

ECONOMY AND HOUSING POLICY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 11 February 2025

Attendance:

Councillors
Batho (Chairperson)

Chamberlain
Achwal S
Eve

Morris
Murphy
White

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor Miller

Deputy Members:

Councillor Horrill (as deputy for Councillor Miller)

Other members in attendance:

Councillors Thompson and Westwood

[Video recording of this meeting](#)

1. **APOLOGIES AND DEPUTY MEMBERS**
Apologies for the meeting were noted as above.
2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**
No declarations were made.
3. **CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**
No announcements were made.
4. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 26 NOVEMBER 2024**
RESOLVED:
That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 26 November 2024 be approved and adopted.
5. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**
There were no comments or questions made during public participation

6. **SUMMARY OF THE UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND AND RURAL ENGLAND FUND PROGRAMMES 2022-2025**

Councillor Lucille Thompson, Cabinet Member for Business and Culture introduced the report, ref EHP54 which set out the summary of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund And Rural England Fund Programmes 2022-2025, ([available here](#)). The introduction included the following points.

1. The funding had significantly aided communities and residents in pursuing greener initiatives, reducing the carbon footprint, and supporting businesses across the district.
2. The Council had received £1.745 million to fund projects throughout the district at a time when resources were scarce.
3. A partnership board, comprising representatives from various sectors, had been established to ensure a wide range of views were considered in the selection and delivery of projects.
4. Over the three years, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund had supported 32 projects aligning with the investment plan, and the fund was on track to be fully spent. The Rural England Fund had supported 25 projects, also fully funded and on track to be fully spent.
5. The funds supported 20 carbon reduction projects, including seven EV charging stations and new foot and cycle paths.
6. 280 residents had gained qualifications in retrofit, alternative energy installations, and digital communications.
7. 22 businesses across the district had received funding in sectors including childcare, landscape gardening, sport, and the creative industries.
8. Matched funding had been secured, effectively doubling the money available by unlocking further investment from local businesses, communities, and other organisations.
9. The Government had confirmed a further UK Shared Prosperity Grant of £1,327,146 to be spent by the end of March 2026.

The committee was asked:

1. To note the types of projects, distribution, impact and value derived from the UKSPF and REPF programme 2.
2. To note the Government's priorities and provide comment on the Council's approach for distributing funds for the 2025/2026 UKSPF extension

The committee proceeded to ask questions and debate the report. In summary, the following matters were raised.

1. Clarification was sought regarding the variation in amounts allocated to different wards, as shown in the graph on page 20 concerning the Rural England Prosperity Fund and it was questioned why some wards, such as Central Meon Valley, were not included on the graph.

2. It was queried whether the absence of projects from certain wards was due to a lack of suitable proposals or other factors.
3. Whether ward councillors could assist in the process of project submission.
4. It was asked whether anything better could/should be done in terms of communications.
5. It was queried whether any good projects were unable to proceed due to a lack of sufficient matched funds.
6. It was asked if the amount of matched funding would be a barrier in the future.
7. Further information was sought regarding the engagement activities mentioned in paragraph 2.47 on page 23, to understand how the message could be more widely disseminated.
8. A question was asked regarding lessons learned from the past three years of the programme and whether any changes would be implemented in the next phase.
9. It was queried if it was possible to focus on areas with low funding, such as green space projects, which were below the expected target.
10. A question was raised regarding the £54,000 gap between the allocated amount (£1,745,000) and the amount spent (£1,691,000) and it was asked what would happen to this money.
11. A question was asked regarding the allocation of 42% of UKSPF and REPF grants to business-related activities, as stated in bullet point 2.17 and clarification was sought as to whether the anticipated percentage for business was set at the outset and if community efforts were being underfunded as a result.
12. Details were sought regarding the five or six projects initially included in the investment plan that did not materialise.
13. A question was asked regarding equality impact assessments and whether applicants were required to demonstrate outreach to a diverse range of people.
14. A question was asked regarding unsuccessful applicants and whether they received feedback on why their applications were rejected.
15. Clarification was sought on how ward areas were defined, particularly in areas with both urban and rural characteristics, to determine eligibility for the Rural Prosperity Fund.
16. A question was asked whether the percentage of allocations to businesses would revert to the original expectation for the next year, or if the current percentages would be used as a baseline.

These points were responded to by Councillor Lucille Thompson, Cabinet Member for Business and Culture, Susan Robbins, Corporate Head of Economy & Community and Camilla Sharp, Shared Prosperity Funding Officer accordingly.

RESOLVED:

1. That the committee noted the concerns regarding the equitable distribution of funding across wards, particularly between rural and urban areas.
2. That members would communicate with their respective wards, encouraging parishes and organisations to apply for grants in the upcoming year.
3. That the Cabinet Member consider whether maintaining some level of contribution from businesses, as beneficiaries of the funding, should be pursued, acknowledging the reduction in match funding requirements to encourage business engagement.
4. That officers explore avenues to encourage more community involvement and funding applications, alongside business-related projects.
5. That officers continue to emphasise learning from both successful and unsuccessful projects, maintaining dialogue and providing feedback to applicants to ensure a steady stream of potential projects for the future.
6. That the cabinet member considers the committee's comments raised during the discussion of the item.

