



**REPORT of
DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY AND RESOURCES**

**to
PERFORMANCE, GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
18 JUNE 2024**

UK SHARED AND RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUNDS

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To update the Committee on the delivery of Maldon District's UK Shared and Rural England Prosperity Fund allocations.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee acknowledges the update provided on Maldon District's UK Shared and Rural England Prosperity fund allocations and continues to monitor the delivery.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

3.1 UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

- 3.1.1 **APPENDIX 1** sets out the projects being delivered via the funding over the three-year period and their current status.
- 3.1.2 As advised in previous reports, where projects are not being progressed due to feasibility, funding will be reallocated to other existing projects within the investment plan. With the current economic climate, and the cost of doing business increasing, it is prudent to ensure all projects align to our Corporate Plan and deliver its priorities.
- 3.1.3 At the time of writing this report, all of the funding, £1m, has been allocated to the progression of projects and agreed costs for management and administration.
- 3.1.4 The current financial year is the third, and final year of UKSPF delivery. Officers will be working very closely with project managers to ensure delivery is on track, within budget and completed before the deadline. Currently less than 25% of the total pot has been spent; however many of the projects were scheduled to be delivered in 2024-25, per the profile of the funding from government. If projects are not delivered by 31 March 2025 this will require a return of any unspent monies to the Department of Levelling Up, Homes and Communities, unless any extension is granted; however no further information has been provided from government regarding any potential extension or continuation of the funds.

3.2 Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF)

- 3.2.1 The Council's REPF grant programme officially launched with an event on 15 February. So far, 29 applications have been received, 19 under Supporting Rural

Business and 10 under Supporting Rural Communities. Of these applications, 12 have been approved to a value of £365,982.53, with £64,345.47 remaining.

- 3.2.2 Due to the number and value of the applications received, we have currently paused accepting any new submissions. Once the existing applications have been reviewed, and potentially approved, there may be the opportunity to reopen the process.
- 3.2.3 During the summer, officers from the Council and our delivery partner, Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE), will work with grant recipients to develop good news stories and case studies to demonstrate the value of the grants provided.
- 3.2.4 The current financial year is the second, and final year of REPF delivery. Officers and RCCE will be working very closely with grant recipients to ensure their proposed projects to ensure progress is on track and completed before the deadline.
- 3.2.5 No further information has been provided from government regarding any potential extension or continuation of the funds.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 UKSPF and REPF continue to present a significant opportunity for the District to support, through direct investment, in our economy, businesses and communities.

5. IMPACT ON PRIORITIES AS SET OUT IN THE CORPORATE PLAN 2023 - 2027

5.1 Supporting our communities

- 5.1.1 The UKSPF will support the UK government's wider commitment to level up all parts of the UK by delivering on each of the levelling up objectives, two of which are 'Restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where they have been lost' and 'Empower local leaders and communities, especially in those places lacking local agency'.

5.2 Enhancing and connecting our place

- 5.2.1 The primary goal of the UKSPF is to build pride in place and increase life chances across the UK. This aligns to the 'Promote civic pride in place and improve environmental quality' aspect of this priority.

5.3 Helping the economy to thrive

- 5.3.1 UKSPF delivery is delivering the Supporting Local Business engagement programme under this priority.
- 5.3.2 REPF will provide direct capital grants to eligible applicant businesses within the District.

5.4 Smarter finances

- 5.4.1 Ensuring UKSPF is spent sustainably for the benefit of the District directly supports this priority.

5.5 A greener future

- 5.5.1 Projects within the UKSPF investment plan will directly support the authority's Climate Action Strategy and yearly Climate Action Plan.
- 5.5.2 REPF will provide direct capital grants to eligible organisations within the District for rural circular economy projects.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – Any project delivered will be designed to enable community groups and businesses to engage with to ensure there is significant customer benefit from its outputs.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – Projects will be delivered in accordance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk** – Should projects not progress as anticipated, future spend is at risk, so it is vital that activity is aligned and adequately reported to the funder to ensure compliance. The Council faces increased reputation risk if it fails to deliver to the expectations of stakeholders.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – The authority has agreement to use 6% of its revenue allocation to support the management and administration of the UKSPF programme. However, with the cost of doing business and supply chain pressures increasing it will be prudent to regularly assess pipeline projects to ensure viability and value for money.
- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – The coordination work for UKSPF and 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. Project delivery is being well supported by resources drawn from the wider organisation and a Project Delivery Group with clear Terms of Reference has been developed.

Background Papers:

APPENDIX 1 - UK Shared Prosperity Fund Project Delivery Update

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