



## REPORT of CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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to  
PERFORMANCE, GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE  
16 JANUARY 2025

### 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 in its final three months.

#### 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. As we are in the final quarter of delivery, any deviations to the investment plan will be discussed and agreed with the Corporate Leadership Team as per the delegation given by the Strategy and Resources Committee on 14 July 2022.
- 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 the initial UKSPF funding period 2022 - 2025. Officers continue to work very closely with project managers to ensure delivery is on track, within budget and completed before the deadline. Currently 87% of the total allocation has been spent; with the remaining projects schedule to complete as per the profile of the funding from government.
- 3.1.5 In the Autumn Budget 2024, the government announced the UKSPF will be extended for a transition year in 2025 / 26. Further guidance on the transition year was issued on 13 December 2024, and a report will be brought to the Strategy and Resources Committee on 23 January 2025 to update Members. The technical guidance confirmed that underspends from the initial allocation (2022 - 2025) cannot be carried forward to 2025 / 26 and will require a return of any unspent monies to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

## **3.2 Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF)**

- 3.2.1 As noted in the previous updates, the Council's REPF grant programme officially launched on 15 February 2024. Since the launch, 33 applications have been received, 21 under Supporting Rural Business and 12 under Supporting Rural Communities. At the time of writing this report, 19 applications have been approved and accepted by the applicants, to a value of £ £396,320 with £34,320 remaining.
- 3.2.2 Due to the number and value of the applications received, we are no longer accepting submissions to this fund. Any residual funds will be discussed with enquirers on a waiting list in the order received prior to the closure of the application period to ensure a fair process.
- 3.2.3 **APPENDIX 2** of this report details the grants issued and the purpose of the funding. Officers from the Council and our delivery partner, Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE), will continue to work with grant recipients to monitor the projects progression where not yet complete.
- 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 the projects are delivered and completed before the deadline.
- 3.2.5 No further information has been provided from government regarding any potential extension or continuation of this specific fund.

## **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 2025 - 2028**

### **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 Investing in our District**

- 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 Growing our economy**

- 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 **Protecting our environment**

- 5.4.1 Projects within the UKSPF investment plan will directly support the authority's Climate Action Strategy and yearly Climate Action Plan.
- 5.4.2 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 (including Fraud implications)** – 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

**APPENDIX 2** - Rural England Prosperity Fund Grant Recipients

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