



Rochford District  
Council

<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	<b>UK Shared Prosperity Fund: 2024-25 Allocation</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>Executive Lead Member Resources, Climate Change &amp; Economy, Cllr Michael Hoy</b>

## REPORT SUMMARY

This report sets out a recommended approach to distributing the Council's 2024-25 allocation from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, in accordance with its agreed investment plan.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1 -** That authority be delegated to the Strategic Director, in consultation with the Lead Member for Resources, Climate Change and Economy, to operate a community grant programme funded by an allocation of up to £250,000 of the Council's 2024-25 UKSPF allocation.
- R2 -** That authority be delegated to the Strategic Director, in consultation with the Lead Member for Resources, Climate Change and Economy, to spend the remaining proportion of the Council's 2024-25 UKPSF allocation, in broad alignment with the provisions of Appendix B.
- R3 -** That the Strategic Director be asked to provide quarterly updates to the Executive concerning the latest position on UKSPF expenditure plans and to invite the Executive to advise should any significant change of circumstances arise.

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**SUPPORTING INFORMATION****1.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1.1 On 13 July 2022, the Executive granted delegated authority to the Assistant Director for Place and Environment, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Climate and Economy, to prepare and submit an Investment Plan for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. At its meetings on 19 January 2023 and 7 March 2023, the Executive made decisions to enable the spend of its 2022-23 and 2023-24 allocations respectively.
- 1.2 The Council now requires an effective process to distribute funding for 2024-25 in accordance with its approved Investment Plan. The recommendations within this report are considered to be appropriate for setting a broad framework which enables the Council's allocation to be spent effectively and efficiently, including allowing for preparatory and procurement processes to be commenced prior to the start of the 2024-25 financial year to maximise delivery within the funding period.

**2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION****Context**

- 2.1 The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) was launched in April 2022 and provides £2.6 billion in funding for local investment by March 2025. It is the government's replacement for the European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF).
- 2.2 UKSPF supports the ambitions of the Levelling Up White Paper and aims to build pride in place and increase life chances across the country.
- 2.3 All areas of the UK will receive an allocation from the Fund which is calculated using a funding formula. It is not a competitive bidding process.
- 2.4 The UKSPF sets out three key investment priorities:
- a) Community and Place
  - b) Supporting Local Businesses
  - c) People and Skills
- 2.5 The funding for the first two priorities commenced in 2022/23, while the 'people and skills' priority will commence in 2024/25.
- 2.6 The Council has been allocated exactly £1,000,000 through the UKSPF. This funding can only be accessed through a submitted Investment Plan.
- 2.7 An annual funding profile providing a breakdown of the funding for the three financial years has been developed by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) for Rochford. The breakdown is as follows:

Year	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Allocation	£75,450	£150,899	£773,651

- 2.8 In 2022/23, a minimum of 10% spend needed to be capital expenditure, followed by a minimum of 13% in 2023/24 and 20% in 2024/25.
- 2.9 As lead authority, the Council was responsible for developing a local Investment Plan. On 13<sup>th</sup> July 2022, the Executive granted delegated authority to the Strategic Director, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Climate and Economy, to prepare and submit an Investment Plan for UKSPF.
- 2.10 The Council's Investment Plan was submitted to Government on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2022.
- 2.11 After consultation with a wide range of community stakeholders as per the UKSPF guidance, the Council prioritised the following interventions in its Investment Plan:
- a) **E1:** Funding for improvements to town centres and high streets, including better accessibility for disabled people, including capital spend and running costs
  - b) **E4:** Enhanced support for existing cultural, historic and heritage institutions that make up the local cultural heritage offer
  - c) **E23:** Strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems, and supporting businesses at all stages of their development to start, sustain, grow and innovate, including through local networks
- 2.12 The Council has budgeted its £1m UKSPF funding amongst the interventions as follows:

Intervention	UKSPF Allocation	% of Total UKSPF Allocation	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
E1: Improvements to town centres & high streets	£300,000	30%	£22,635	£45,270	£232,095
E4: Enhancing existing cultural, historic & heritage institutions offer	£600,000	60%	£45,270	£90,539	£464,191
E23: Strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems	£100,000	10%	£7,545	£15,090	£77,365

