

REPORT TITLE: SUMMARY OF THE UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND AND
RURAL ENGLAND FUND PROGRAMMES 2022-2025

11 FEBRUARY 2025

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER: Cllr. Lucille Thompson, Cabinet Member for
Business and Culture

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WARD(S): ALL

PURPOSE

Since October 2022 the council has been distributing its allocation on UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) grant of £1.745m. This three-year programme concludes at the end of March 2025. This report details how the funding has been awarded to projects across the district on a range of activities that benefit local communities, businesses and residents. It highlights the types of projects supported and the outcomes to date these have achieved and the value of these to local areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Policy Committee is asked to:

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

1 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

1.1 The total UKSPF and REPF allocation made to the council was:

Year	UKSPF		REPF	Totals
	Revenue	Capital	Capital	
2022/23	£41,695	£17,500	£0	£59,195
2023/24	£89,709	£28,681	£186,274	£304,664
2024/25	£366,406	£456,009	£558,822	£1,381,237
Total	£497,810	£502,190	£745,096	£1,745,096

1.2 The UKSP funding allowed up to 4% to be allocated to resource administration and co-ordination support. This funded a dedicated officer (0.6 FTE) until the end of March 2025. Programme management support has also been provided by existing staff resources in the both the Economy and Finance teams. Teams within the council receiving grants to deliver projects have provided their own resources as necessary.

1.3 In December 2024, Government announced an additional year of UKSPF programme funding and the council was allocated a further £327,146 of which £60,401 is capital and £266,745 is revenue, to be spent from 1 April 2025 to end of March 2026. This also allows for up to £13,000 to be used for administration costs. Programme management support will also be required by existing staff resources in the both the Economy and Finance teams.

2 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

Background

2.1 Winchester City Council was allocated £1m of the government's UKSPF in April 2022. Owing to the predominantly rural nature of the district, the council was also allocated a further £745,000 under the REPF.

2.2 To draw down the funds the council submitted to government an Investment Plan, as approved by Cabinet on 19 July 2022 (CAB3356). To align the programmes interventions to local need and priorities several stakeholders and partners including members, parish councils and officers across the council were contacted to input their ideas. This feedback helped create the Investment Plan which also includes details of the local challenges and opportunities as they relate to the UKSPF's three priorities of Community and Place, Supporting Local Business and People and Skills. The projects detailed in the Plan formed the basis on which funds were awarded to projects, subject to the completion of detailed project proposal.

- 2.3 The REPF was allocated by government as a top-up to UKSPF after the council's Investment Plan had been submitted and approved. Therefore, an additional framework for how we would distribute the REPF was approved by Cabinet on 15th November 2022 (CAB3372). It set out the investment proposals under which projects could come forward for capital funding from the market towns, villages and rural areas of Winchester district. It approved a competitive grant application be established for each of the four priority investment proposals of:
- a) Net Zero / Climate Mitigation
 - b) Community Infrastructure and Assets Improvement
 - c) Culture, Arts and Tourism Development
 - d) Green Spaces Enhancement
- 2.4 As part of the grant terms we were required to set up programme governance arrangement in the form a Partnership Board comprising representatives from a broad range of sectors and interests. The Winchester District Prosperity Partnership was created and is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Business and Culture. Members include representatives from organisations such as Winchester Business Improvement District, Hampshire Cultural Trust, the Country Landowners Association and the parish councils. Their role is to ensure the view of a wide range of interests and places are considered in the selection and delivery of projects.
- 2.5 Project proposals were submitted to the council either following a direct invitation under UKSPF or as an open competition application under REPF. Applications were received from businesses, community organisations and council departments. Each application was scored by a panel of three reviewers. Success depended on due diligence including credit checks, a clear alignment with the objectives of the fund and a reassurance that the project could be completed before the closure of the fund in March 2025. Applications involving building or refurbishment work for which planning permission had not yet been granted were regarded as high risk in terms of deliverability.

