

UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocations 2024 to 2025

Report number:	CAB/WS/24/015	
Report to and date:	Portfolio holder decision	7 February 2024
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Decisions Plan: Notice of Intention providing the purpose of the decision and the date in which the decision is expected to be made has been published on 30 January 2024.

Wards impacted: All wards

Recommendation: It is recommended that the Portfolio Holder for Resources implements the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) allocations for 2024 to 2025 as follows, in line with the Council's UKSPF investment plan:

1. £192,662 for a competitive grant process for improvements to town centres and high streets, including better accessibility for disabled people, including capital spend and running costs (UKSPF intervention E1)

- 2. £68,106 for community projects to support capacity building for local civil society and community groups (UKSPF intervention E11)**
- 3. £34,053 for Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector organisations working with the new Community Food Partnership Officers to enable support to be available to the food banks, groups supporting sustainable food and the establishment of a food network (UKSPF intervention E13)**
- 4. £20,000 allocation to West Suffolk College (the Council's strategic partner for skills) to create a new post to engage with employers with under-employed staff and offer skills training and qualifications to enable them to take up full-time jobs, with a focus on those likely to be leaving or not returning to the workplace (UKSPF intervention E37)**
- 5. £100,000 to West Suffolk College to create new skills training opportunities to enable local people to access local skilled jobs, particularly in areas of shortage and growth (UKSPF intervention E38)**
- 6. £25,000 to West Suffolk College to extend the access and availability of green skills courses to both employed and unemployed utilising newly created training facilities and qualifications (UKSPF intervention E39)**

1. Context to this report

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Government guidance

- 1.1 On 13 April 2022, the Government announced a £2.6 billion fund to support implementation of its Levelling Up White Paper, known as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). The fund is a successor to EU Structural Funds and covers the period 2022-2025. Full details are set out in the [UK Shared Prosperity Fund: prospectus - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/107444/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus-2022-2025.pdf)
- 1.2 The Government's stated aim for the fund is to build pride in place and increase life chances across the UK, aligned with the Levelling Up White Paper goals. The vision for the fund is that 'it will lead to visible, tangible improvements to the places where people work and live, alongside investment in human capital, giving communities up and down the UK more reasons to be proud of their area.'
- 1.3 In July 2022, a meeting of full Council approved West Suffolk's investment plan for submission to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), which set out how West Suffolk proposed to spend its £1,943,467, against a selection of the Government's 41 'interventions'. The full list of 41 interventions is available on the DLUHC website at this link: [UK Shared Prosperity Fund: interventions, outputs and indicators - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/107444/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-interventions-outputs-and-indicators-2022-2025.pdf)
- 1.4 Once funding is received, interventions are expected to be delivered through:
 - grants to public or private organisations
 - commissioning third party organisations
 - procurement of service provision
 - in-house provision
- 1.5 In July 2022, Council granted delegated authority to the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Property "to implement the approved investment plan once funding was received from DLUHC, including implementing minor variations in the funding amounts for each intervention, in order to respond to changing circumstances over the lifetime of the Fund".

2. Proposals within this report

Implementation of UKSPF allocations

- 2.1 Portfolio Holders have agreed to proceed at this stage with the implementation of initiatives under six of the interventions identified in the investment plan, with the remaining interventions to be implemented in due course. The six initiatives are described below.

2.2 **E1: Funding for improvements to town centres and high streets**

West Suffolk Council created a Town Centre Fund in 2023-2024 using UKSPF funding, under intervention 'E1: Funding for improvements to town centres and high streets, including better accessibility for disabled people, including capital spend and running costs' and under the 'Communities and Place' investment priority. The fund received £38,109 in 2023-2024 with further funding of £192,662 being recommended for 2024-2025.

The scheme is open to town councils and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) in the West Suffolk district, with an aim to build resilient and safe neighbourhoods, through investment in quality places that people want to live, work, play and learn in, through targeted improvements to the built environment and innovative approaches to crime prevention.

2.3 **E11: Investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups.**

It is proposed that this funding (£68,106) is allocated in two ways:

- a. To Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) projects identified through the Community Chest application process.
- b. To VCSE projects to be identified by the Portfolio Holders for Families and Communities and Leisure during 2024-2025, that meet the criteria for intervention E11.

2.4 **E13: Community measures to reduce the cost of living, including through measures to improve energy efficiency, and combat fuel poverty and climate change.**

It is proposed that this funding (£34,053) is allocated to VCSE sector organisations working with the new Community Food Partnership Officers to enable support to be available to the food banks, groups supporting sustainable food and the establishment of a food network.

2.5 **E37: Tailored support to help people in employment, who are not supported by mainstream provision to address barriers to accessing education and training courses. This includes supporting the retention of groups who are likely to leave the labour market early.**

It is proposed that £20,000 is allocated to West Suffolk College (the Council's strategic partner for skills) to create a new post to engage with employers with under-employed staff and offer skills training and qualifications to enable them to take up full-time jobs. The focus will be on those likely to leave the workplace such as women/men with caring responsibilities, those aged 50-plus and non-returners who

may have been expected to return for example, maternity/paternity leave.

