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**REPORT TO THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE 13 JULY 2022****PORTFOLIO: CLIMATE & ECONOMY****REPORT FROM ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, PLACE AND ENVIRONMENT****SUBJECT: UK SHARED PRIORITIES FUND****1 DECISION BEING RECOMMENDED**

- 1.1 That authority be delegated to the Strategic Director for Resources, Environment & Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Climate & Economy to prepare and submit an Investment Plan for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

**2 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 The Council has been provisionally allocated funding through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund which can only be accessed through submission of an Investment Plan for Government approval, prior to 1 August 2022.

**3 SALIENT INFORMATION****Background**

- 3.1 The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) was launched in April 2022 and provides £2.6 billion in national funding for local investment by March 2025. It is the Government's replacement for the European Structural and Investment Programme (ESIF).
- 3.2 The Fund supports the ambitions of the Levelling up White Paper and aims to build pride in place and increase life chances across the country.
- 3.3 All areas of the UK have been provisionally allocated a share of the monies from the UKSPF which have been calculated using a funding formula – this is **not** a competitive bidding process against other Local Authorities.
- 3.4 The UKSPF sets out three key investment priorities:
- Community and Place
  - Supporting Local Business
  - People and Skills
- 3.5 The funding for the first two priorities will commence in 2022/23, while the 'people and skills' priority will commence in 2024/25.
- 3.6 In England, the UKSPF will operate across the geographies of the Mayoral Combined Authorities and lower tier or unitary authorities. As such, Rochford

District Council has been identified as the lead authority for the UKSPF within the District of Rochford.

- 3.7 The Council has been provisionally allocated £1,000,000 through the UKSPF. However; this funding can only be accessed by submitting an Investment Plan for Government approval.
- 3.8 The Council's 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) as follows:

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

- 3.9 As can be seen above, the majority of the funding is not available until the third year (2024-25). It is therefore imperative that the intended spend within the Investment Plan reflects the allocation profile.
- 3.10 In 2022-23, a minimum of 10% spend needs to be capital expenditure, followed by a minimum of 13% in 2023-24 and 20% in 2024-25.
- 3.11 As lead authority, Rochford District Council is responsible for developing a local Investment Plan which needs to be submitted to Government by 1 August 2022. The Investment Plan must be approved by the Government before the funding is made available. Once the Investment Plan is approved, the Council will have responsibility for managing the fund, processing payments and day-to-day monitoring.
- 3.12 The Investment Plan is completed using a set template, which addresses the local context, outcomes, interventions and delivery. UKSPF guidance provides 41 interventions which Rochford District Council projects should ideally align against. At this stage, projects do not need to be fully developed and the information required about each project to be included within the Investment Plan is not onerous.
- 3.13 Investment plans do not need to cover all of the three key priority areas but should instead seek to address local challenges and opportunities.
- 3.14 The DLUHC are responsible for leading the assessment process for signing off investment plans. Where a plan cannot be signed off first time, feedback will be given and the DLUHC will work with the lead authority to secure sign off.
- 3.15 Collaboration with different partners is a core component of the fund. Working across boundaries with different local authorities is heavily encouraged, this especially applies to the *supporting local business and people and skills*

priorities. Lead authorities should aim to include as wide a range of stakeholders and partners as possible; these include:

- local businesses and investors
- business support providers or representatives
- local partnership boards and strategic bodies
- prominent local community & faith organisations
- voluntary, sector social enterprise and civil society organisations
- education and skills providers and employment experts and providers
- nature, environmental or associated representatives
- public health representatives
- police and crime representatives
- local MPs

3.16 Collaboration has taken place with Brentwood Borough Council along with other authorities to identify potential synergies. Engagement with other stakeholders including those listed above will be ongoing throughout the process.

### **Principles of Investment Plan**

3.17 The UKSPF has made available £20,000 provision for each lead local authority to help prepare the investment plan. This funding is in addition to each authorities' allocation, and will be paid on sign-off of the investment plan. The Council proposed to use a proportion of that funding to appoint a local consultant firm, Russell and Dawson to develop the Investment Plan in advance of the 1 August 2022 deadline.

3.18 The proposed Investment Plan identifies priorities with the Council's Business Plan 2020-2023 that align with the Investment Priorities of the UKSPF and consists of an outline proposal that features a focus on high-street regeneration, both through physical improvements and through the promotion of a local arts and cultural offering to develop a stronger and identifiable Rochford District brand. Projects are likely to include, but not necessarily limited to:

- Ensuring that the Mill Arts and Events Centre represents a focal point for a cultural offering and provides a high-street regeneration focus
- Community-led arts and events projects across the three main towns of Rochford, Rayleigh and Hockley
- A large-scale annual event representing arts and culture to take place in the District, e.g. Cherry Orchard Country Park
- High-street improvements to place, e.g. Ernie Lane, Rayleigh; Spa Junction, Hockley; Market Square, Rochford etc.

- 3.19 At this stage, the Investment Plan needs to provide an indication of the expected projects, but these need not be exhaustively defined. It is accepted that a degree of refinement and refocus will be required over time as priorities and opportunities become clearer otherwise this may impact the Council's ability to prepare an Investment Plan before the deadline of 1<sup>st</sup> August.

#### **4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 The Council is not obliged to prepare and submit an Investment Plan prior to 1 August 2022 deadline, however a decision to not do so would forego the Council's allocation through the UKSPF and in doing so, would forego the opportunity to fund new interventions in the District and, therefore, the opportunities to improve outcomes for its residents and businesses.

#### **5 RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 By preparing an Investment Plan the Council will be able to access allocated funding through the UKSPF and address opportunities to improve outcomes for local residents and businesses. Should this Investment Plan not be prepared, either robustly or at all, there is a risk that the Council will not receive this allocation. The Council is engaging a specialist consultancy to ensure its Investment Plan is robust.
- 5.2 The Council has undertaken initial engagement with stakeholders and will continue to undertake such engagement throughout the process to ensure opportunities are identified and inefficiencies avoided. This will mitigate risk of missed opportunities or duplicative work that may otherwise lead to a lower quality of output from the funding.

#### **6 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no direct environmental implications from preparation and submission of an Investment Plan at this stage.

#### **7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The UKSPF has made available £20,000 provision for each lead local authority to help prepare the investment plan. This funding is in addition to each authorities allocation, and will be paid on sign-off of the investment plan.

#### **8 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no legal implications at this stage of the process.

#### **9 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 'An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and found there to be no impacts (either positive or negative) on protected groups as defined under the Equality Act 2010.

I confirm that the above recommendation does not depart from Council policy and that appropriate consideration has been given to any budgetary and legal implications.

The decision should be taken as a matter of urgency and not subject to call-in because of the need for expediency in meeting 1 August 2022 deadline for the submission of the bid.

LT Lead Officer Signature: \_\_\_\_\_



**Assistant Director, Place and Environment**

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**Background Papers:-**

None.

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