

**Public**  
**Key Decision – Yes**

## **HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Title/Subject Matter:** UK Shared Prosperity and Rural England Prosperity Fund Update

**Meeting/Date:** Overview and Scrutiny (Performance and Growth)  
April 3<sup>rd</sup> 2024

Cabinet – 16<sup>th</sup> April 2024

**Executive Portfolio:** Cllr Sam Wakeford Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy, and Housing

**Report by:** Pamela Scott, Regeneration and Housing Delivery Manager

**Ward(s) affected:** All

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### **Executive Summary:**

This report provides an update on the programme of activity funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) in Huntingdonshire

### **Recommendation(s):**

Note progress on the projects within the UKSPF and REPF programme that support the delivery of the best outcomes for our residents, businesses, and the district.

## 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update on progress of the activities within the UKSPF and REPF programme in Huntingdonshire that supports the delivery of the Council's priorities and alignment with other external funding streams to maximise opportunities to deliver the best outcomes for our residents, businesses, and district.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The UKSPF and REPF is a central pillar of the UK Government's Levelling Up agenda and provides a total of £2.71 billion of new funding for local investment by March 2025. All areas of the UK received an allocation from the fund via a formula. The UKSPF fund enables areas to target funding where it is needed most; building pride in place, supporting high quality skills training, supporting pay, employment, and productivity growth, and achieving improved life chances, this is structured into three pillars:
- Communities and Place,
  - Supporting Local Businesses, and
  - People and Skills.
- 2.2 The Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) aims to improve productivity, strengthen the rural economy and rural communities.
- 2.3 The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) oversee the fund at UK level; the lead authority for Cambridgeshire is the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA).
- 2.4 Huntingdonshire received an allocation of £1,878,645.43 UKSPF after a fixed 4% programme administration was removed, this 4% was shared equally between the Council and the CPCA. In addition, a further £304,749.89 was set aside to support Cambridgeshire wide activity.
- 2.5 REPF funding is again administered through the CPCA with Huntingdonshire's allocation totalling £957,788.00, this is capital funding only. The REPF is different to the UKSPF allocation in that match funding is required via an intervention rate for each business or organisation in receipt of REPF.

**Table 1. Total funding breakdown for both programmes**

<b>Fund</b>	<b>Amount</b>
UKSPF Allocation (minus fixed 4% admin fee)	£1,878,645.43
Contribution to Cambridgeshire wide priorities	£ 304,749.89
<b>TOTAL UKSPF</b>	<b>£1,573,895.54</b>
REPF Allocation	£ 957,788.00
<b>TOTAL UKSPF &amp; REPF Allocation</b>	<b>£2,531,683.54</b>

### UKSPF Project Activity

- 2.6 A total of eight projects are scheduled to be delivered through the UKSPF investment in Huntingdonshire:

- **Green Business Impact Programme** – Support for SME's to move towards net zero by reducing carbon emissions and energy costs
- **Huntingdonshire Business Accelerator** – 12 month dedicated programme taking cohorts of pre-start and early stage ventures to help entrepreneurs gain skills and knowledge needed to apply for funding and launch their business idea
- **Business and Intellectual Property Centre (BIPC)** – Jumpstart competition and support to provide free access to resources, intelligence, databases and services to early-stage, start-ups, new start-ups, and SME's
- **Huntingdonshire Digital Manufacturing Growth Programme** Continuation of a dedicated support programme for our heritage and foundation sector of manufacturing, supporting local SME's in the sector to improve productivity and efficiencies.
- **Active Travel Feasibility Studies** – To produce up to five route feasibility studies to support external funding bids for new active and sustainable travel routes in Huntingdonshire.
- **Ramsey Great Whyte Improvements** – Delivery and promotion of proposed new market/agricultural hub and surrounding public realm improvements, community development events and activities alongside capital funding secured separately from the CPCA.
- **Vibrant Communities** – To support events (arts, culture, skills, seasonal and environmental events) in town centres and large villages as part of a wider package of activity to increase footfall and build on the success from the Welcome Back Fund.
- **Community based Employment and Skills** – Engaging the economically inactive via key community nodes providing tailored and targeted support, including a focus on mental health and wellbeing, volunteering as a route to employment and progression pathways to further develop skills and employment through existing mainstream provision.

