

UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND (UKSPF)

Executive Summary

In April 2022 the Government launched the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) with the aim of helping local places to build pride in place and increase life chances.

Woking Borough Council received £1m of the UKSPF plus an additional £20,000 in investment plan preparation and reporting budget. An investment plan was submitted to DLUHC and approved in October 2022.

Spend to date, £134,517, has focussed on Green Infrastructure and in particular, improvements at Horsell Moor and Oakfield play areas. A £50,000 commitment to the Surrey decarbonisation programme has also previously been agreed and will be taken forward in 2024/25 as part of the overall previously agreed allocation of £349,000 for Green Infrastructure. However, in the light of a key project, the Digital Centre of Excellence, not proceeding, consideration needs to be given to how this now uncommitted £601,000 may be used in 2024/25. A number of projects have been put forward and these have been assessed against both UKSPF criteria and Woking's own Commercial Protocol, both of which are set out below. Six priority projects have been identified, with an additional three projects which could benefit from allocation of funding should the priority schemes not be progressed.

Once the priority projects have been agreed, a change request will be submitted to DLUHC to formally agree the proposed replacement projects.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RESOLVE That

- (i) the priority projects listed in the report be confirmed;
- (ii) on the basis of the agreed projects, a change request be submitted to DLUHC; and
- (iii) authority be delegated to the UKSPF Group, in consultation with the S.151 Officer, to authorise the reallocation of funding to the additional projects listed in the report should the priority schemes not be bought forward within the required timeframe.

Reasons for Decision

Reason: The priority projects meet the UKSPF criteria for the funding available, which, in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding with DLUHC, required the local authority must have been spent within this funding period.

The Executive has the authority to determine the recommendation(s) set out above.

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Background Papers: None.

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 In April 2022 the Government launched the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) with the aim of helping local places to build pride in place and increase life chances. Woking Borough Council received £1m of the UKSPF plus an additional £20,000 in investment plan preparation and reporting budget. An investment plan was submitted to DLUHC and approved in October 2022.
- 1.2 This agreed plan included Green Infrastructure improvements, Surrey County Council decarbonisation loan scheme, and the creation and management of a green innovation hub (renewable energy/ green tech) titled “The Digital Centre of Excellence”. The latter project is not being taken forward. The provider is longer able to meet the requirements of the service and the obligations on them as a provider.
- 1.3 To date, £134,517 (Y1 & Y2 allocation) has been spent (contracted works) leaving a balance of unspent funds of £865,483, and this is set out in the table below, including the balances for those previously agreed projects.

SPF Project	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total
Digital Centre of Excellence			£601,000	£601,000
Green Infrastructure	£44,839	£89,678	£214,483	£349,000
SCC Loan Scheme			£50,000	£50,000
Total	£44,839	£89,678	£865,483	£1,000,000

- 1.4 In the light of the Digital Centre of Excellence not proceeding, consideration needs to be given to how this uncommitted £601,000 may be used in 2024/25. A number of projects have been put forward and these have been assessed against both UKSPF criteria and Woking’s own Commercial Protocol, both of which are set out below. Once the priority projects have been agreed, a change request will be submitted to DLUHC to formally agree the proposed replacement projects.

2.0 Assessment Criteria

- 2.1 UKSPF has 41 interventions across three topic areas. The full list and detail of these interventions can be found at [Interventions list for England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/interventions-list-for-england). For the purposes of this report, only the detailed interventions associated with priority projects are specifically referred to expanded on. However, the three topic areas and broad objectives for each of these areas are set out below.

2.2 Communities & Place:

- Strengthening our social fabric and fostering a sense of local pride and belonging, through investment in activities that enhance physical, cultural and social ties and amenities, such as community infrastructure and local green space, and community-led projects.

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- Building resilient, safe and healthy neighbourhoods, through investment in quality places that people want to live, work, play and learn in, through targeted improvements to the built environment and innovative approaches to crime prevention.