- 2.13 The submitted Investment Plan identifies priorities within the Council's Business Plan 2020-2023 and Economic Growth Strategy 2022-25 that align with the Investment Priorities of the UKSPF.
- 2.14 The Investment Plan did not need to identify projects however the Government has identified a range of example projects which give an indication of the types of projects likely to be eligible under each investment. For Rochford, these include but are not necessarily limited to:
- Regenerating a town square
  - Public realm improvements, for example street art, street furniture or other decorative improvements
  - Regenerating a high street
  - The delivery of outreach/engagement/participatory programmes for community spaces, including youth centres and public libraries
  - The development, restoration or refurbishment of local natural, cultural and heritage assets and sites
  - The delivery of outreach, engagement and participatory programmes for these local assets and sites
  - Strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems and connecting businesses to wider support on, for example, innovation, trade and skills
  - Establishing local peer-to-peer networking/support and learning to improve sharing of best practice
  - Development of evidence-based regional entrepreneurial support, led by entrepreneurs, risk capital providers, corporates, academia and government
- 2.15 At its meetings on 19 January 2023 and 7 March 2023, the Executive made decisions to enable the spend of its 2022-23 and 2023-24 allocations respectively.
- 2.16 This report is now being brought forward to set out recommendations to enable the spend of the Council's 2024-25 allocation.

### **2024-25 Allocation**

- 2.17 As above, the Council's UKSPF allocation for the 2024-25 financial year is £773,651, which is allocated to the three interventions as follows:
- £232,095 to E1: Improvements to town centres and high streets
  - £464,191 to E4: Enhancing existing cultural, historic and heritage institutions offer

- £77,365 to E23: Strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems
- 2.18 In addition, at least 20% of the 2024-25 allocation must be spent on capital projects across the three interventions.
- 2.19 The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) have advised that transferring funding between interventions E1 and E4 is considered a 'non-material change', which does not require their approval. As such, these allocations can be considered to form one larger budget to be used across the two interventions. Transferring funding into or out of intervention E23 is, however, considered a material change requiring their approval.
- 2.20 Projects funded from the Council's 2024-25 UKSPF allocation must be substantially complete by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, which creates a time imperative to commence planning and delivery at the earliest opportunity.

#### Community Grant Programme

- 2.21 Funded from UKSPF, the Council's 2023-24 UKSPF Grant Programme opened in April 2023. The programme enabled local community organisations to access up to £15,000 towards projects meeting Interventions E1 or E4. The grant programme was successful and funded a diverse range of community projects, including brand new event programmes, community markets, and physical improvements to local high streets and cultural venues.
- 2.22 Due to the success of the 2023-24 grant programme, it is recommended that a further grant programme be offered using part of the Council's 2024-25 allocation.
- 2.23 A grant programme satisfies Government requirements for the distribution of funding to be competitive, whilst enabling the community to design and directly deliver projects where they are best equipped to do. A grant programme also has the ability to create and fund capacity in project delivery beyond the Council's immediate officer base.
- 2.24 It is proposed that any grant programme would receive applications via an online form on the Council's website. The form would be accompanied by the conditions and eligibility criteria for a grant, and a plain English guide to submitting a grant application.
- 2.25 In order to distribute funding as early in the 2024-25 financial year as possible, it is recommended that the grant programme initially opens in March 2024. The grant opportunity would be advertised widely, including direct approaches to known local groups, with a specific workshop on the grant programme for potential applicants, and access to free support for bid writing.
- 2.26 Further details of the proposed Community Grant Programme are set out in Appendix A.