Impact of the overall programme

- 2.6 In total, over the three-year lifespan of the programme the funds have supported 57 projects:

Year	Projects		Totals	£
	UKSPF	REPF		
2022/23	3	0	3	56,800
2023/24	7	5	12	207,922
2024/25	18	20	42	1,303,488
	4 jointly funded			122,794
Total			57	1,691,004

Delivery alignment with government, agreed council approach and priorities

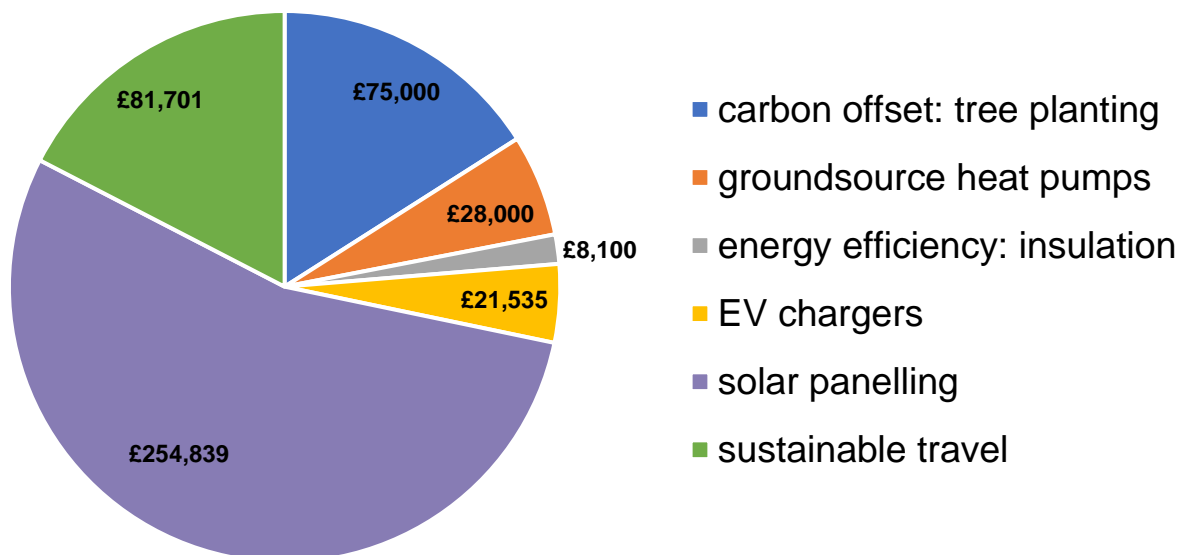
- 2.7 The original UKSPF investment plan, created in 2022, envisaged 26 projects covering 20 of the government's suggested themes. 22 of these projects were realised on time and on budget and the funding for the remaining five projects, amounting to 14.5% of the total fund, was reallocated to eleven new projects. At the close of the three-year period, we are proud to report that we have supported 32 projects covering the 20 themes we originally identified. The fund is on track to be fully spent.
- 2.8 Whilst REPF priority investment areas were developed, as outlined in 2.2, the expenditure against this fund was fully market driven, delivered through three open call competitive funding rounds. This resulted in a lower than expected take up of projects to improve green spaces. However, this was offset by considerably more interest in net zero projects, which accounted for over 50% of the total REPF allocation. The visitor economy, including culture, arts and tourism projects, was 28% more popular than we had predicted whilst community infrastructure was 30% less so. Overall, the fund was significantly oversubscribed with 25 projects fully funded by the REPF, on track to be fully spent.
- 2.9 In designing the schemes, scoring methodology and award criteria, we have prioritised applications that contribute to making the Winchester district greener, that boost the local economy and that help our residents to live well.

Tackling the Climate Emergency and Creating a Greener District

- 2.10 27% of the total UKSPF and REPF grant from government - £479,675 - has been allocated to 20 projects, designed to reduce carbon emissions. 11 of these were solar panelling projects comprising of five on community buildings Colden Common, Denmead, Easton, Sutton Scotney and Upham as well as five commercial buildings.

2.11 Winchester Action on Climate Change (WinACC) were also funded to engage organisations and deliver decarbonisation plans as the first step to solar panelling projects. This led to funding the five solar projects on community buildings noted above as well as leveraging funding from other channels leading to the completion of a further six projects across the district.

