

NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

**COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – THURSDAY, 6
FEBRUARY 2025**



Title of Report	UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND AWARD 2025/26	
Presented by	Barrie Walford Economic Development and Regeneration Team Manager	
Background Papers	Scrutiny Committee report – March 2023 UKSPF Cabinet report – March 2023	Public Report: Yes
Financial Implications	Set out within the report	
	Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
Legal Implications	Set out within the report	
	Signed off by the Monitoring Officer: Yes	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	Set out within the report	
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes	
Reason Agenda Item Submitted to Scrutiny	To set out to Scrutiny Committee a deliverable 12-month programme of UKSPF funded projects that delivers against Council objectives and in accordance with requirements of the UKSPF fund.	
Recommendations	THAT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REVIEWS THIS REPORT ON ADDITIONAL FUNDING FROM THE UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND AND PROVIDES COMMENTS FOR CABINET TO CONSIDER AT ITS MEETING ON 25 FEBRUARY 2025	

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Announced in April 2022, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) was administered by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) – Now re-named as Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).
- 1.2 The Council was allocated £2,414,817, profiled over three years from 2022 to 2025. The final year of funding ends on 31 March 2025.
- 1.3 In November 2024, MHCLG announced that the UKSPF would be extended for a ‘transition year’ for the financial year 2025/26 while work continued on what would ultimately replace the funding in the longer term.

1.4 In December 2024, MHCLG confirmed the allocations for Lead Authorities and also set out the approach for the funding:

- The Council has been allocated £789,998, which is split as £145,859 Capital and £644,140 Revenue.
- NWLDC will receive this funding directly in or around April 2025.
- Unspent funding from the 2022-2025 UKSPF cannot be carried over into the new fund. The 31 March 2025 deadline remains for those projects.
- No announcement has been made on further funding beyond March 2026. However, the UKSPF 2025/26 cannot be carried over into what arrangements may follow, and therefore it must be spent within the 12-month timeframe.
- The three priority areas of Community and Place, Supporting Local Business and People and Skills remain, however, there are new missions and priorities associated with each:

1.5 **Communities and Place**

- **Healthy Safe and Inclusive Communities**
 - Healthy: Improving health and wellbeing
 - Safe: Reducing crime
 - Inclusive: Bringing Communities together, tackling homelessness
- **Thriving Places**
 - Development of the visitor economy
 - High street / town centre improvements

1.6 **Supporting Local Business**

- **Support for business**
 - Advice and support to business
 - Enterprise Culture and Start-Up support
 - Business sites and premises

1.7 **People and Skills**

- **Employability**
 - Support for young people at risk of being Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)
 - Supporting people to progress towards and into employment
- **Skills**
 - Essential skills, including numeracy, literacy, English as a second language (ESOL) and digital
 - Employment related skills

1.8 A full prospectus and list of interventions for the UKSPF 2025/26 has not been published but is expected soon.

1.9 In addition to the UKSPF award, the Department for Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) awarded local authorities additional funding to deliver a Rural England Prosperity Fund between April 2023 and March 2025. No announcement has yet been made in relation to further funding from DEFRA .

2.0 **UKSPF 25/26 recommended programme**

2.1 Officers have considered options for the new fund against the short timeframe in which delivery is required. Recommended options for allocation of the funding are set out below.

2.2 These projects will:

- Meet Council priorities as set out in the Council Delivery Plan.
- Deliver against the Council’s Regeneration Framework objectives.
- Split the funding to provide a District-wide impact (Reflecting Member aspirations that shaped the original UKSPF programme).
- Respond to feedback on the Districtwide Regeneration received from Members, Community Scrutiny Committee and external stakeholders.
- And, satisfy UKSPF eligibility criteria.

2.3 Following Scrutiny Committee, officers intend to present recommended options for the use of the UKSPF transitional funding to Cabinet on 25 February.

2.4 The list of proposed projects are set out in the table below which includes an allowance for the cost of administration.