Council-led Projects

- 2.27 It is recommended that the remaining portion of the Council's 2024-25 UKSPF allocation is allocated to a range of projects and programmes that the Council itself directly commissions under the three intervention headings.
- 2.28 In order to maximise the ability for project delivery within the 2024-25 financial year, and in recognition that the procurement process for some projects will take a number of weeks, this report recommends the delegation of authority to pursue the delivery of a list of Council-led projects against a budgetary allocation from the Council's 2024-25 allocation.
- 2.29 Engagement with a variety of internal and external stakeholders has helped to inform a list of potential headline project areas to which allocations could be made.
- 2.30 In some cases, these project areas relate to longstanding opportunities which have been awaiting funding, where limited further design and development is required. In other cases, it is recognised that further design and development of the project ideas is required to more precisely define feasibility, scope and costs. Such design and development would commence swiftly after any decision to allocate funding.
- 2.31 This approach is intended to allow for an effective and efficient approach to project delivery in the context of time constraints. It is not intended, however, preclude the delivery of other projects that are subsequently identified as a priority. To this end, it is also recommended that the Executive receive quarterly updates on UKSPF delivery, within which direction can be sought and given on changes in circumstances, or any need to materially redirect allocated spend.
- 2.32 A summary of the identified project areas is summarised below and expanded upon in Appendix B.

E1: Improvements to town centres and high streets

- A budgetary allocation for rejuvenation works to high streets and town centres in priority areas, including 'hard' upgrades (e.g. priority repaving) and 'soft' upgrades (e.g. greening, cleaning and maintenance)

E4: Enhancing existing cultural, historic & heritage institutions offer

- A budgetary allocation for priority improvements to the Mill Arts and Events Centre to support its continued use as an arts and events centre
- A budgetary allocation for investment in improved walking and cycling facilities at Cherry Orchard Country Park
- A budgetary allocation to create a 12 month fixed term post for a Tourism and Events Officer, including a specific tourism and events budget to be

used to fund improved place branding, guidance for visitors and a programme of events

#### E23: Strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems

- A budgetary allocation for a series of business events, including investing to improve the quality and quantity of local networking and promotional opportunities, with dedicated activity around Big Green Week
- A budgetary allocation for a new business support contract, focused on the themes specifically requested by the business community based on the latest business survey
- A budgetary allocation to specifically support start-ups, entrepreneurs and small businesses, such as subsidising access to business space, networks and professional advice

#### **Next Steps**

2.33 Subject to decision, the work necessary to enable the delivery of the UKSPF objectives for 2024-25 will be ramped up to:

- Launch the UKSPF grant programme in March 2024 with the intention for the first grant notices to be issued prior to the commencement of the new financial year on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, wherever possible
- Continue design, feasibility and delivery work on identified Council-led projects, including, where possible, commencing any necessary procurement prior to the commencement of the new financial year to enable the maximum period of delivery across the financial year

2.34 Quarterly reports will be brought to the Executive to provide an update on delivery progress and invite input on any material changes that would be a substantial departure from the contents of this report, such as the inability to deliver an identified project and/or its substitution for an alternative project.

### **3.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

3.1 The Council is not obliged to spend its UKSPF allocation but a decision not to do so would forego the potential for this funding to further local ambitions and objectives, with respect to 'levelling up' and improving local outcomes and opportunities.

3.2 The Council could seek to distribute its UKSPF 2024-25 allocation in a different way to that which is set out within this report, provided that the overall requirements of UKSPF were still met. However, the recommendations within this report are considered to be appropriate in light of the purposes of the funding, identification of current opportunities and challenges and the findings of community engagement. The recommended decisions do, in any case, allow for reasoned adjustment where new opportunities arise.



#### **4.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 4.1 The Council has a responsibility to ensure that its UKSPF allocation is spent in a timely and effective way, or else risks the opportunities it presents to fund activities that positively impact local communities being missed. By putting in place an effective mechanism for identifying funding opportunities and subsequently funding appropriate projects, in a way that is inclusive and collaborative, the Council is helping to reduce any risks that the funding is used ineffectively or wasted.
- 4.2 As set out in this report, the UKSPF process will be inclusive and include co-operation and collaboration with various stakeholders, including the local UKSPF Partnership Group and a commitment to regular all-Member updates. This process will help to ensure any operational or performance risks are identified in partnership.
- 4.3 To mitigate operational risks, the Council is working as one team with Brentwood Borough Council as it puts in place plans for utilising its own UKSPF allocation. This approach ensures resilience in officer capacity and ensures that any technical requirements (e.g. procurement, publicity, monitoring etc.) are well understood as a collective.
- 4.4 Project-level risks will be identified and assessed at the project level. Grant applications will need to include an initial risk analysis which can be considered and monitored to ensure project outputs are achieved.