**Figure 1: UKSPF and REPF 2022-2025
20 carbon-reducing projects by technology/activity**



2.12 The impact of this funding has helped to meet the targets set by The Green Economic Development Strategy 2022 to 2032 and the Carbon Neutrality Action Plan (CNAP) 2020 to 2030. Outcomes include the following achieved and projected results:

- a) 85 m2 of low carbon installations already completed
- b) 12.6 tonnes of CO2 already avoided with a further 20t forecast once the solar panelling projects are all operational. Of this total, 18t will result from installations on commercial buildings, exceeding the annual CNAP target of 14.7 tCO2e
- c) 7 EV charging stations
- d) 40 m2 of green space recovered and a further 10 acres to come
- e) 150 m2 of new foot and cycle paths
- f) 280 residents are set to gain qualifications in retrofit, alternative energy installation and digital communications through three green skills projects

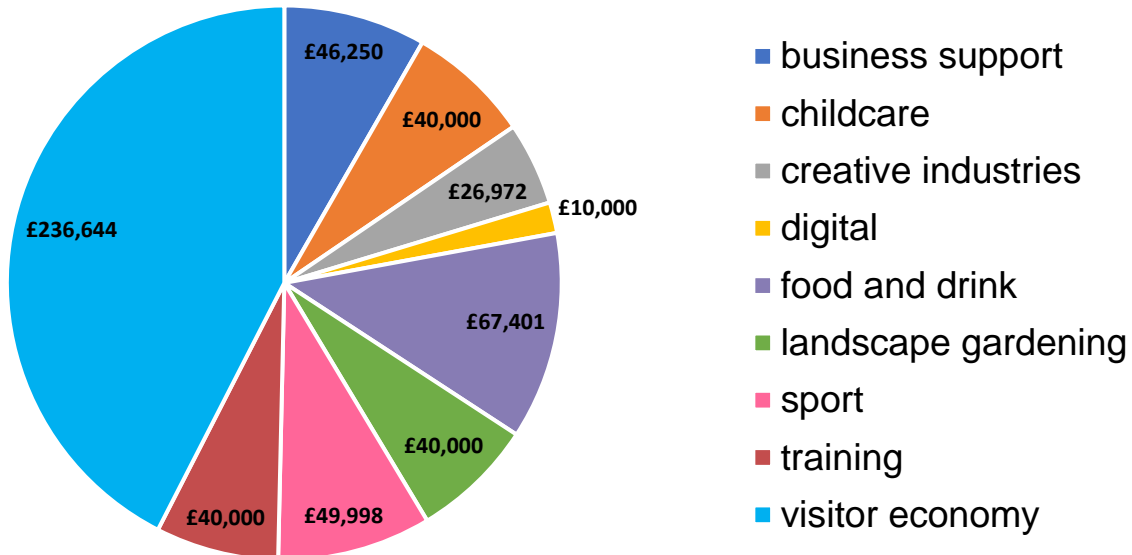
- 2.13 Patrick Foster, owner of Oakridge Smallholdings Ltd of Upham, whose solar panelling, part-funded by the REPF, has resulted in such significant CO2 and cost savings in the six months since installation that: "The good thing is that it's making us think about adding another solar/battery system to secondary supply we have on the farm to be much less grid reliant."
- 2.14 Bob Porter, Trustee of Denmead Community Centre, said: "REPF Funding through Winchester City Council enabled us to install a PV array at the Denmead Community Centre which will not only have environmental benefits but also reduce our costs enabling us to maintain and enhance opportunities and activities for all the residents of Denmead and the surrounding area."
- 2.15 Kate Shanley, owner of the Northbrook Arms pub at East Stratton, said "The funding for the EV Chargers at The Northbrook Arms has enabled us to install four EV charging points at the rear of the car park. This has made EV Charging available to guests visiting the pub, staying in the cottages, employees and the wider community."

