



Cabinet

Tuesday, 14 March 2023

Endorsement of plan for UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund 2023/24

Report of the Director Development and Economic Growth

Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Business and Growth, Councillor Andy Edyvean

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. In April 2022, Government launched the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). This is a £2.6bn fund for the next three years which replaces the EU Structural funds which were previously allocated through Local Enterprise Partnerships.
- 1.2. Rushcliffe's allocation of UKSPF is £2,571,462 for three years (2022/23 to 2024/25). This is a mix of capital and revenue funding. This is allocated across the three years:
 - 2022/23 - £312,071
 - 2023/24 - £624,141
 - 2024/25 - £1,635,250.
- 1.3. In September 2022, Government launched The Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). REPF is a top-up to UKSPF and succeeds EU funding from LEADER and the Growth Programme, which were part of the Rural Development Programme for England.
- 1.4. Rushcliffe's REPF allocation is £596,193. This is capital funding only. This is allocated across two years:
 - 2023/24 - £149,048
 - 2024/25 - £447,145.
- 1.5. This report follows the previous report to Cabinet in July 2022, Growth and Development Scrutiny in January 2023 and a briefing which all members were invited to at the end of January 2023, and sets out UKSPF activity delivered in 2022/23, outlines plans for delivering UKSPF and REPF in 2023/24 and a proposed governance model for decision making, for Cabinet's endorsement.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet:

- a) Recognises UKSPF activity delivered in 2022/23
- b) Endorses the proposals for UKSPF and REPF in 2023/24

- c) Delegates sign off of refinements to proposals for 2023/24 to the Leader, Chief Executive and S151 Officer, with both revenue and capital implications reported in future financial reports to Cabinet and the MTFs to Full Council
- d) Delegates sign off of grant awards for UKSPF and REPF to the S151 Officer and Director Development and Economic Growth in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Business and Growth, following officer recommendations based on assessment and moderation.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1. It is important to have a clear framework and principles for UKSPF and REPF activity to be delivered in 2023/24 and for this to be endorsed by Cabinet. However, it may be necessary to make adjustments to ensure that funds are allocated where they can have the most impact and to be able to respond to opportunities as they may arise throughout the year. In the interest of not slowing delivery and risking not spending the full allocation, it is appropriate for authority to approve final delivery plans to be delegated to the Leader, Chief Executive and S151 Officer.

4. Supporting Information

UKSPF 2022/23

- 4.1. UKSPF has three investment priorities:
 - Communities and Place
 - Supporting Local Business
 - People and Skills (only from 2024/25).
- 4.2. There are 41 interventions across the three investment priorities. A full list can be seen at Appendix A. Councils do not have to deliver activity in every intervention.
- 4.3. UKSPF activity delivered in Rushcliffe in 2022/23 includes:

Investment Priority	Intervention	Project
	E3: Creation of and improvements to local green spaces	New benches and shelter to enhance visitor experience at Rushcliffe Country Park
		Reed clearance at Grantham Canal to identify areas in need of repair and to provide more open water habitats, supporting a diverse range of aquatic species
	E5: Design and management of the built and landscaped	Additional police patrols around Ratcliffe on Soar to deal with the issue of car cruising

Communities and Place	environment to 'design out crime'	
	E9: Impactful volunteering and/or social action projects	Cost of living support – workshops and 1-1s
	E14: Relevant Feasibility Studies	Radcliffe on Trent - Parking Study
		Bingham long stay car park – Transport assessments
	Central Avenue, West Bridgford - Accessibility Study	
Supporting Local Business	E16: Open markets & town centre retail & service sector	One to one advice, webinars and a business support tool kit for high street businesses
		Improvements to the electric bollards at Bingham Market Place
	E29: Supporting decarbonisation & improving natural environment	Energy audits of nine of RBC's operational properties

4.4. Government had initially indicated that any underspend in each year would be lost, so following sign off of the Investment Plan at Cabinet in July 2022, Officers began delivering UKSPF activity, which was done at risk until the Investment Plan was approved in December 2022.

4.5. Government subsequently released guidance that underspend could be carried forward if credible plans were submitted setting out how it will be utilised in the next year. Rushcliffe's 2022/23 UKSPF allocation has either been spent or allocated, therefore Officers are confident that any underspend will be carried forward into 2023/24.