#### **5.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 A UKSPF Partnership Group exists which represents a range of local stakeholders, including voluntary groups, parish/town councils, cultural representatives and business leaders. The Council has met and will continue to meet with this group to receive insight into local needs (social, environmental and economic) and to help co-design some of the resulting projects to ensure they respond positively to local opportunities and challenges.

#### **6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 This report and its recommendations relate to UK Government funding in the form of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). Whilst the funding has been allocated to the Council, it is not the Council's own funding and as a result has limited financial implications for the Council itself.
- 6.2 Notwithstanding the above, the Council has a responsibility to ensure that the funding is spent effectively and in accordance with financial regulations, including the relevant procurement rules.
- 6.3 UKSPF may provide match funding opportunities for the Council's own funding in certain scenarios, which will be reported as relevant to decision-making.



**7.0 LEGAL/GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 All spend associated with the Fund must be compliant with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and follow the Council's procedures.

**8.0 EQUALITY & HEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The decision is not considered to have any direct equality or health implications, however it is recognised that funding decisions, including through a grant programme, could in principle disproportionately benefit or disbenefit those who do or do not hold a protected characteristic.
- 8.2 Were a grant programme to be operated, the Council would include an assessment criterion which requires grant applicants to consider the equality and diversity implications of their funding proposal, as well as provide positive opportunities to engage and support harder-to-reach groups.
- 8.3 Project-level decisions will be made with a fuller understanding of any equality and diversity implications and ensure there are no unlawful impacts on protected groups as defined under the Equality Act 2010.

**9.0 ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are no direct environment or climate implications arising from this report. It is recommended, however, that environmental and climate considerations are given considerable weight in the design and development of project spend, including the grant programme criteria.

**10.0 ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 There are no direct economic implications arising from this report, however it is recognised that the projects to be funded should deliver a range of local economic benefits, including creating jobs and investment and encouraging incidental economic benefits such as increasing the amount of spend retained locally and increasing footfall to local town centres and venues.

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**APPENDICES**

Appendix A – Outline of 2024-25 Community Grant Programme Proposition

Appendix B – Outline of 2024-25 Council-led Expenditure Proposition

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Rochford District Council UKSPF Investment Plan

**SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Executive	13 July 2022
Executive	19 January 2023
Executive	7 March 2023

## Appendix A - Outline of 2024-25 Community Grant Programme Proposition

### Operation of the Grant Programme

- A.1. As set out in the main report, the Council operated a successful community grant programme as part of its 2023-24 UKSPF delivery process.
- A.2. The 2023-24 UKSPF Grant Programme offered grants of up to £15,000 for projects which responded to either Intervention E1 (High Streets and Town Centres) or E4 (Enhancing Culture and Heritage).
- A.3. There were nine successful applications to the 2023-24 grant programme and they are:
- **Bar n Bus Trust** – to run a youth outreach project in Rayleigh with a focus on providing positive opportunities for young people in local parks
  - **Elysium Eco Events** – to introduce a regular new eco-market in Rochford with a focus on showcasing sustainable and environmentally friendly products
  - **Friends of St Mary The Virgin CIC** – to fund a programme of work aimed at repurposing St Mary The Virgin Church in Little Wakering as a community building
  - **Make Your Market** – to run a programme of themed community markets across the District, with a focus on providing opportunities for young traders
  - **Rayleigh Town Council** – to fund a project to repair and repaint street furniture across Rayleigh town centre
  - **Rochford District Council Licensing Team** – to fund a period of taxi marshalling, and the installation of new defibrillators, in Rayleigh town centre
  - **Show Up Productions** – to operate a range of new community events as part of a 'Rochford in Winter' initiative
  - **Volunteer It Yourself CIC** – to lead a community rejuvenation project for Rochford WI Hall, with a focus on providing volunteering opportunities for local disadvantaged people
  - **Vulcan Restoration Trust** – to fund new displays and visual material at the Vulcan's hangar at London Southend Airport
- A.4. In light of the popularity of the previous grant programme, an opportunity has been identified to distribute a proportion of the Council's 2024-25 allocation through a competitive grant programme, opened to individuals and organisations.