Vibrant Local Economy

- 2.16 The council's commitment to boosting a vibrant local economy is complemented by two key objectives of the Shared Prosperity Funds: to support small, local businesses, especially in rural areas, and to develop people and skills.
- 2.17 42% of the total UKSPF and REPF grant from government has been allocated to business related activities.
- 2.18 22 separate businesses, some of which were micro-businesses, received 32% of the total UKSPF and REPF grant from government
- 2.19 Ten of these, representing £234,528, are involved in the visitor economy: three are pubs and two are educational exhibition centres (Winchester Science Centre and Marwell Zoo). When added to the UKSPF projects undertaken by the public sector, including funded projects delivered by the council to attract visitors to the district, the projects taking place in the visitor economy accounts for 51% of the total UKSPF and REPF grant from government.
- 2.20 In addition to the above, the wider business community is also benefitting from several training courses financed by UKSPF. £196,000 was allocated to six different training programmes.

2.21

**Figure 2: UKSPF and REPF 2022-2025
Business sectors supported**



2.22 The impact of these projects includes:

- a) Visitor numbers are forecast to increase by 4,585 once all projects are completed
- b) 40 events have been supported
- c) 22 businesses financed directly by the funds
- d) 52 businesses have been supported indirectly through the organisation of events
- e) Three local businesses are expanding because of the financial support received
- f) 205 people have already received training

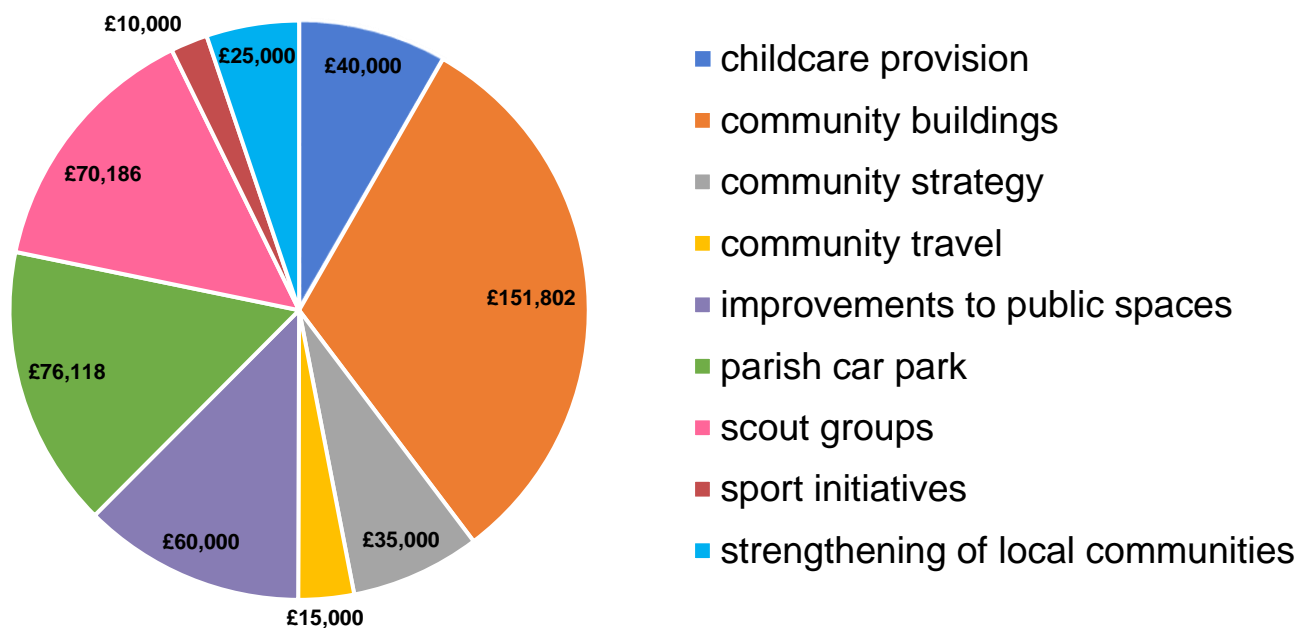
2.23 Will Harrigan, Founder and CEO of River Coffee Roasters which received funding for a larger roasting machine, said: "The project has allowed us to increase our production capacity. With this production capacity increase we have been able identify further sectors for growth. An example of this is a successful application and award for a listing on the TUCO supplier framework featuring in 5 lots. This framework gives us access to over 700 universities with the potential to supply hot beverage products. Without the

project and increase of capacity we would not be able to achieve this. The project has supported an extra full time employment role at River Coffee Roasters, with the new employee learning how to operate the new equipment. The project has also supported a part time role, taking our total employee count to 6 employees."