7. HOUSING REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE POLICIES

Councillor Chris Westwood, Cabinet Member for Housing introduced the report, ref EHP56 which set out proposals for the Housing Repairs And Maintenance Policy, ([available here](#)). The introduction included the following points.

1. The report presented four proposed policies for review and comment: Disabled Adaptations, Housing Repairs and Maintenance, Housing Repairs Recharge, and Managing Damp and Mold.
2. Tenant input had been gathered through a survey in May 2024 regarding the future operation of the repairs service and to support the retendering of the repairs and maintenance contract.
3. Following an online consultation, workshops were held with tenants and members and feedback was incorporated into the updated policies.
4. The policies would inform the Council's future approach to delivering housing repairs and maintenance, aiming for consistent application across all areas.
5. The Committee's comments were sought on the four policies before a further tenant consultation.
6. The draft policies, incorporating the Committee's comments, would be presented to Cabinet Committee: Housing in July 2025 for approval.
7. Approval of the policies would contribute to the modernisation of Housing Services by clearly defining the scope of services covered and ensuring consistent and easily understood application.

The committee was asked to review and comment upon the proposed four Policies attached, namely:

1. Disabled Adaptations Policy
2. Housing Repairs And Maintenance Policy
3. Housing Repairs Recharge Policy
4. Managing Damp And Mould.

The committee proceeded to ask questions and debate the report. In summary, the following matters were raised.

Disabled Adaptations Policy

1. A question was asked regarding the inclusion of disability due to injury or accident as part of the policy.
2. Clarification was sought regarding the appeals process across all four policies and whether it adequately addressed tenant dissatisfaction with decisions.
3. It was asked how the council would enforce the actions in the policies universally.
4. Questions were raised concerning budgets and the estimated need for adaptations, considering the local ageing population.
5. A question was asked regarding timescales, specifically the 12-month timeframe for approved adaptations and whether a more challenging target would be useful.
6. Clarification was sought regarding item 5.4 on page 35, regarding properties adapted for disabilities being let to able-bodied individuals and if they could then be evicted if a disabled applicant needed the property.
7. Following a previous point, it was questioned how adaptations would be applied to properties occupied by able-bodied individuals, given the potential need for larger properties by families.
8. A question was asked about including a clawback on the policy regarding adaptations and the right to buy.
9. A question was asked about training available for a broader group of officers to support the implementation of the policy.

Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy

1. A question was asked regarding emergency repairs and recharges, specifically regarding what constituted an emergency versus an urgent repair.
2. Clarification was sought on page 50 regarding minor repairs that should be carried out by the tenant, and whether there was a specific list in the tenancy agreement.
3. A question was raised about the tenant's responsibility to reduce humidity levels and how this aligned with damp and mould policies.
4. Assurances were sought that the out-of-hours process was sufficiently robust for the policy.

5. A question was asked regarding defects and whether a robust process would be to put in a review of new homes at a set period.
6. Concern was raised regarding the use of the term "moderate colour" on page 57.
7. A question was asked about the accuracy of the wording regarding the five-year stock condition survey within the planned works section.
8. A question was asked regarding page 53 and a wider view of the tenant's responsibilities that the council would Recharge for.

Housing Repairs Recharge Policy

1. Regarding recharging for repairs and damage when a tenancy ends, it was asked what happened when a tenant died and if the council would try and recover money from an estate.
2. A comment was made regarding the code of conduct for contractors, specifically regards advising tenants of progress.
3. It was asked if the council had had success in implementing its previous policy in terms of recharges.
4. Further information was requested regarding the scale of these charges.
5. Regarding 5.9 on page 69, which refers to tenants seeking consent to carry out works themselves and a quality check potentially being carried out by council surveyors and who would carry the cost for that survey.

Damp and Mould Policy

1. Given the high profile of Awaab's Law and the stricter timescales relating to dealing with damp and mould, a question was asked if this policy included those stricter timescales.
2. Regarding the causes of dampness, particularly moisture released through drying clothes, a question was asked whether the council might provide outdoor drying facilities.
3. For private tenants, how did we empower them to complain about their landlord if no action on previously raised issues had been taken?
4. It was asked whether it would be feasible for council contractors who were going into the properties to undertake repairs, would be able to report back on any damp and mould issues noticed.
5. Regarding the performance measures on page 89, a question was asked about the systems and mechanisms being used to capture the data for the weekly report to be put on the website.
6. A general question was asked regarding how recently the policies were last reviewed and whether these review dates could be included in the documents.

These points were responded to by Councillor Chris Westwood, Cabinet Member for Housing, Gilly Knight, Corporate Head of Housing and Simon Hendeby, Strategic Director accordingly.

RESOLVED:

1. That the committee thanked officers for bringing the new policies together, noting that they provide clarity on the responsibilities of both tenants and the council.
2. The committee raised the importance of a robust appeals process, particularly for the recharge policy, anticipating potential challenges from tenants due to its new implementation.
3. That the committee welcomed the regular review of the policies and suggested stating the implementation date and review date on the policy itself.
4. That the committee requested a review of the policies at this committee in one year, following implementation, to assess the actual situation.
5. That the cabinet member considers the committee's comments raised during the discussion of the item.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and concluded at 8.45 pm

Chairperson