#### REPF Project Activity

- **Rural Businesses** – Capital grants for small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas to boost jobs, community cohesion and private sector investment; supporting farm diversification and introduction of new products, technologies and services.
- **Rural Communities** – Capital grants for investment and support for digital infrastructure for community facilities to strengthen social fabric and fostering pride in place
- **Rural Communities** – Capital grants for investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups, including community energy schemes, ev charging points and nature based solutions.

The projects are listed in Appendix 1 where more detail is provided on activities since the last report to Cabinet in March 2023, most projects are ongoing throughout the next financial year 24/25, where greater levels of spend are expected in line with the budget assigned. The programme will conclude in 24.25. The only exception to this is the Vibrant Communities project where the project has mainly concluded although a few events will take place in 24/25.

### 3. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 3.1 The Panel discussed the UK Shared Prosperity and Rural England Prosperity Fund Update Report at its meeting on 3rd April 2024.
- 3.2 Following an enquiry from Councillor Gardener on the progress and implementation of the Electrical Vehicle Charging Scheme, the Panel heard that whilst there were updates on project deliveries within the Appendix to the report, the Electrical Vehicle Strategy was still in the implementation process but that progress would be reported back to the Panel in due course.
- 3.3 Councillor Jennings enquired how the team would be managing the success of projects where the measure was stated to improve perception. Following which the Panel were assured that work was underway on how to better demonstrate and articulate project success and that this measure would be developed into a more tangible measure and that this would be further elaborated in a future report.
- 3.4 Following a question from Councillor Gleadow, the Panel were assured that the budget risks relating to the programme for staff had been assessed and that were felt to be sufficient.
- 3.5 In response to an enquiry from Councillor Cawley, the Panel heard that details on the Huntingdon Business Accelerator were available and would be distributed to Members following the meeting to allow further communication with interested parishes and businesses.
- 3.6 Following questions from Councillor Blackwell and Councillor Gardener, the Panel heard that it was hoped that active travel could be developed in rural areas to connect and improve routes between villages, towns and points of interest. It was also stated that the funding mentioned within the report was designed to develop feasibility studies for up to five areas which in turn would allow those applicants to mobilise and bid for funding to fulfil the project as it becomes available.
- 3.7 Following the discussion, the Panel were informed that their comments would be added to the Cabinet report in order for an informed decision to be made on the report recommendations.

### 4. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS

- 4.1 **Budget Management Risk:** At a time of increased costs, it is important to ensure spend is within budget, in line with the agreed funding profile and that financial regulations are complied with including Value for Money. Mitigation measure include individual project funding profiles which have been agreed within the overall programme funding profile. Ongoing monitoring of actual spend versus profile, procurement of individual schemes where necessary and oversight by the Regeneration Programme Manager and Programme Board.
- 4.2 **Programme Timescale Risk:** This is an ambitious programme of delivery, with tight timescales for delivery. Mitigation measures include individual project plans which will inform an overall programme plan incorporating design to delivery. This is continually reviewed and monitored through Programme Board and reported against key delivery and funding milestones.
- 4.3 **Programme Resources Risk:** The programme has multiple projects which must be managed simultaneously and via different delivery mechanisms. Mitigation

measures include an established programme management through Programme Board, individual projects managed by officers who have clear roles and responsibilities.