Living Well

- 2.24 Funds have been awarded to projects that make community buildings more comfortable, affordable and accessible by improving their energy efficiency. Additional funds have been directed towards the regeneration of town centres and green spaces to create pride in place. One project has focused on plans to give resident minorities a voice along with developing support networks in areas of deprivation. Another has provided social and physical benefits to residents through the development of health walks and a third has provided upskilling to local residents with low levels of digital experience.
- 2.25 28% of the total UKSPF and REPF grant from government - £483,106 – has been allocated to 18 projects for local community services. 31% of this has supported the improvement of seven community buildings (five of which are also reported under the Climate Emergency priority).

**Figure 3: UKSPF and REPF 2022-2025
Community projects**



2.26 Impacts of these projects include:

- a) 2,352 m2 made wheelchair accessible with a further 475 m2 projected
- b) 300 residents engaging in sport

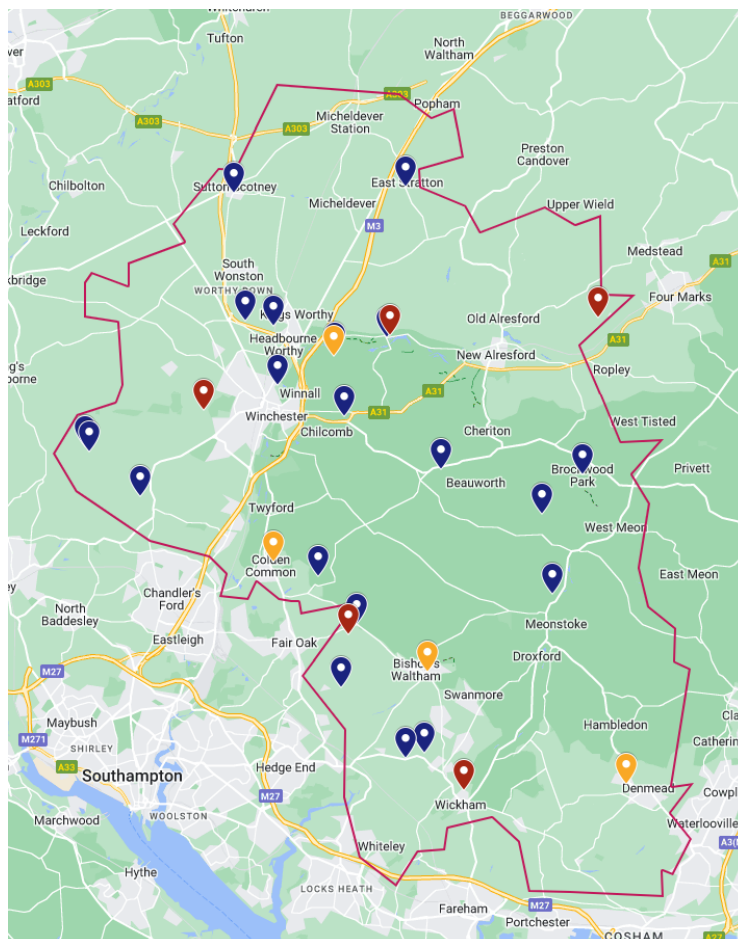
2.27 Mark Robins, Finance Director of Woodham’s Farm Day Nursery at Kings Worthy which received funding for a balcony providing access to fresh air for the youngest children, said: "Without the REPF funding, this important improvement to our childcare provision would have stayed on our wish list for another year or two”

District focus

2.28 The REPF provided the council with an additional £745,000 to be spent across the district excluding the urban centres of Winchester and Whiteley. By means of social media outreach and direct contact with networks, including those of the Partnership Board, the council was able to alert farms and other rural businesses to this opportunity, resulting in 51 applications over three competitive grant application rounds.

