

UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund 2025/2026

Report of the Leader

Recommended:

1. That the projects summarised in paragraph 5.3 to the report be endorsed and allocated UK Shared Prosperity Fund funding.
2. That the Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development in consultation with the Leader be authorised to make any subsequent necessary amendments or adjustments to the projects and sums encapsulated in recommendation 1 above.
3. That the Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development be authorised to develop grant schemes, submit monitoring reports to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in consultation with the Leader.
4. That the Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development in consultation with the Leader and the Climate Emergency and Countryside Portfolio Holder be authorised to administer the Rural England Prosperity Fund 2025/26 allocation.
5. That the Head of Finance and Revenues be authorised to add capital projects from this scheme to the Council's Capital Programme.

Recommendation to Council

SUMMARY:

- To outline the projects contained within the Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund plan for 2025/26.
- To outline the Rural England Prosperity Fund approach for 2025/26

1 Introduction

- 1.1 On 13 December 2024, the Government announced a further round of UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) for 2025/26. The Council has been awarded £327,000.
- 1.2 On 4 March 2025 the Government announced that there would be a further year's Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) awarded to Local Authorities. The award amount has yet to be confirmed.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to outline how the UKSPF and REPF can be

used to meet the objectives of the Council and its partners.

2 Background

- 2.1 The UKSPF supports the five Government missions: Kickstart economic growth, break down barriers to opportunity, make Britain a clean energy superpower, Build an NHS fit for the future and Take back our streets.
- 2.2 The Council was awarded just over £1million UKSPF funding for 2022 – 2025. This was then topped up by £514,097 of REPF over the same time period. Both programmes came to an end on 31 March 2025.
- 2.3 In December 2024 the Council was awarded a further £327,000 of UKSPF funding to cover activities in 2025/26. The Council does not have to agree its plans for 2025/26 in advance with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), but it will have to report on its activities and their outputs and outcomes, linking them to MHCLG prescribed investment themes. Projects must also be consistent with TVBC and UK Government priorities.
- 2.4 Work has been undertaken to identify deliverable projects for the UKSPF 2025/26 portfolio.
- 2.5 In March 2025 it was announced that there would also be another tranche of REPF for 2025/26. At this time there is no further detail about the amount that TVBC will be allocated.

3 Corporate Objectives and Priorities

- 3.1 The projects contained within the portfolio touch on the Sustainability, Inclusion, Prosperity, Connection and Environment priorities highlighted in the Corporate Plan 2023 – 2027. In addition, the projects proposed have geographic coverage across the Borough.
- 3.2 The UKSPF proposed projects and REPF funding support the delivery of aspects of the Economic Development Strategy 2024 -2029.
- 3.3 The Net Zero Solar grant programme for businesses supports the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP).

4 Consultations/Communications

- 4.1 Officers have reviewed the outcomes of the projects delivered in the 2022 – 2025 UKSPF Investment Plan. In addition, there has been broad internal consultation on proposals for 2025/26.
- 4.2 Consideration has been given to the place-based workshops' outcomes; projects supported by Andover Vision and Romsey Future; potential overlaps with other schemes and sources of funding; fit to the UKSPF missions and themes; the geographic spread of the grants; and deliverability by 31 March 2026.
- 4.3 The REPF 2022 – 2025 programme is ending on the 31 March 2025. An

initial internal lessons learned session has taken place which will inform the new REPF 2025 / 2026 programme once more detail is published by Government. Any future REPF programme would need to compliment the proposed rural strategy and rural business grant which is the subject of a separate recommendation on this agenda.

5 Options

- 5.1 Option One – Approve the following projects for UKSPF and delegate authority for REPF.
- 5.2 Projects need to target those areas of Test Valley in line with UKSPF priorities. UKSPF is not a fund that can be distributed equally across the Borough but is aimed at creating opportunities in the context of supporting our communities, improving skills and supporting the local economy. The breadth of the projects listed below meet one or a combination of these themes as required by the UKSPF.
- 5.3 The indicative projects and proposed allocations are as follows:
 - (a) A £33,000 contribution to Andover health hub. The health hub is already delivering significant benefits for Andover and surrounding communities. This funding would be used to part-fund Community Wellbeing Workers to help reach vulnerable people within the Borough who often have serious health and housing problems.
 - (b) £80,000 funding to provide a Changing Places Facility in Romsey.
 - (c) £80,000 funding to create an Andover High Street and Town Centres a grant scheme to improve the appearance of units in Andover Town Centre. This scheme has been developed in partnership with Andover Town Council and the Andover Business Improvement District (BID).
 - (d) £30,000 funding to install history boards in Romsey.
 - (e) £29,000 funding to improve the internal layout of King Arthur's Way Community Centre to enable more groups to use the centre.
 - (f) £50,000 funding to create a Net Zero Solar programme for businesses.
 - (g) £10,000 funding towards the University of Southampton Science Park Catalyst Programme to support new cutting-edge technology businesses.
 - (h) £15,000 funding for the Romsey Young Carers to support the work they do with disadvantaged young people across southern Test Valley and the rural area.
- 5.4 The above cost estimates may change as projects are delivered. To ensure maximum use of the grant within the strict UKSPF timescales, it is recommended that the Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development, in consultation with the Leader, be authorised to make changes to the above schedule.
- 5.5 The UKSPF scheme requirements stipulate that a minimum of £60,400 of the total costs are on capital expenditure. This requirement will be met with the recommended programme of interventions.

