

CABINET

UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF): Supporting Local Business / People and Skills Individual Cabinet Member Decision: Councillor Tim Hamilton-Cox

Report of Chief Executive

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To delegate to the Chief Executive the authority to finalise and agree UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) awards in respect of Interventions relating to Supporting Local Business and People and Skills, in line with the council's UKSPF Investment Plan and within the parameters of the UKSPF change control process.

Key Decision

X

Non-Key Decision

Referral from Cabinet
Member

Date of notice of forthcoming
key decision

19 April 2023

This report is public; Appendix A is exempt from publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE

- (1) That the Chief Executive be delegated to finalise and agree UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) awards in respect of Interventions E19, E23 and E29 (Supporting Local Business) and E33, E38 and E39 (People and Skills) as set out in the council's UKSPF Investment Plan and within the parameters of the UKSPF change control process, to deliver the following projects:

- Tech Lancaster
- Lancaster City Council Business Support
- New Low Carbon Technology
- Low Carbon Business Support
- Employer Hub
- Strawberry Fields
- Calico
- Positive Futures

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 In April 2022 the government announced the [prospectus for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund \(UKSPF\)](#), to be delivered by local authorities from 2022-25.
- 1.2 The Lancaster district was provisionally allocated £5.3m of UKSPF funding, to be administered by Lancaster City Council and subject to the submission of an Investment Plan detailing the council's proposals for delivering the funding in line with the requirements of the prospectus.

2.0 Investment Plan

- 2.1 Following a highly consultative development process during summer 2022, Cabinet at its meetings of [12 July 2022](#) and [26 July 2022](#) considered the council's Investment Plan proposals, which were subsequently finalised and submitted to meet the government's deadline of 1 August 2022.
- 2.2 The council received approval of its Investment Plan in December 2022, followed by release of the initial tranche of funding for 2022-23.

3.0 Round 1 Awards

- 3.1 Following an application and evaluation process in late 2022 and early 2023, an initial eight projects were awarded funding in January 2023.
- 3.2 A number of project proposals were also deferred for consideration in subsequent rounds of funding.

4.0 Round 2 Applications

- 4.1 To enable the Lancaster district's UKSPF programme to deliver positive impact at the earliest opportunity, a further round of applications was invited in February 2023, with a closing date of Friday 3 March 2023.
- 4.2 A total of 37 applications were received across the UKSPF's Community & Place, Supporting Local Business and People & Skills priorities, for consideration alongside 14 deferred proposals.
- 4.3 The full list of Round 2 applications and deferred proposals is included in the exempt appendix to this report.

5.0 Evaluation

- 5.1 Applications have been evaluated in line with HM Treasury's 'five cases' best practice approach to business case development (considering the strategic, economic, commercial, financial and management case for each project) as well as the Critical Success Factors agreed by Cabinet at its meeting of 12 July 2022:
 - Climate Emergency
 - Affordable
 - Deliverable
 - Impact
 - Inclusive
 - Collaborative
 - Proven Track Record
 - Scalable
- 5.2 As a number of Round 2 proposals involve awarding funding directly to Lancaster City Council, further independent and neutral evaluation has been commissioned via Growth Lancashire to support internal evaluation.
- 5.3 Following initial evaluation in March 2023, informal discussions with Cabinet in April 2023 considered the proposed strategic approach and provisional recommendations for the second round of funding awards.
- 5.4 Subsequent further technical evaluation has been conducted to ensure projects are strongly aligned to UKSPF criteria as well as meeting all relevant obligations of the funding.

