarter working centres*: commuting to work is becoming an increasing problem for many due to the high cost of fuel and parking, traffic congestion and the population's increased awareness of the negative environmental impacts of car use. Whilst more and more people are working from home for either all or part of the week, there are often concerns that the home environment lacks an important social dimension and scope for informal

shared thinking or testing ideas on colleagues. Hampshire County Council and the E-Hampshire Partnership are working on proposals for 'smarter working centres', up to four of which could be established in the District's rural towns and villages with some subsidy from the City Council. Centres would, where it makes sense to do so, be integrated into our local service points. At a cost of £10,000 per centre, it is proposed to set aside a total allocation of £40,000. A further report will comprehensive details of the proposals will be brought back to Cabinet for approval.

b) City Centre retail: Winchester City Centre Partnership is currently drawing up plans for a retail marketing campaign for the city, funded through BID monies, which is well-timed to the allay fears about any impact the opening of the new IKEA store in Southampton may have. We will work with the Partnership to complement their work with a range of events and promotions designed to draw footfall to the city centre. It is proposed to set aside a budget of £30,000 for this area of work.

5 Exit Strategies

5.1 Some of the schemes outlined above are one-off or project-based, providing a natural conclusion. However, the training programmes, festival support and grant-based schemes detailed in paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3 above have the potential to create expectations of continued or repeated support in future years. It will be essential to manage such expectations through clear communications and transparent processes if these measures are to perceived as genuinely beneficial to businesses. As officers continue to develop each scheme, therefore, appropriate 'exit strategies' will be considered. Members will also have the opportunity to review the measures in October, and to consider allocating any further funding to extend successful schemes during the 2010/11 budget cycle.

6 Future Projects

- 6.1 The initiatives outlined in this report are estimated at a total £300,000 of the full £400,000 allocation. As the effects of the recession are beginning to make themselves more apparent in the Winchester District, there will be opportunities to develop other initiatives targeted at the worst affected sectors.
- 6.2 Officers propose to identify the best use of the remaining £100,000 and bring further details to Cabinet and Principal Scrutiny Committee for approval.

7 Allocation to the Property Fund

- 7.1 At the February Council meeting, there was recognition of the shortfall in funds for the future requirements of the capital programme. Members therefore proposed to transfer £100,000, funded by LABGI receipts, to the Property Fund to help pay for essential maintenance and improvement works on the Council's non-housing properties. Members are asked to approve this proposal.
- 8 <u>Conclusions</u>
- 8.1 LABGI monies are one-off payments that cannot be guaranteed to continue. It is important therefore to find uses for the Council's LABGI receipts that make a meaningful and long lasting difference based on a single allocation. As LABGI monies are distributed to reflect the increase in National Non-Domestic Rates collected in a district, they originate from the business community and there is a strong case for re-investing a substantial proportion to support the local economy.
- 8.2 During this time of recession, government at every level is expected to act to support the business community. The actions listed in this paper will go some way to helping the District's economy to remain robust during the difficult months ahead, and help local businesses survive the recession.
- 8.3 Members are therefore asked to approve the overall expenditure plans of £400,000, funded by LABGI, for the programme of recession support measures outlined in this paper.
- 8.4 For the three grant schemes detailed in paragraph 2.3 above (rate relief, startup grants and village/community shop grants) which require clear criteria to be drawn up or – in the case of rate relief schemes – reviewed, it is proposed to seek approval for these criteria through the Portfolio Holder Decision Notice process. This will minimise the delay in getting support to the businesses that need it at this time.
- 8.5 Further, detailed reports will be brought to Cabinet in relation to the Smarter Working Centres (para 4.1a refers).
- 8.6 It is proposed that a monitoring report be brought to Cabinet in October, outlining the progress of all the measures detailed in this report.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

9 <u>CORPORATE STRATEGY (RELEVANCE TO)</u>:

- 9.1 One of the five key outcomes of the Sustainable Community Strategy is economic prosperity for the Winchester District. This programme of recession support for local businesses is wholly in keeping with that outcome.
- 9.2 Under its wellbeing power, the Council is legally entitled to deliver services which benefit local businesses after considering how this supports the aims of the Sustainable Community Strategy. Appendix 1 shows how the measures proposed in this report relate to the economic prosperity outcome of the Strategy. S2 Local Government Act 2000 is the general well-being power and enables the Council to do anything which is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of the area. There is nothing in other legislation or in the statutory guidance which would prevent the use of the power as set out in the report subject to the comments on state aid below.
- 9.3 The Business Rate proposals are covered by separate legislation: the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and S49 enables the Council to set a policy for the award of hardship relief. Each case has to be considered on its merits and the policy cannot be applied rigidly. The interests of Council taxpayers generally have to be taken into account. This includes consideration of both wider economic benefit and the ability of the Council to fund its share of the cost.
- 9.4 Both the Business Rate proposals and the use of the well-being power for the other schemes are subject to EU restrictions on state aid to business. This requires EU approval unless the schemes are small scale or come within exemptions. The EU de minimis limit for small schemes is 100,000 euros (£63,000) to any one business from any state body over a period of three years. This de-minimis allowance does not apply to, for example, agriculture or export related activities. Exemptions from the restrictions include not for profit or other small scale local service organisations which are deemed incapable of affecting intra community trade.

10 **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**:

- 10.1 A budget of £400,000 is requested for this programme of support measures, to be funded from the total unallocated LABGI pool of £800,000. There will be no impact on revenue budgets, although the initiatives outlined in this report may in some cases spread over two financial years.
- 10.2 LABGI is a 'windfall' reward grant from Government to reflect the level of business growth in the District. Allocations have varied each year since it was introduced in 2006, and Government has indicated that the amounts

distributed to districts will significantly reduce in favour of sub-regional allocations in future.