- 5.6 Under the previous REPF programme the funding was split equally to support a rural business and community grant scheme. Without the detail from Government in terms of funding amount and flexibilities it is not possible to confirm how this funding will be spent at this time. However, consideration is being given to continue the previous grant schemes.
- 5.7 Option Two – Do not approve the projects and carry out further analysis.

6 Option Appraisal

- 6.1 Option One would earmark central Government funding to projects that meet both Government and local priorities. The projects should be achievable within the 2025/26 financial year and within the proposed budgets. They have geographic coverage across the Borough and supporting evidence for their need.
- 6.2 The REPF funding will provide an opportunity to continue to support rural communities.
- 6.3 The disadvantage to this option is that due to the timescales imposed these projects have been identified at pace. However, it is felt that this has been mitigated by the process outlined in 6.1.
- 6.4 Option Two would allow a full evaluation of the current UKSPF and REPF projects to inform project selection for 2025/26. Further consultation may reveal further projects.
- 6.5 The disadvantage to this option is that all funding has to be spent by 31 March 2026 and so projects need to begin as soon as possible to meet this deadline. The projects identified arise from existing evidence and engagement undertaken by the Council. Additionally, learning from UKSPF and REPF has informed the consultation and decision-making process, so additional analysis may not add value.

7 Risk Management

- 7.1 The risk assessment has been completed. Given the very short timescale for the UKSPF/REPF programmes, there are risks that one or more projects might not be deliverable in time or might underspend in the time window. These risks will be mitigated through the following actions:
- Grant schemes will be launched quickly
 - Partners will be made aware of their responsibilities and the timescales in writing at the outset
 - Monitoring will be undertaken to enable funds to be switched between priorities if issues emerge sufficiently early.
 - The Housing team will put funding towards the health hub project to provide greater flexibility on timelines for the recruitment of staff.
 - Flexibility is built into the scheme to ensure all funding can be utilised.

8 Resource Implications

- 8.1 MHCLG will provide £327,000 that will need to be spent by 31 March 2026.
- 8.2 The final REPF allocation for 2025/26 is not yet known. It will also need to be spent by 31 March 2026.
- 8.3 Revenue budgets will be updated to reflect the cost of interventions that are revenue expenditure. Interventions that will be classified as capital expenditure will be included in the next Capital Programme update.
- 8.4 Both programmes will be managed within existing resources.

9 Legal Implications

- 9.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

10 Equality Issues

- 10.1 There are no adverse equality issues identified resulting from the recommendation. Indeed, the Changing Places toilet will make Romsey Town centre more inclusive and accessible, allowing people with additional needs to spend more time in town to shop, socialise and take part in community events.
- 10.2 The Community Wellbeing Workers will work within a geography of defined households in an area of highest deprivation, poorest health outcomes and lowest percentage of employment to improve community connectedness, promoting prevention opportunities and increase health literacy.
- 10.3 Should any equality issues arise during the administration of the fund, they will be given appropriate consideration and Equality Impact Assessments carried out as required.

11 Other Issues

- 11.1 There are no Community Safety issues identified.
- 11.2 There are no Environmental Health issues identified.
- 11.3 The Net Zero Solar programme will help meet Sustainability and Addressing a Changing Climate priorities.
- 11.4 Property Issues – Relevant permissions will be sought per project, if required.
- 11.5 Wards/Communities Affected – All Wards affected.

12 Conclusion

- 12.1 The Government has allocated £327,000 to the Council through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. This report summarises the projects identified which best meet the UKSPF guidance and connect with the objectives of the Council and its partners. Whilst the details of the REPF funding have yet to be confirmed it is anticipated that the grant will provide an opportunity for the Council to support its rural communities.

Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)

[UK Shared Prosperity Fund Background – Cabinet 29 September 2022](#)

[Rural England Prosperity Fund Background – Council 5 April 2023](#)

Confidentiality

It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.

No of Annexes:	None	File Ref:	N/A
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(Portfolio: Leader) Councillor P North

Officer:	Graham Smith	Ext:	8141
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Report to:	Cabinet	Date:	9 April 2025
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