UKSPF 2023/24

4.6. Rushcliffe's £624,141 allocation for 2023/24, is split as follows:

- Communities and Place - £325,575
- Supporting Local Business - £273,600
- 4% admin fee (allocated by Government to support the productive delivery and administration of the fund) - £24,960 for a new Project Implementation Officer who will be working with local groups and organisations to support them to access UKSPF and REPF as well as supporting delivery of project.

4.7. It is proposed that Rushcliffe's allocation for Supporting Local Business be split as follows:

Joint Commission: £116,000	Grant Pot: £90,000	RBC Spend - £67,600
<p>Jointly commissioning business support with the District Councils across Nottinghamshire. Details are currently being refined, with a view to delivery commencing in April 2023.</p> <p>This business support is expected to deliver activity under the following interventions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E19: Investment in research and development at the local level. • E23: Strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems and supporting businesses at all stages of their development to start, sustain, grow and innovate, including through local networks. • E29: Supporting decarbonisation and improving the natural environment whilst growing the local economy 	<p>Inviting applications for projects delivering activity under 'Supporting Local Business' interventions. See appendix A for full list.</p> <p>All applications will be welcome but we will be encouraging applications which align with RBC Corporate Priorities and interventions identified in the investment plan.</p> <p>Welcoming projects that facilitate added value and provide match funding.</p> <p>Projects up to £40k</p>	<p>The programme of activity delivered directly by the Council is indicative at this stage, to enable the programme to respond to opportunities as they may arise throughout the year.</p> <p>The indicative programme currently includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High street business support (continuation of work delivered in 2022/23) • Dedicated business support advisor for Rushcliffe businesses • Support for specific sectors/groups • Opportunities for inward investment

4.8. It is proposed that Rushcliffe's allocation for Communities and Place be split as follows:

Grant Pot - £150,000	RBC Spend - £175,575
<p>Inviting applications for projects delivering activity under 'Supporting Community and Place' interventions. See Appendix A for full list.</p> <p>All applications will be welcome but will encourage applications which align with RBC Corporate Priorities and interventions identified in the investment plan.</p> <p>Welcoming projects that facilitate added value and provide match funding.</p> <p>Projects between £5k-£40k</p>	<p>The programme of activity delivered directly by the Council is indicative at this stage, so that Officers can remain responsive to need and prioritise deliverable schemes throughout the year.</p> <p>The indicative programme currently includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support around cost of living, including home energy efficiency • Enhancement of existing events programme and seasonal lights • Heritage trail • Improvements to local green spaces • Improvement to local community and sporting facilities • Feasibility Studies to facilitate capital spend in 2024/25

REPF 2023/24

4.9. REPF has two investment priorities:

- Supporting Rural Business
- Supporting Rural Communities.

4.10. There are 11 interventions across the two investment priorities. A full list can be seen at Appendix B. Councils do not have to deliver activity in every intervention.

4.11. REPF can fund projects in rural areas only. A map of eligible areas in Rushcliffe is included in Appendix C. For REPF purposes, rural areas are:

- towns, villages and hamlets with populations below 10,000 and the wider countryside
- market or 'hub towns' with populations of up to 30,000 that serve their surrounding rural areas as centres of employment and in providing services.

4.12. To secure this funding, local authorities were required to submit an addendum to their original investment plan setting out, at a high level, intended spend against the two investment priorities: supporting rural business and supporting communities. The Council has not yet received approval of this, although it is expected shortly.

4.13. It is proposed that Rushcliffe's £149,048 REPF allocation for 2023/24 is dedicated to two grant pots as follows:

Supporting Rural Business	Supporting Rural Communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £80,000 available • Applications welcomed between £10k and £40k • Examples of projects that can be supported: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Diversification ○ Net zero infrastructure ○ Rural business hubs ○ Visitor economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £69,048 available • Applications welcomed between £10k and £40k • Examples of projects that can be supported: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups ○ Creation/improvement to green spaces ○ Active travel ○ Cultural, historic and heritage institutions and activities

4.14. It is proposed that businesses will be required to contribute 60% match funding. 30% match funding, either financial or in-kind, from community and voluntary groups will be welcomed but not mandatory i.e applications which can demonstrate match will receive higher scoring in evaluation.