2.3 Supporting local business:

- Creating jobs and boosting community cohesion, through investments that build on existing industries and institutions, and range from support for starting businesses to visible improvements to local retail, hospitality and leisure sector facilities.
- Promoting networking and collaboration, through interventions that bring together businesses and partners within and across sectors to share knowledge, expertise and resources, and stimulate innovation and growth.
- Increasing private sector investment in growth-enhancing activities, through targeted support for small and medium-sized businesses to undertake new-to-firm innovation, adopt productivity-enhancing, energy efficient and low carbon technologies and techniques, and start or grow their exports.

2.4 People & Skills:

- Boosting core skills and support adults to progress in work, by targeting adults with no or low level qualifications and skills in maths, and upskill the working population, yielding personal and societal economic impact, and by encouraging innovative approaches to reducing adult learning barriers.
- Reducing levels of economic inactivity through investment in bespoke intensive life and employment support tailored to local need. Investment should facilitate the join-up of mainstream provision and local services within an area for participants, through the use of one-to-one keyworker support, improving employment outcomes for specific cohorts who face labour market barriers.
- Expected cohorts include, but are not limited to people aged over 50, people with a disability and health condition, women, people from an ethnic minority, young people not in education, employment or training and people with multiple complex needs (homeless, care leavers, ex/offenders, people with substance abuse problems and victims of domestic violence).
- Supporting people furthest from the labour market to overcome barriers to work by providing cohesive, locally tailored support, including access to basic skills.
- Supporting local areas to fund gaps in local skills provision to support people to progress in work, and supplement local adult skills provision e.g. by providing additional volumes; delivering provision through wider range of routes or enabling more intensive/innovative provision, both qualification based and non-qualification based. This should be supplementary to provision available through national employment and skills programmes.

3.0 Recommended Priorities

- 3.1 A total of 15 projects were initially put forward and assessed against the agreed framework above. The following projects have been identified as meeting the criteria and funds have been provisionally allocated funding. These are listed below with no's 1-6 being officer recommended priorities and no's 7-9 as potential additional options should the agreed projects not come forward. A further 6 projects were assessed as not meeting the criteria and so are not included below.

Priority projects

1. Transfer of sports pavilions to community groups. **Allocation £150,000.** The funding would be for assisting with the transition of pavilion ownership to sports organisations and the costs involved with maintenance and utilities. This will give additional time to complete the asset transfers required to ensure grassroots sports clubs do not fold due to the pavilion closures. This is in line with the UKSPF intervention E10: Funding for local sports facilities, tournaments, teams and leagues; to bring people together.
2. Transfer of Community Centres to the community. **Allocation £140,000.** The funding would be assisting with the transition of community centre ownership (Moorcroft, St. Mary's, The Vyne and Parkview) to community groups as well as costs involved with maintenance and utilities. This will give additional time to complete the asset transfers required to ensure community groups are not immediately burdened with financial pressures. This is in line with UKSPF intervention E11: Investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups.
3. Parks and Play areas. **Allocation £101,000.** The funding would be to support the most urgent works where the Council has a legal duty (as landowner) to maintain a condition to ensure health & safety for users, Works will reduce the ongoing maintenance burden and pressure on existing / future budgets by bringing the facility into a better condition. Specific works will include replacement and refurbishment of safety surfacing and equipment, works to footpaths and car park areas. This is in line with UKSPF intervention E3: Creation of and improvements to local green spaces, community gardens, watercourses and embankments, along with incorporating natural features into wider public spaces.
4. Support for arts and culture. **Allocation £130,000.** This would enable the establishment of a new community based model for The Lightbox that secures alternative funding - a commercially viable operating model, shop, café, venue hire, renting creative studio space that underpins the community, well-being outreach work. This is in line with Intervention E6: Support for local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities.
5. Supporting Economic Growth and Local Businesses. **Allocation £50,000.** The funding would be to support economic growth across Woking to bring together businesses to work collaboratively as a "Place Board" to ensure the economic success of the Borough. This funding would facilitate that collaboration, driving a programme of work that supports growth, attracts new business, promotes our strong cultural offer and seeks to retain business as well as talent and skills. This is in line with intervention E8: Funding for the development and promotion of wider campaigns and E23: Strengthening local entrepreneurial systems and supporting businesses at all stages of their development to start, sustain, grow and innovate, including through local networks.
6. Citizen's Advice - securing our volunteer base. **Allocation £30,000.** The funding would support Citizen's Advice Woking to move to a more sustainable business model, and secure funding from alternative sources. This funding links to E9: Funding for impactful volunteering and/or social action projects to develop social and human capital in local places.