Project	Indicative Budget
4% Admin Allowance	£31,600
Renew Business Support contract	£60,000
Renew Skills for work contract	£35,000
New Community Grant scheme	£150,000
Investment in key settlements (Vital and Viable study projects)	£300,000
Improving Our Visitor Economy - Moira Furnace Phase 2	£145,859 Capital and £30,000 Revenue
Regeneration Framework project feasibility studies	£37,500

2.5 **4% Admin Allowance** - This is a deductible amount from the total award to be used toward supporting the resourcing of the project(s). The figure of 4% is suggested by MHCLG.

2.6 **Extension of existing Business Support contract** - Through the 2022-2025 UKSPF programme, North West Leicestershire launched two different business support programmes.

2.7 The first was the Leicestershire Business Advisory Service, known as LBAS. This project was delivered in collaboration with Leicestershire Local Authorities of Blaby, Harborough, Hinckley and Bosworth, Melton, and Oadby and Wigston and ran a free to access business advice and support service for small and medium sized business across Leicestershire.

2.8 The second was a ‘Women in Business’ support programme commissioned exclusively in North West Leicestershire that was designed to support local women to start up in business and/or support women back into employment.

- 2.9 Officers are currently working with our neighbouring authorities to define what the extension of these business support programmes could look like to maximise the impact of the 2025/26 UKSPF transition funding.
- 2.10 **Extension of existing Skills work contract** - Through the 2022-2025 UKSPF programme, North West Leicestershire commissioned and launched a series of different skills support programmes.
- 2.11 As with the business support programmes referred to earlier, Officers are currently evaluating the impact of these skills programmes to determine how to best use the 2025/26 UKSPF transition funding to shape the extension of some of the UKSPF funded skills programmes.
- 2.12 **New Community Grant scheme** - Over 2023 and 2024 the Council allocated £300,000 toward Community led projects in each parish (or area where unparished) of the district. Over £258,000 was distributed to a range of projects, however, it was noted that several parishes did not apply for funding at all and that larger areas, such as Coalville and Ashby-de-la-Zouch, met their funding caps very quickly. It was also fed back from applicants that the small amounts of funding in some places (<£3,500) made it difficult to find a project without using external funding.
- 2.13 Officers propose that this scheme is kept as a larger, central grant fund from which the Council seek to support a smaller number of higher value projects that can come from anywhere in the District.
- 2.14 **Investment in local centres (Vital and Viable study) projects** - By March 2025, each of the six centres identified in the Council's Local Plan (Coalville, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Castle Donington, Kegworth, Ibstock and Measham) will have a 'Vital and Viable' study completed which will also include suggested projects. These studies are being completed in collaboration with Town and Parish Councils, local businesses, community groups and other stakeholders.
- 2.15 These studies, shaped by local stakeholders, will identify a series of projects and interventions that can make smaller but impactful improvements to towns and local centres in the District.
- 2.16 It is proposed that an allocation of £300,000 be made from the Council's UKSPF 25/26 award to enable town and parish councils to work with their communities with the six centres to deliver some of their priority projects they identify through preparing their local vital and viable study.
- 2.17 Nominally the £300,000 allocation gives each centre £50,000, though this may need to be tiered to take into account the size and needs of each area.
- 2.18 **Improve The Visitor Economy Moira Furnace – Phase 2**
Through the original UKSPF award and the Council's own Capital programme, the historic monument has been subject to recent investment to secure the Furnace, undertake essential repair works and to enhance the existing presentation of the furnace setting.
- 2.19 Using the capital allocation of UKSPF transitional funding, Officers propose to continue to deliver improvements to the offer at Moira Furnace and commence a new second phase of capital investment to support the visitor economy and enhance the tourism offer. The use of the UKSPF complements the Council's planned investment

into Moira Furnace and contributes to the ongoing investment to the National Forest and delivery of the Heart of the National Forest plan.

2.20 These projects include:

- Study work to support efforts to restore the Ashby Canal as set out in the Council's District-wide Regeneration Framework,
- Ongoing collaborative work with Visit Leicester to promote North West Leicestershire as a visitor destination
- Delivery of a green accreditation that supports local visitor attractions, tourism businesses and accommodation providers to improve their green credentials, benefit the environment and create competitive advantage for our visitor economy.