Grant application indicative timeline

4.15. It is proposed that the grant pots would be launched shortly after the Cabinet meeting on 15 March for local organisations and businesses to review criteria

and the application form and discuss proposed projects with the Economic Growth Team. During this period, applications cannot be submitted and this time will allow projects to be discussed and the required information obtained.

- 4.16. The Council will accept applications towards the end of April from organisations/groups that have had a conversation with an Officer and received an invitation to bid. This invitation will not guarantee an award of funding but will ensure projects that come forward are developed and better fit the criteria.
- 4.17. The deadline for applications will be towards the end of May at which point officers will assess the applications and review as per the process set out below at 4.19.
- 4.18. It is proposed that there will be an additional grant pot for high street businesses which will be for smaller funding allocations. This will run on a first come, first served basis to enable a faster response time for smaller projects. This will better support local businesses who want to implement new initiatives quickly. The application process for this will follow a similar one to the current digital high streets grant pot.

Governance

- 4.19. Subject to Cabinet endorsement, officers will continue to refine the UKSPF and REPF programme for 2023/24, in line with the principles established above. The Leader, Chief Executive and S151 Officer will be required to provide sign off of any changes to the above proposals, including new projects or changes of allocations, as well as receiving updates on projects supported.
- 4.20. Grant applications will be assessed by officers and moderated by the internal UKSPF and REPF project board. The Portfolio Holder for Business and Growth will be consulted as part of the process via monthly briefings. Sign off of all grant awards will sit with the S151 Officer and Director of Growth and Economic Development.
- 4.21. Rushcliffe's Strategic Growth Board acts as the Partnership Board which was required to be established for the purposes of UKSPF. This Board meets quarterly and it is proposed that at each Board meeting an update on UKSPF/REPF is provided to members.
- 4.22. The UKSPF and REPF project board meet on a monthly basis and ensure delivery of projects and spend remains on track. This is then reported to the Executive Management Team.

5. Alternative options considered and reasons for rejection

- 5.1. It is an option to request Cabinet approval for UKSPF and REPF delivery on a project-by-project basis. It is also an option to request endorsement from Cabinet of a definite list of UKSPF and REPF projects for 2023/24, which could not then change throughout the year. Neither of these options would provide both the ability to respond to changing priorities and needs, while also delivering

the funding effectively without risk of significant underspend. Cabinet endorsement of the plan proposed above, with delegated authority for on-going refinements throughout the year strikes the correct balance of flexibility and effectiveness, whilst maintaining transparent and appropriate governance.

6. Risks and Uncertainties

- 6.1. There is a risk that the REPF addendum is not signed off; however, this is not a competitive process and Government officials will work with Council officers to support any required resubmission.

7. Implications

7.1. Financial Implications

UKSPF and REPF are both funding awarded by Government to be allocated and spent by the Council. When deciding on projects the Council has been mindful of not committing itself to on-going revenue and capital costs. There are no direct financial implications for the Council associated with this report.

7.2. Legal Implications

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

7.3. Equalities Implications

An Equality impact assessment has been completed in conjunction with this report. Equalities implications will be considered for all UKSPF and REPF funded activity.

7.4. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Implications

There are no crime and disorder implications associated with this report.

8. Link to Corporate Priorities

Quality of Life	The UKSPF's focus is on supporting Governments Levelling Up ambitions and particularly pride in place. The funding offers the opportunity for the Council and other organisations to deliver new activities to support and enhance our residents' quality of life.
Efficient Services	No contributions to this corporate priority identified.
Sustainable Growth	Objectives of the fund include supporting local businesses and people and skills, this funding will allow the council and partners to deliver local interventions that meet the needs of our businesses and community.
The Environment	Interventions within UKSPF activity for 2023/24 include a focus on decarbonisation and this is an identified priority areas for the Council.

9. Recommendation

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For more information contact:	Catherine Evans Service Manager Economic Growth and Property 0115 914 8552 cevens@rushcliffe.gov.uk
Background papers available for Inspection:	
List of appendices:	Appendix A UKSPF priority interventions list Appendix B REPF interventions list Appendix C REPF map of eligible areas in Rushcliffe