2.29 There were many strong applications with clear potential benefits for the district which resulted in the fund being oversubscribed. Accordingly, several of projects were supported with funding from the UKSPFF

2.30 The geographical spread of the 34 successful REPF applicants is shown below:



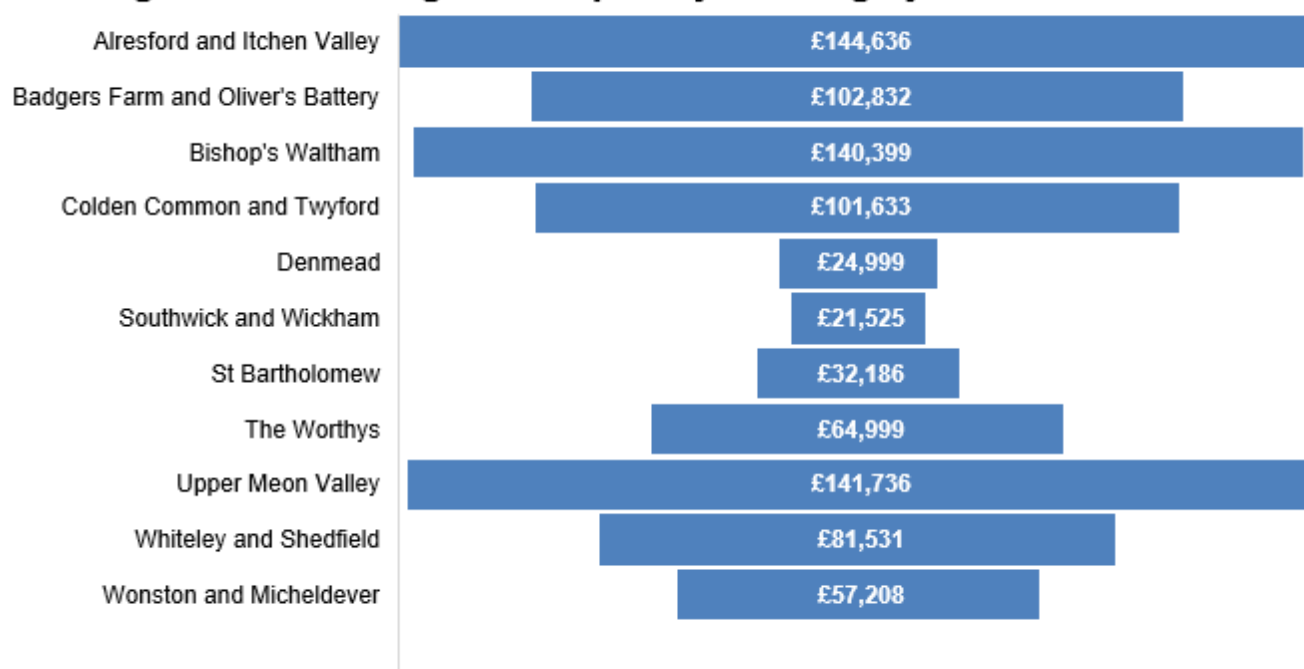
<https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=1sz8BayX0RXpuaacblmtp-KBnVpr0T0k&usp=sharing>.

2.31 70.7% of the total UKSPF and REPF grant from government has funded projects in the rural parts of the district as outlined below:

Fund	Total grant award to rural areas
REPF	£744,332
REPF / UKSPF	£134,352
District-wide UKPSF	£355,100
Total	£1,233,784