## **5. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES**

*(See Corporate Plan)*

5.1 The delivery of both programmes aligns to Huntingdonshire District Council's Corporate Plan which sets out the Council's objectives, key actions, and performance measures. The Council's key objectives are:

- **Tackling Climate Change and caring for the Environment** with UKSPF investment looking at future active sustainable travel routes and supporting businesses to reduce their carbon emissions through business advice and grants to deliver physical improvements to buildings.
- **Enhancing employment opportunities and supporting businesses** with UKSPF activity supporting residents who want to start a business through entrepreneurship programmes and SME's in the manufacturing sector being assisted to improve productivity and digital technologies.
- **Supporting needs of residents** through a programme of engagement and support focussed on Employment and Skills engaging economically inactive through community based groups and community locations
- **Strengthening our communities** by investing UKSPF to support vibrant communities. Text.

## **6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 The Council have entered into Grant Funding agreements with the CPCA which were reviewed by the Council's legal team, senior officers, and members.

6.2 Individual contracts with delivery partners have also been reviewed as and when necessary, with the Council's legal team, senior officers, and members as per the recommended delegation.

## **7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There are a number of delivery mechanisms for the individual projects. In the main, projects will be managed by existing staff resource or via additional resource built into project costs. The Council will receive £39,138.44 to support overall programme management over three years. This is the maximum amount available and staff time spent on programme management will be claimed from this.

7.2 The Programmes is managed by the Regeneration and Housing Delivery Team alongside the Market Towns Programme, this brings together expertise in the delivery of externally funded schemes. Individual project managers lead projects from different teams within the Council with clear reporting lines to Programme Board.

## **8. HEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 Huntingdonshire District Council is committed to supporting residents through a positive and ongoing working relationship with local communities. Delivery of the Community and Skills employment based project will support economically inactive residents by providing tailored and targeted support. This includes focussing on mental health and wellbeing, volunteering as a route to employment

and progression pathways to further develop skills and employment through mainstream provision. Support in these areas will directly contribute to positive health outcomes.

## **9. ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The Council has a duty to ensure that we continue to promote an environmentally positive recovery following the pandemic, we also have a duty to deliver sustainable place-making. The Council has direct control over a tiny proportion of all the carbon emissions within Huntingdonshire. We can however adopt a key role in influencing the district demonstrating good practice, whilst setting policies and strategies to influence business and communities to tackle climate change at the same time as enabling sustainable living and growth. These principles are embedded in these programmes.
- 9.2 In October 2022, the Council passed a Cost of Living and Climate Change motion that recognises that the current cost of living and climate crisis require joint attention to support the wellbeing of residents and businesses. Linked to this motion and the Climate Strategy, which was adopted by the Council in February 2023, the Council committed to seek wherever possible positive environmental and social benefits.

## **10. EQUALITIES**

- 10.1 The Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of the nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- 10.2 Good planning and effective regeneration can improve environments and opportunities for communities experiencing disadvantage. Planning which does not adequately engage with or consider the needs of local communities is unlikely to improve their life chances and may further entrench area based disadvantage.

## **11. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS**

- 11.1 To provide an update from members on the projects within the UKSPF and REPF programmes since the last update in March 2023.

## **12. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED**

Appendix 1 – Overview of Huntingdonshire District Council UKSPF and REPF Project Delivery

## **13. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Cabinet Paper March 2023: [Report Template for Cabinet / Committee Reports \(huntingdonshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk)

Cabinet Paper, December 2022: [Report Template for Cabinet / Committee Reports \(huntingdonshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk)

UK Government guidance on UKSPF is available at:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus>

CPCA UKSPF Investment Plan is available at: [Agenda Item No \(cmis.uk.com\)](#),  
[Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](#) and [Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](#)

Rural England Prosperity Fund: [Rural England Prosperity Fund: prospectus - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

## **CONTACT OFFICER**

Name/Job Title: Pamela Scott, Regeneration and Housing Delivery Manager  
Tel No: 07874887465  
Email: [pamela.scott@huntingdonshire.gov.uk](mailto:pamela.scott@huntingdonshire.gov.uk)