- A.5. A grant programme satisfies Government requirements for the distribution of funding to be competitive, whilst enabling the community to design and directly deliver projects where they are best equipped to do. A grant programme also has the ability to create and fund capacity in project delivery beyond the Council's immediate officer base.
- A.6. As with the previous programme, it is proposed that any grant programme would receive applications via an online form on the Council's website. The form would be accompanied by the conditions and eligibility criteria for a grant, and a plain English guide to submitting a grant application.
- A.7. In order to distribute funding as early in the 2024-25 financial year as possible, it is recommended that the grant programme initially opens in March 2024, for a period of at least four weeks. The grant opportunity would be advertised widely, including direct approaches to known local groups, and a specific workshop on the grant programme for potential applicants will be held shortly before the grant programme launches.
- A.8. Learning from the previous grant programme, the engagement of a specialist is also planned to offer free, independent bid writing expertise to local groups prior to the grant window opening.
- A.9. As set out in the main report, the Council's UKSPF allocation totals slightly in excess of £770,000 for the 2024-25 funding year. As in the previous year, it is proposed that funding for Intervention E23 be excluded from the grant as the nature of its intention lends itself better to directly commissioned projects.
- A.10. From its combined E1 and E4 allocations, it is recommended that the Council allocates the grant programme up to £250,000 and limits individual grant recipients to a proportionately lower figure, with value for money a key determinant in any award criteria.
- A.11. It is proposed that no minimum allocation of the funding be made to the grant programme and that decisions on the exact amount of funding released through the grant programme are instead made on the merit and volume of applications received. It may be that there insufficient eligible or favourable applications to utilise the entire grant budget, in which case any unused proportion could be released for further Council-led projects.
- A.12. Notwithstanding the above, further rounds of the grant programme could be operated within 2024-25 subject to an assessment of demand and funding priorities.

### **Principles of 2024-25 Grant Programme**

- A.13. In order to attract the greatest number of applications, it is proposed that eligibility criteria are only set where needed to ensure projects fit the overall conditions of the UKSPF funding and will be clearly effective and deliverable. It is proposed that the below conditions become the overarching principles for any grant programme:

- Projects must either enhance local high streets / town centres (Intervention E1); or enhance existing cultural or historic institutions (Intervention E4); or both<sup>1</sup>
  - Applicants must clearly specify the value of their funding request and whether that request is for revenue funding and/or capital funding, or both;
  - Applicants would be able to secure a grant in 2024/25 to a minimum value of £10,000 or maximum value of £50,000. It is proposed that this maximum value could be exceeded in exceptional cases where justified by the extent of outcomes and it is clear that the project has a clear legacy
  - Applicants must agree to communicate the progression of their funded projects, meet all UKSPF criteria, and submit regular monitoring reports demonstrating progress and achievements of key outputs and outcomes.
  - Applicants must hold or commit to achieve all relevant licenses, permissions and insurances and be financially robust.
- A.14. The above principles will function as ‘pass-fail’ criteria for all applications, however it is recognised that subjective criteria will also be required in judging whether to award a grant to a specific applicant. It is proposed that the Council uses the below assessment criteria, appropriately weighted, to determine whether to award a grant to an applicant:
- Applicants must clearly demonstrate how their funded projects would enhance local high streets / town centres (Intervention E1); or enhance existing cultural or historic institutions (Intervention E4); or both
  - Applicants must demonstrate how their funded projects would deliver the outputs and outcomes set out under their target intervention(s)
  - Applicants will be encouraged to demonstrate how their funded projects will help to deliver outputs and outcomes for a wide range of District locations, and particularly in villages
  - Applicants should identify how their funded projects would help support the delivery of wider Council strategies (e.g. the Business Plan or Economic Growth Strategy)
  - Applicants should set out how their funded projects would help to ‘level up’ the area, improving outcomes or providing opportunities for local residents, businesses and wider communities, socially, economically and/or environmentally
  - Applicants must provide details of their project team, and any other organisations they would work with, the relevant experience held by the