2.32 The value of REPF projects funded for each ward is shown here:

Figure 4: Rural England Prosperity Funding by wards 2022-2025



Conclusion

- 2.33 In many cases, the funding awarded to local projects has been up to half of the total project cost. In the case of some of the bigger projects, the contribution has been lower still: in the order of 20-23%. Our most recent progress report returned to UK Government forecasts that the £1,745,000 fund has levered an additional £1,688,354 of private investment, nearly doubling the total project investment to £3,433,354 so far. This has meant that for every pound the council has awarded it has unlocked another pound from local businesses, community and other organisations.
- 2.34 The impact to the local community and economy is already, and will continue to be, significant. The projects that have been delivered are varied, innovative and align with council priorities as laid out in the original investment plan. They help meet local needs, supporting communities, business growth and skills development as identified by the business and organisations themselves and endorsed by the Partnership Board. It is anticipated that there will be a high level of project completions with associated increased impact by the time the current programme concludes on 31 March 2025.
- 2.35 In the meantime, many grant recipients have already come forward to report on the impact that the grants have offered. This paper has illustrated some of these which are examples from a diverse range of organisations from across the district. A further example of these was the Nunnaminster interpretation improvement project in the city centre. A local tour guide who admired the new panels said "Just a quick note to say how brilliant the new information boards are! I tried very hard to read the last boards but they were very weathered. The new boards are fascinating, full of things I didn't know, and I took a group there last week and they thought they were great! I am a Winchester guide and I will take groups there all the time now!"
- 2.36 Case studies are regularly up-dated on the council's website with projects that are successfully completed:
- [UK Shared and Rural England Prosperity Funds - Winchester City Council](#)
- 2.37 As the current UKSPF and REPF programmes come to an end, officers have taken the opportunity to reflect on how these programmes have been delivered.
- 2.38 Both funds have shown that relatively small sums of public sector support can kick start an activity that might otherwise have been deferred indefinitely. Two recipients have already informed us that they will be adding to their initial match funding pledge. In the council's last report to UK Govt, it was observed that the total benefit to the local economy was already double the allocation. We anticipate that this figure will rise.

- 2.39 Other local authorities have commented on the shortage of applicants for these funds, especially from the business community. Our funds have been oversubscribed and we believe that our success in reaching residents and potential recipients is owing to working closely with our networks, including our advisory board, business databases and parish colleagues.
- 2.40 We have seen particular success in areas where a preliminary study or strategy, financed by the UKSP, has identified areas for further funding by the UKSPF or REPF. A good example is the WinAcc audit of community buildings which has resulted in five REPF awards.
- 2.41 The government is well aware of the difficulties experienced in the first two years of the funding period, caused the by transition from one report system to the PowerApp. The lesson learned from the delays and inaccuracies that arose from these problems is the continued importance of robust internal systems within the council so that data is protected and an accurate record retained for post assurance purposes.

Programme Extension 2025-26

- 2.42 On 13 December 2024 government confirmed the council would be in receipt of additional UKSPF grant, enabling us to extend our programme of support for local communities and economic growth for a further year. We have been awarded a total of £327,146 of which £60,401 is capital and £266,745 is revenue to be spent from 1 April 2025 to end of March 2026.
- 2.43 MHCLG and DEFRA are working together and will update on any further programme for REPF in 2025/26 in due course.
- 2.44 Comment from the committee is sought on the approach planned for the 2025/2026 programme.
- 2.45 Delegated authority to the Corporate Head of Service for Economy & Communities to accept the 2025/2026 UKSPF, design and implement a grant programme in consultation with the Cabinet member for Business & Culture and spend against it, will be sought at an upcoming Cabinet Meeting. C
- 2.46 The government has laid out its priorities for the 2025/2026 UKSPF programme <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-2025-26-technical-note#:~:text=An%20additional%20year%20of%20UKSPF,of%20existing%20a ctivity%20where%20appropriate> which align with the previous years.

- 2.47 An open call to businesses and not for profit/community organisations across the district will be made, concentrating on economic growth, community resilience and energy generation will be undertaken in the coming weeks. This will be supported by a range of business engagement activities including marketing and promotion.
- 2.48 Applications will be sought for projects with grant values between £25,000 and £50,000.
- 2.49 Successful applicants will be advised in time for funded projects to be undertaken and delivered by 27 February 2026
- 2.50 All other grant conditions will reflect those set out for the previous UKSPF programme as agreed by Cabinet on 19 July 2022 (CAB3356).

3 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

3.22 Not applicable

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

Previous Committee Reports:-

CAB3356: UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND – INVESTMENT PLAN PROPOSAL 19 JULY 2022

[UKSPF Investment Plan proposal - Cabinet Documet.pdf](#)

CAB3372: RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND – INVESTMENT PLAN PROPOSAL 15 NOVEMBER 2022

[CAB3372 Rural England Prosperity Fund Investment Plan Proposal.pdf](#)

Other Background Documents:-

None

APPENDICES:

None