- 2.6 **E38: Support for local areas to fund local skills needs. This includes technical and vocational qualifications and courses up to level 2 and training for vocational licences relevant to local area needs and high-value qualifications where there is a need for additional skills capacity that is not being met through other provision.**

It is proposed to allocate this funding (£100,000) to West Suffolk College to create new skills training opportunities that enable local people to access local skilled jobs. For example, the region is in need of HGV drivers to fulfil Suffolk's extensive ports, logistics and international supply sector. Furthermore, there is a shortage of high value engineering and advanced manufacturing skills, such as welding. These needs will only increase in light of the major infrastructure projects that are in development at Sizewell C and Freeport. Local employers are already concerned about existing staff moving to major projects since the pay is higher.

- 2.7 **E39: Green skills courses targeted around ensuring we have the skilled workforce to achieve the government's net zero and wider environmental ambitions.**

It is proposed to allocate £25,000 to West Suffolk College to extend the access and availability of green skills courses to both employed and unemployed, utilising newly created training facilities and qualifications. Courses will include a) Sustainability – Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA), b) Electric Vehicle charger fitting, c) Retrofit – assessors and technicians; and d) Air and Ground Source Heat Pump installation.

3. Alternative options that have been considered

- 3.1 The funding available in 2024 to 2025 to West Suffolk Council from UKSPF funding could have been given to different external organisations. However, the organisations and initiatives chosen and described in this report reflect the new strategic priorities and approach to allocate the funding to local and strategic partners who will be best placed to deliver the desired outcomes to the UKSPF interventions.

4. Consultation and engagement undertaken

- 4.1 A key part of the Government’s design of the UKSPF and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) is engagement with local partners and stakeholders. West Suffolk Council therefore undertook a significant piece of engagement work in the development of UKSPF in order to ensure a wide range of views were incorporated into the development of the investment plan. This included contacting each district councillor. This engagement work has been used in the development of the implementation plan for UKSPF and the allocation of REPF against interventions. Full details of this engagement were set out in the report to Council in July 2022.
- 4.2 All portfolio holders were consulted in advance of this decision.

5. Risks associated with the proposals

- 5.1 **Failure to spend allocated funding by March 2025**
UKSPF funding runs from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. Year three money, therefore, is required to be allocated and spent within this time frame. Mitigations for this risk have been considered when making decisions on the allocation and prioritisation of funding. As a result, the grant recipients for the interventions are well placed to spend this money in the time period.

6. Implications arising from the proposals

- 6.1 **Financial**
None. If funding is not forthcoming, the initiatives will not proceed, however, we have had reassurances from Government that the funding will be forthcoming.
- 6.2 **Legal compliance**
The Council will be required to abide by the terms and conditions of the funding. In particular, the council will be required to abide by subsidy rules in awarding funding to third parties.
- 6.3 **Personal data processing**
All personal data handled in conjunction with the UKSPF will relate to individuals in their professional capacity. No additional customer data will be handled by the council as a result of the funding. All personal information (for example, names of respondents, contacts at supplier organisations) received through the engagement process and through the implementation phase will be handled in line with the council’s information governance policies.
- 6.4 **Equalities**
The proposals in the investment plan allocations support the delivery of the Council’s equalities objective:

To continuously improve access to our services for all members of our community, by learning from best practice and listening to feedback.

6.5 **Crime and disorder**

The overall purpose of the UKSPF and REPF is to build social capital in communities and build pride in place, both of which support reductions in crime and antisocial behaviour.

6.6 **Environment or sustainability**

The UKSPF and REPF prospectuses invite local authorities to ensure that their investment plans contribute to net zero objectives. As such, as well as directly investing in green skills initiatives (E39) and measures to improve energy efficiency (E13), other projects that come forward under other interventions will be encouraged to build in carbon reduction measures. UKSPF and REPF will also sit alongside other funding from pooled business rates and the Council's investment in net zero measures in order to reduce West Suffolk's carbon footprint over the period of the fund.

6.7 **HR or staffing**

West Suffolk Council will draw down four percent of the overall value of the funding to support the administration and delivery of the investment plan.

6.8 **Changes to existing policies**

UKSPF does not require any changes in existing policies.

6.9 **External organisations** (such as businesses, community groups)

The role of external organisations in delivery of UKSPF and REPF is set out in the above sections of the report.

7. **Background documents associated with this report**

- 7.1 Council approval of investment plan July 2022 [Decision - UK Shared Prosperity Fund: investment plan allocations \(westsuffolk.gov.uk\)](https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/decision-uk-shared-prosperity-fund-investment-plan-allocations)