10.3 Budgets are proposed as follows:

Report ref.	Initiative Revenue Expenditure	Proposed budget
0.0	Grants	
2.2a	Training courses for businesses	£8,000
2.2b	Back to work training	£8,000
2.2c	Support for city festivals	£30,000
2.2d	Bishops Waltham Pocket Guide <u>Employee costs</u>	£8,000
2.3	Administration of the three schemes below (0.2FTE for 8 months)	£5,000
3.4	Apprenticeships	No additional cost
	<u>Other</u>	
2.3a	Business rate relief	£35,000
2.3b	Business start-up grants	£50,000
4.1b	City centre retail promotion	£30,000
	Contingency allowance	£5,000
	Total Revenue Expenditure	£179,000
	Reduced Income	
3.3	15 day target for payment of invoices	£1,000
	Capital	
2.3c	Village/community shop grants	£80,000
4.1a	Smarter working centres	£40,000
	Total Capital	£120,000
	Total	£300,000

10.4 Members have also proposed that an additional £100,000 be transferred to the Council's Property Fund funded by LABGI receipts as detailed earlier in this report.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

More information about the Council's hardship relief scheme can be found at <u>www.winchester.gov.uk/General.asp?id=9751</u>

More information about the Council's small business rate relief scheme can be found at www.winchester.gov.uk/General.asp?id=9754

The Council's *Procurement Concordat for Small and Medium-sized* Enterprises can be viewed at <u>www.winchester.gov.uk/Documents/Business/WinchesterSMEConcordat.pdf</u>

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1: Links to the Sustainable Community Strategy

Appendix 1: Links to the Sustainable Community Strategy

This table is taken directly from the Sustainable Community Strategy for the Winchester District. The middle column shows in bold type which measures proposed in this paper support which of the aims of the strategy in relation to economic prosperity.

What do we plan to do?	Trends that we will monitor to see if we have made a difference
Support the local development of knowledge-based industries Proposed recession measures: Iand for business development smarter working centres rate relief schemes Support the local development of creative industries Proposed recession measures: Iand for business development smarter working centres recession measures: Iand for business development smarter working centres rate relief schemes Facilitate diversification in the rural areas Proposed recession measure:	Reduction in the amount of commuting rates, increasing the proportion of people working and living in the District. Investigation required into how this will be monitored on a regular basis.Total tourism turnover generated by visitors to the Winchester DistrictNumber of new businesses operating in the rural areas of the District as supported by the Leader programme (insert hyperlink)Number of visitor bed nights in the Winchester District
	Support the local development of knowledge-based industries Proposed recession measures: • land for business development • smarter working centres • rate relief schemes Support the local development of creative industries Proposed recession measures: • land for business development of creative industries Proposed recession measures: • land for business development • smarter working centres • rate relief schemes • rate relief schemes • Facilitate diversification in the rural areas

Economic Prosperity		
	P will deliver this outcome is set out in the V Winchester City Council and the Economic I	
What outcome do we want?	What do we plan to do?	Trends that we will monitor to see if we have made a difference
	smarter working centres	
	Encourage innovative solutions to premises and transport challenges	
	Proposed recession measures:	
	land for business development	
	smarter working centres	-
	Market Winchester District as a world-	
	class tourism destination	
	Proposed recession measures:	
	 support for city festivals 	
	 city centre retail promotion 	
	 Bishop's Waltham Pocket Guide 	
The promise of London 2012 is	Encourage business start-ups	(Local PI) LI B1a)Number of business
channelled into local opportunities to		start ups
enhance the skills and ambitions of	Proposed recession measures:	
those who live in the district	 training courses for businesses 	(Local PI) LI B1b) Businesses per
	 business start-up grants 	1000 pop.
	Work with schools, colleges and universities to develop the workforce of	(Local PI) LI C3: Local accessibility
	tomorrow	Indicator to be developed for rural, social and digital exclusion relating to the

Economic Prosperity		
	OSP will deliver this outcome is set out in the V by Winchester City Council and the Economic	
What outcome do we want?	What do we plan to do?	Trends that we will monitor to see if we have made a difference
	Reduce the barriers of rural, social and digital isolation Proposed recession measures: • training courses for businesses • back to work training • grants for village/community shops Give all adults of all ages access to learning and development opportunities Proposed recession measures: • back to work training	Indices of Multiple Deprivation. Indicator to be developed for lifelong learning in line with the developing Economic Strategy
Businesses are good neighbours	modern apprenticeships Ensure that new development provides benefits for local people. Help businesses commit to a low carbon economy.	The LDF Core Strategy will set the development strategy across the District for the next 20 years which will be monitored in the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR).
	Help businesses to take advantage of new technologies to make services more accessible.	Local Development Framework's AMR will indicate how the main infrastructure providers have performed against the programmes for infrastructure set out in

Economic Prosperity		
	WDSP will deliver this outcome is set out in the ed by Winchester City Council and the Economic	0,
What outcome do we want?	What do we plan to do?	Trends that we will monitor to see if we have made a difference
	Proposed recession measure: • smarter working centres Improve businesses participation in policy and decision making, and in the wider life of the district.	the LDF's core strategy. Value of tourism turnover retained in the I Local economy
		Indicators on reducing harmful impacts, the use of new technologies and improving business participation to be developed in line with the developing Economic Strategy.