2.21 **Regeneration Framework project feasibility studies** - This funding can be utilised toward exploring feasibility, design or options studies for projects set out within the North West Leicestershire Districtwide Regeneration Framework and the Coalville Regeneration Framework.

3.0 Financial implications

3.1 All projects listed above in section 2 above are proposed to be delivered using UKSPF 25/26 funding awarded in accordance with any conditions attached to those funding awards.

3.2 Any UKSPF 25/26 funding unspent by 31 March 2026 will need to be returned to MHCLG.

3.3 This report sets out proposals to allocate the new funding to projects which officers are confident of delivering within the 12-month timescale, as well as meeting the priorities of the Council Delivery Plan and Regeneration Frameworks.

3.4 It is proposed that the projects recommended within this report will be delivered using existing capacity with the Economic Regeneration team.

4.0 Legal Implications

4.1 Projects delivered through the UKSPF will need to be delivered within the subsidy control regime (formerly State Aid).

4.2 Additionally, UKSPF spend should be compliant with Public Contracts Regulations 2015, where relevant and follow local constitution, processes and procedures as and where relevant.

5.0 Staffing and Corporate Implications

5.1 It is proposed that the UKSPF 25/26 programme will be delivered with a similar programme framework as the original UKSPF.

5.2 The UKSPF 25/26 will be delivered by a 'Project Team' consisting of the Council's Economic Development Manager and a Senior Economic Development Officer. This Project Team will be supported by the wider Economic Development team, the Head of Regeneration and Director of Place.

- 5.3 Each of the listed projects will be delivered by at least one senior 'Lead' Officer. The Lead Officer(s) will regularly (weekly in most cases) meet with the 'Project Team' to monitor the progress of each project.
- 5.4 The Economic Development Manager will be providing regular updates through monthly briefings with the Business and Regeneration Portfolio Holder and through briefings with the Shadow Business and Regeneration Portfolio Holder.
- 5.5 On a bi-monthly basis the 'Project Team' will provide a progress report and notify any delivery risks to a 'UKSPF Programme Group'. It is proposed that 'Programme Group' will be made up of officers from the following service areas: Audit, Communications, Finance, Legal and, where necessary, ICT and Transformation.
- 5.6 As a minimum, on a quarterly basis, the 'Programme Group' will provide an oversight update on the UKSPF programme to Capital Strategy Group.
- 5.7 Once concluded, officers will bring an evaluation report back to the Scrutiny Committee and to Cabinet to reflect on the UKPSF 25/26, its outputs and outcomes and lessons learnt.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning and regeneration - Communities and housing - Clean, green and Zero Carbon - A well-run council
Policy Considerations:	North West Leicestershire Council Delivery Plan North West Leicestershire Districtwide Regeneration Framework
Safeguarding:	No safeguarding considerations have been identified.
Equalities/Diversity:	No equalities/diversity considerations have been identified at this stage. However, Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken for specific projects as they are developed to ensure they meet the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion objectives of the Council
Customer Impact:	The proposed UKSPF 25/26 projects set out a series of interventions that will benefit residents and businesses.
Economic and Social Impact:	The proposed UKSPF 25/26 projects set out a series of interventions that will benefit residents and businesses.
Environment, Climate Change and zero carbon:	Through the delivery of the Community Grants and investment in local centres may enable communities and partner organisation to implement initiatives that contribute to achieving the North West Leicestershire zero carbon roadmap.
Consultation/Community Engagement:	The programme of work identified within this report contribute to the delivery of the adopted Council's Regeneration Frameworks which have been subject to scrutiny prior to their adoption. In addition, the investment in local centres: Vital and Viable study projects will have been identified

	following consultation within the districts six local centres.
Risks:	As part of its Corporate Governance arrangements, the Council must ensure that risk management is considered and satisfactorily covered in any report put before elected Members for a decision or action.
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