



**REPORT of  
DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY, PERFORMANCE AND GOVERNANCE**

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**to  
STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE  
10 NOVEMBER 2022**

**RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND**

**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To inform Members of the new opportunities presented by the UK Government's Rural England Prosperity Fund.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (i) That Members note the opportunity presented for investment in the District by the Rural England Support Fund and the Council's role in securing the investment and any administration;
- (ii) That Members note the aggressive pace of work required to submit the Council's Rural England Prosperity Fund Addendum Investment Plan and delegate the authority to the Director of Strategy, Performance and Governance in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Chairman of Strategy and Resources Committee for development and submission in line with the Government guidance. Members will be provided with a further written update.

**3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES**

**3.1 Rural England Prosperity Fund**

- 3.1.1 The Strategy and Resources Committee on 14 July 2022 approved the recommendation to submit Maldon District's UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) investment plan in line with authority's corporate strategies and to bring forward new opportunities for inclusion where appropriate.
- 3.1.2 The Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) is part of UK Government's levelling-up agenda and will provide £110 million of funding for local investment by March 2025. It builds on and is complementary to UKSPF.
- 3.1.3 The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) published the Rural England Prosperity Fund prospectus on 3 September 2022. The prospectus confirmed that Maldon District has been allocated £430,328 to be spent by March 2025.
- 3.1.4 The funding can be used to support capital projects for small businesses and community infrastructure. This will help to improve productivity and strengthen the rural economy and rural communities.

- 3.1.5 The REPF is integrated into the UKSPF which supports productivity and prosperity in places that need it most. For eligible local authorities, the REPF is a rural top-up to UKSPF allocations. It supports activities that specifically address the challenges rural areas face. It is complementary to funding used to support rural areas under the UKSPF.
- 3.1.6 Funding will be profiled over 2023 / 24 to 2024 / 25 and the objectives sit within the UKSPF investment priorities for:

<b>Community and Place</b>	<b>Supporting Local Business</b>
Support new and improved community infrastructure, providing essential community services and assets for local people and businesses to benefit the local economy	Support new and existing rural businesses to develop new products and facilities that will be of wider benefit to the local economy. This includes farm businesses looking to diversify income streams

- 3.1.7 Each place will be asked to set out measurable outcomes that reflect local needs and opportunities in delivering against these priorities. Priority will need to be given to projects that deliver the greatest economic, environmental, and social benefits.
- 3.1.8 Eligible Local Authorities are responsible for submitting the REPF additional information to the UK Government for approval as an addendum to the previously submitted UKSPF investment plan. The prospectus encourages consultation with local rural partners to deliver the fund and engagement with the nominated UKSPF local partnership group, One Maldon District. An indicative spend profile will need to be established as part of the submission. DEFRA have verbally confirmed the allocation will be split 25% in year one (2023 / 2024) of the fund and 75% in year two (2024 / 2025).
- 3.1.9 The additional information is required to be submitted between 3 October – 30 November 2022, with an anticipated date of January 2023 for approvals.
- 3.1.10 As an Eligible Local Authority, Maldon District Council will receive the District's allocation of £430,328 to manage, including administering local calls for selecting projects in line with approved plans, approving applications, contracting with successful applicants, making payments and day-to-day monitoring. There is no further funding available to undertake necessary administration.
- 3.1.11 This report details phase one of the process being undertaken, with the submission of our indicative spend profile against the interventions prescribed by the guidance. Phase two will involve development of a robust and clear eligibility, application and awarding process. A further report will be brought to a future Committee outlining the proposals to manage, administer and monitor the fund.

## 4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The REPF presents a significant opportunity for the District to support, through direct capital investment, in our economy, businesses, communities, cultural and heritage assets, regeneration and the Council should invest what is needed in making this opportunity successful.

## 5. IMPACT ON STRATEGIC THEMES

- 5.1 The REPF supports the Council's **Place Outcomes** of: 'Promote civic pride and maintain the District's environmental quality', 'Work with partners to maintain and

improve the District's resilience to the effects of climate change'; **Prosperity Outcomes** of 'Enabling future economic investment and new jobs', 'Supporting existing local businesses', 'Enhancing and promoting the District's visitor economy' and **Community Outcomes** of 'Building on the strengths of our communities and what they can do to support themselves and help each other to thrive'.

- 5.2 The REPF also support our **Performance and Value Outcomes** of: 'Finance & Income', 'Governance', 'Performance' and 'Meaningful Engagement'.

## 6. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – Any application process will be designed to enable community groups and businesses to engage with a fair bidding process to ensure there is significant customer benefit from its outputs. Successful projects will deliver capital projects that end up being used by and benefit residents, businesses, special interest groups and visitors.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – Any application process will be designed to enable all community groups and businesses to engage with a fair bidding process to ensure there is significant customer benefit from its outputs. This process will meet the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk** – Future spend is at risk, so it is vital that programme activity is aligned and adequately reported to the funder to ensure compliance. The programme will work to reduce the impact to the economy and communities from Covid19. The Council faces increased reputation risk if it fails to deliver to the expectations of stakeholders.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – The REPF does not provide additional funding to cover the cost of day-to-day administration. Delivery will need to be incorporated into existing workloads.
- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – The initial coordination and delivery of the work for the REPF work will be undertaken by the Lead Specialist Prosperity for the remainder of their contract. The delivery will be reviewed and reallocated as necessary afterwards.  
  
Delivery will need to be supported by resources drawn from the wider organisation.
- (vi) **Impact on the Environment** – Consideration will need to be given on how the investments contribute to net zero, nature recovery objectives, green growth.
- (vii) **Impact on Strengthening Communities** – The projects funded will seek to ensure the Council strengthens engagement with communities to shape and deliver significant benefits from outputs.

Background Papers:

[Rural England Prosperity Fund Prospectus](#)

[Rural England Prosperity Fund: interventions, objectives, outputs and outcomes](#)

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