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<sup>1</sup> The full objectives, outcomes and outputs of the Council’s UKSPF priorities would be set out in any grant material

project team on similar projects and the capacity the project team holds to deliver any funded projects

- Applicants must set out a realistic timetable for delivery of all project outputs and detail how these timetables would be managed and achieved, including an initial risk analysis with mitigation
- Applicants should demonstrate how their funded project would have a positive legacy and any ambitions to become self-sustaining in the long-term
- Applicants should demonstrate any intention to achieve match funding and details of any successful match funding applications on similar projects in the past
- Applicants should demonstrate how their funded projects would achieve equality and diversity objectives, and include / benefit harder-to-reach or less represented groups in the community
- Applicants should demonstrate how their funded projects would support local sustainability goals and how carbon and environmental objectives would be achieved

A.15. Decisions on whether to award a grant would be made by a panel under the delegated authority sought in the main report.

A.16. However it is expected that the principles and outcomes of the grant programme will be reported and scrutinised at least quarterly to the local UKSPF Partnership Group (consisting of stakeholders and partners) and the Executive.

A.17. Iterative feedback received from the UKSPF Partnership Group will be used to help shape the mechanics of the grant programme.

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**Appendix B - Outline of 2024-25 Council-Led Projects Proposition****Context**

- B.1. As set out in the main report, any portion of the Council's 2024-25 UKSPF allocation not otherwise committed to a grant programme will need to be used to fund a range of Council-led projects under the three interventions in the Council's Investment Plan.
- B.2. To emphasise, these interventions are:
- E1: Improvements to local town centres and high streets
  - E4: Enhancements to existing cultural, historic and heritage institutions and their offer
  - E23: Strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems
- B.3. As set out in the main report, the Council's 2024-25 UKSPF allocation is around £773,000. Were the Council to utilise the full £250,000 budget for a Community Grant Programme, approximately £523,000 would remain for Council-led projects.
- B.4. Whilst these projects are identified as 'Council-led' for the purposes of distinguishing them from the grant programme wherein projects would be definitionally 'community-led', there is no suggestion that these projects would be delivered in isolation to the community. A partnership approach is recommended for each project.
- B.5. The project listed in Table 1 below have been identified from a programme of internal and external engagement. As each project is likely to have its own procurement requirements which will help to refine the exact scope and budget, it has been recommended at this stage that the allocation made to each project area be a reasoned approximation, rather than a precise or restrictive budget. These approximate allocations have, however, been made on the basis of realistic judgements on likely costs, socialised and tested with the relevant service areas as appropriate, and inclusive of a small contingency. In some cases, it is recognised that the allocation is only likely to fund some portion of a wider initiative, and further funding (including in the form of match funding) may be sought as appropriate.
- B.6. More precise project costs, including those subsequently defined through procurement processes, will be reported into the Executive through the quarterly update reports, as appropriate. At this time, allocations can be converted into more precise budgets.



- B.7. Given the time restrictive nature of the funding, the need to maximise project delivery within the 2024-25 financial year, and the need to allow for procurement processes, it has been important to the effective use of the funding to formulate an initial list of project ideas to progress. Fundamentally, projects which are not capable of delivery before the end of March 2025, or which would require such extensive planning and procurement that delivery would not be able to commence until the latter stages of the 2024-25 financial year, are unlikely to be suitable for the funding.
- B.8. Notwithstanding the above, the list of projects included in Table 1 are not intended to be exhaustive, nor is this process intended to preclude the opportunity for new projects to be identified during the funding period. It should be emphasised that any projected underspend, including as a consequence of unforeseen challenges in the delivery of a particular project, any underspend from the grant programme, or the release of a project contingency, will all provide opportunities to fund additional or alternative projects. These additional or alternative projects, where significant in scope or cost, can be considered as part of future Executive reports.