6.0 Proposal Details

- 6.1 It is proposed that applications be considered for a decision based on the following two outcomes:

- 1) *Award funding and begin implementation:* projects which clearly meet the criteria and can deliver positive impact against the programme's strategic outcomes and outputs
 - 2) *Do not consider awarding funding:* projects which are less well aligned to the criteria or strategic fit
- 6.2 The recommended decision for each application is contained in the exempt appendix to this report.
- 6.3 Specific to the relevant portfolio area of Sustainable Economic Prosperity, the following project(s) are proposed for a Year 2 and / or Year 3 funding award in respect of Interventions E19, E23 and E29 (Supporting Local Business) and E33, E38 and E39 (People and Skills) as set out in the Investment Plan:
- Tech Lancaster
 - Lancaster City Council Business Support
 - New Low Carbon Technology
 - Low Carbon Business Support
 - Employer Hub
 - Strawberry Fields
 - Calico
 - Positive Futures
- 6.4 Should the recommendation in this report be approved, officers will initiate the process of finalising all relevant details and agree grant agreements for the projects to be delivered in accordance with the UKSPF programme's guidance and requirements, and within the funding envelope defined by the council's Investment Plan.
- 6.5 Some projects may contribute to the delivery of multiple UKSPF Interventions, and as such may draw on funds allocated to a number of Interventions set out in the Investment Plan.
- 6.6 Delivering the complex and wide-ranging UKSPF programme will require a degree of flexibility in managing the specific funding allocated to each of the three Priorities and thirteen Interventions contained in the Investment Plan. All allocations will be determined within the parameters of the UKSPF programme's change control process.

7.0 Details of Consultation

- 7.1 Delivering a successful UKSPF programme from 2022-25 will be fundamentally dependent on a consultative, collaborative and inclusive approach. The council's programme so far has been characterised by this principle, with wide-ranging consultation including:
- Focus groups and an open Expression of Interest process in summer 2022 to support development of the Investment Plan
 - The formation of a Local Partnership Group, in line with the UKSPF Prospectus, to advise and support the Investment Plan development process and subsequent activity in delivering the programme
- 7.2 The technical nature of project evaluation along with its 'competitive' element means that limited consultation is possible in considering funding awards for specific projects at this stage.
- 7.3 However, a consultative process has been taken with Cabinet members to ensure recommendations are in line with the desired strategic direction.

8.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

	Option 1: Award UKSPF funding in respect of the specified project(s)	Option 2: Do not award UKSPF funding for the specified project(s)
Advantages	Commence delivery of the UKSPF programme with its associated benefits to the district.	Opportunity to consider other projects by not committing funding at this time.
Disadvantages	No specific disadvantages beyond demands on the organisation of delivering the programme.	Failure to deliver on the UKSPF programme.
Risks	Projects may require further development in finalising and agreeing details.	Failure of the council to fulfil its duty of delivering the UKSPF programme.

9.0 Officer Preferred Option (and comments)

9.1 The officer preferred option is option 1, to commence delivery of the UKSPF programme.

10.0 Conclusion

10.1 A robust process has been conducted in the development of an approved Investment Plan, followed by the evaluation of project proposals.

10.2 This report sets out the proposed approach to the next phase of delivering the programme, and as such it is recommended that officers be delegated to finalise and agree funding awards for the second round of projects.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

The UKSPF Priorities demonstrate significant overlap with the council's Plan 2030 Priorities. As such, UKSPF projects and funding awards provide additional opportunity to advance the council's strategic priorities. This is reflected in the strategic design of the programme to meet the Council's goals.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, HR, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

All UKSPF projects are required to be delivered in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, with the relevant contractual obligations placed on those delivering projects as part of the conditions for receiving funding.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Legal Services have been consulted throughout this process and will advise on any necessary legal agreements in relation to grant funding arrangements.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. All awards to projects are funded by UKSPF money via central government. Some Year 1 underspent funds remain available for allocation, with Year 2 funds to follow ahead of direct project expenditure. All funding awards at this stage are subject to receipt of funds from central government.

With regard to the resources used to administer the fund, the award includes a 4% allowance to assist, and a team has been established to address this whilst working within the financial boundaries set. Whilst not expected, any additional requirement will be managed from existing budgets.

OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**Human Resources:**

N/A externally delivered project

Information Services:

N/A externally delivered project

Property:

N/A externally delivered project

Open Spaces:

[Click here for open spaces](#)

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Section 151 Officer would request that both Members and Officers consider that the Council currently has a significant structural budget deficit and so funding initiatives will need to be (at a minimum) cost neutral to the Council, or be subject to the usual arrangements surrounding the support of items not included within the budget framework.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments to add

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix (Exempt):

Summary of UKSPF Round 2 Applications

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