

Individual Cabinet Member Decision

UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), Grant Award: Lancaster Regeneration and Local Economy Individual Cabinet Member Decision: Councillor Nick Wilkinson

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 UKSPF Theme Employability and Support For Business in line with the council's UKSPF Investment Plan and within the parameters of the UKSPF framework.				
Key Decision		Non-Key Decision	X	Referral from Cabinet Member
Date of notice of forthcoming key decision		n/a		
This report is public.				

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That the Chief Executive be delegated to finalise and agree UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) awards in respect of UKSPF Theme **Employability and Support For Business**.

Funds will be awarded as set out in the council's UKSPF Investment Plan and within the parameters of the UKSPF framework to deliver the following projects:

- Morecambe Winter Gardens: The Peoples Palace
- Positive Futures: Moving Forward with Confidence
- Strawberry Fields Training CIC: Engage to Progress
- Lancaster and Morecambe College: Employer Hub & Re-engage NEET
- Electech Innovation Cluster
- Business and Skills (Economy and Skills)

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 As announced at Autumn Budget on 30 October 2024, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund will be extended for 2025-26 at a reduced level.

- 1.2 A technical note in December 2024 provided details of the key updates to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund for 2025-26.
- 1.3 The Lancaster District is to receive £1,717,574 of UKSPF funding, to be administered by Lancaster City Council and subject to the submission of a forecast detailing the council's proposals for delivering the funding in line with the requirements of the prospectus and updated technical note.

2.0 Forecast 2025-2026

- 2.1 A diverse and high impact UKSPF programme was established for year 2022-2025 following the submission of an Investment Plan that reflected the priorities of the council and district partners. Therefore, the forecast for 2025 - 2026 will have some consistency to the original investment plan. This will enable high impact projects to continue for a further year to demonstrate longevity of impacts.
- 2.2 The council will submit its forecast to the Lancashire Combined County Authority in April. The CCA will then forward a Lancashire wide forecast to MHCLG for approval. Importantly, the Lancashire Combined County Authority will act as the Accountable Body for the delivery of the fund in Lancashire.
- 2.3 It is anticipated that the forecast will be approved leading to Service Level Agreements with each district authority and so that the funds can be passported to Lancaster City Council to deliver on its forecasted activity.
- 2.4 It is important to note that the funds are expected in May 2025 at the earliest. Therefore, project spend and delivery prior to government signing off forecasts, will be at the risk of grant applicants. The council's grant agreements for projects will detail this so that this risk is transparent and clear to all parties.

3.0 Funding Awards

- 3.1 Grant agreements will be put in place to projects to deliver the UKSPF programme, following the successful submission of Expression of Interest forms that demonstrated a clear business case for continuing project delivery.
- 3.2 Each EOI and Business Case was assessed on historic outcomes and project performance as well as, longevity of impact, district priorities and value for money.
- 3.3 A thorough democratic decision-making process considered all options before internal indicative decisions were made.
- 3.4 The full list of Expression of Interest and Business cases applications are included in the exempt appendix to this report.

4.0 Proposal Details

- 4.1 It is proposed that applications be considered for a decision (subject to MHCLG approval of forecast reports) 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
- 4.2 Specific to the relevant portfolio area of Communities, Well-Being and Partnerships, the projects recommended in this report are proposed for a funding award in respect of the ***Employability and Support For Business***

Theme:

- Morecambe Winter Gardens: The Peoples Palace
- Positive Futures: Moving Forward with Confidence
- Strawberry Fields Training CIC: Engage to Progress
- Lancaster and Morecambe College: Employer Hub & Re-engage NEET
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4.3 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 forecast.

4.4 Some projects may contribute to the delivery of multiple UKSPF Themes, and as such may draw on funds allocated to a number of Themes set out in the UKSPF forecast.

5.0 Details of Consultation

5.1 Delivering a successful UKSPF programme from 2022-25 required 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 original 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

5.2 To ensure some continuation and longevity of the UKSPF programme from 2022 – 2025, the council enabled all projects within that programme to put forward a Business Case for continued project delivery. The council has also engaged with a number of key partners and stakeholders so that the programme for 2025-2026 is reflective of local priorities.

5.3 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.

5.4 However, a consultative process has been taken with Cabinet members to ensure recommendations are in line with the desired strategic direction.

6.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

	Option 1: Award UKSPF funding in	Option 2: Do not award UKSPF
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	respect of the specified project(s)	funding for the specified project(s)
Advantages	Commence delivery of the UKSPF project 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.

7.0 Officer Preferred Option (and comments)

- 7.1 The officer preferred option is option 1, to commence delivery of the UKSPF project.

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 A thorough process has been conducted in the development of a renewed UKSPF forecast for 2025-2026 that continues the pre-work and partner engagement that led to the original UKSPF Investment Plan and subsequent programme. Projects for 2025-2026 followed the evaluation of project proposals and enable the continuation of existing project activity where appropriate.
- 8.2 This report sets out the proposed approach to award funding to projects that will contribute to the delivery of the UKSPF programme, and as such it is recommended that officers be delegated to finalise and agree funding awards.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

The UKSPF Themes demonstrate significant overlap with the strategic priorities of the Council Plan 2024-2027. 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. All funding awards for financial year 2025-2026 at this stage, are subject to receipt of funds from central government. Regarding the resources used to administer the fund, the award includes a 3% allowance from the core revenue budget from the UKSPF programme. A team has been established to address this whilst working within the financial boundaries set and any additional requirements are being managed from within 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 for on-going 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 1 – UKSPF 2025-2026 Decisions
(EXEMPT)

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