Table 1: List of Council-Led Projects and Allocations

Project Headline	Description	Indicative Allocation	Additional Funding Available
<b>Intervention E1 – High Streets and Town Centres</b>			
High Street and Town Centre Rejuvenation Works	<p>There are known accessibility issues throughout the public realm of each of the District's town centres and high streets including damaged or uneven surfaces and street furniture. This allocation would be put forward to Essex County Council, with input from other partners including Parish and Town Councils, to fund rejuvenation projects within priority areas within local town centres / high streets.</p> <p>This allocation would also include a sub-allocation towards funding softer enhancements, such as greening and additional street furniture.</p>	£100,000 (Capital)	<p>There is an opportunity to combine a UKSPF allocation with the existing £50,000 dedicated budget for high street regeneration.</p> <p>It may also be possible to access match funding from Essex County Council or local parish councils through a collaborative funding approach to rejuvenation works.</p>
<b>Intervention E4 – Culture and Heritage</b>			
Enhancements to the Mill Arts and Events Centre	As identified in the report to Council on 7 September 2023, there remains a range of enhancements required to the Mill Arts and Events Centre over a 15 year period to support its beneficial use as supporting the Arts and Events sector. This allocation would be used to support existing identified funding to bring forward priority investment in the following areas:	£200,000 (Capital)	A funding allocation would complement the £185,000 allocation that has already been approved for priority works, alongside the £45,000 allocation for furniture replacement
Walking and Cycling Enhancements to Cherry Orchard Country Park	There is a costed scheme in place for walking and cycling enhancements to Cherry Orchard Country Park, which seeks to improve the connectivity and resilience of the country park. An allocation from UKSPF would help to support the delivery of a phase of enhancements which could enable match funding for further phases. In addition, the provision of water	£78,000 (Capital)	There may be an opportunity to complement a UKSPF allocation with Section 106 funding towards cycling improvements. The Council is currently working with Essex County Council on the development of a Local Cycling

	and power to the site could help promote events in the country park.		and Walking Infrastructure Plan, which, once finalised, will enable the Council to begin seeking new funding from the newly established Active Travel England.
Creation of a 12 month Tourism and Events officer post with a dedicated budget	The District has an untapped potential for tourism focussed around its natural and historic assets. However within the authority, there is limited officer resource available to maximise or promote this potential. Creation of this post, initially on a temporary basis, will help create capacity and capability to lead on place promotion, branding, and the curation of tourism assets (including new event programmes) across Rochford District.	£75,000 (Revenue)	There may be opportunities for the postholder to seek additional funding from, for example, Arts Council and to create additional capacity through collaboration with local partners
<b>Intervention E23 – Business Support</b>			
Programme of local business events, including dedicated support for Big Green Week	The Council has a history of running a range of business events, including business breakfast networking events, alongside supporting the events of local networks, such as those operated by 3 Chambers. An allocation from UKSPF would be used to expand and enhance local business events into a more consistent and coherent programme, supporting the development of local supply chains, providing networking opportunities and creating enhanced access between the Council, business partners and local businesses themselves. This allocation would also fund dedicated activity around Big Green Week, focussed on supporting the uptake of sustainable business practices.	£15,000 (Revenue)	N/A

Business Support Programme	In recent years, the Council has accessed Government funding to contract with specialist business advisors for the delivery of business support programmes. This allocation would enable the commissioning of a further business support contract for 2024/25 which would provide local businesses with free access to support, mentoring and advice on themes informed by the latest business intelligence.	£25,000 (Revenue)	N/A
Specific support for start-ups, entrepreneurs and small businesses	The District's economy has a strong entrepreneurial and small-business culture. This allocation would be used in partnership with national support agencies to provide new businesses, entrepreneurs and small businesses with limited means subsidised access to membership of national support agencies, local premises and other expertise which is normally only financially accessible by larger firms.	£30,000 (Revenue)	N/A