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SPF Project	2024/25	Total
Green Infrastructure (already agreed)	£214,483	£349,000
SCC Loan Schemes (already agreed)	£50,000	£50,000
E11 - Transfer of community centres	£140,000	
E10 - Transfer of sports pavilions	£150,000	
E6 – Support for arts and culture	£130,000	
E3 – Parks and Play areas	£101,000	
E8 and E23 – Supporting economic growth and local businesses	£50,000	
E9 – Citizen’s Advice Woking	£30,000	
Total	£865,483	£1,000,000

Additional projects which could be supported should funding become available, but not currently part of the priority list.

7. Street lighting and landscaping enhancements to the area where Church Street East meets Chertsey Road. It is proposed that the area between Church Street East and Chertsey Road is allocated for public realm improvements comprising landscaping, planting, pedestrian paving, and street furniture improvements. This is in line with Intervention E5: Design and management of the built and landscaped environment to ‘design out crime’.
8. Renew the digital inclusion project with a subsidy/ grant. The current digital inclusion project, managed by Alex Pullin is currently funded until March 2024 by a grant from the NHS. So extending this would be in line with Intervention E36 Intervention to increase levels of digital inclusion, with a focus on essential digital skills, communicating the benefits of getting (safely) online, and in-community support to provide users with the confidence and trust to stay online.
9. Rural Access tracks. Most urgent works where the Council has a legal duty (as landowner) to maintain a condition to ensure health & safety for users. Where applicable this has been risk assessed against a relevant industry specific standard. Works will reduce the ongoing maintenance burden and pressure on existing / future budgets by bringing the facility into a better condition. This is in line with Intervention E2: Funding for new, or improvements to existing, community and neighbourhood infrastructure projects including those that increase communities’ resilience to natural hazards, such as flooding. This could cover capital spend and running costs.

3.2 In accordance with the governance arrangements set out in the Terms of Reference for the UKSPF Group agreed by the Executive on 14 September 2023, these priorities are supported by the UKSPF Group, and accordingly are now reported to the Executive for decision.

4.0 Options

4.1 Agree the projects outlined above for completion in 2024/25 (recommended).

4.2 Agree different projects, presented in the additional list above.

5.0 Corporate Strategy

5.1 The delivery of the recommended projects would be consistent with all four priority outcomes with the Corporate Strategy: Healthier communities, Engaged communities. Greener communities, and Prospering communities.

6.0 Implications

Finance and Risk

6.1 There are no specific risks associated with the receipt of the grant. Where funding is not spent by the end of 2024/25 it must be paid back. Therefore, it is important that any projects are capable of being delivered in-year. As funding ceases in March 2025 all projects must end by the end of March 2025. It will be necessary to ensure that there is no expectation that funding will continue after this date. As plans become more developed then risks associated with the individual projects will be identified and controlled.

Equalities and Human Resources

6.2 Equality implications will be considered as part of each project plan in order to ensure that any implications (positive or negative) are understood and managed effectively.

Legal

6.3 While there are no specific legal implications associated with the receipt of the funding (other than the requirement for this to be used within the parameters set by Government), there will undoubtedly be legal implications associated with each of the individual projects, both in terms of scope and in terms of the grant conditions (for example regarding monitoring and potential recovery in whole or part).

7.0 Engagement and Consultation

7.1 Engagement and consultation will take place on individual projects as needed, once priorities are agreed.

REPORT ENDS