

# STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

## COUNCIL

21 JULY 2022

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>UK Shared Prosperity Funding, Investment Plan</b>			
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To consider the draft UKSPF Investment Plan.			
<b>Decision(s)</b>	<b>The Committee RESOLVES to:</b>  a. <b>Approve the development of the UKSPF Investment Plan</b> b. <b>Approve the next steps and outlined plan prior to submission of the plan</b> c. <b>In consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader, agree to the Strategic Director of Resources making minor amendments to the plan as required and then submitting the UKSPF Investment Plan bid by August 1<sup>st</sup> 2022.</b>			
<b>Consultation and Feedback</b>	Consultation and discussions have taken place with members of the Strategic Leadership Team, Regeneration and Investment Board, town and parish councils, local businesses, business groups and Community Groups.			
<b>Report Author</b>	Amy Beckett, Senior Economic Development Specialist Email: Amy.Beckett@stroud.gov.uk			
<b>Options</b>	Option 1: to do nothing. This is not recommended as it would lead to the District not being able to draw down its share of UK Shared Prosperity Funding.  Option 2: to agree or make amendments to Stroud Districts Investment Plan and proposed interventions.			
<b>Background Papers</b>	None			
<b>Appendices</b>	Appendix A – UKSPF Investment Plan Appendix B – Priority Area’s proposed outcomes and interventions			
<b>Implications (further details at the end of the report)</b>	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

### 1. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) was launched by Government in April 2022, a non-competitive funding stream, replacing the European Funding that has been previously made available. The fund is available to all Local Authorities, with requirements for each

area to develop an Investment Plan, offering high level details on how the fund will be utilised over the funding period of three years.

The ambition of the fund is to build pride in place and increase life chances across the country; the fund is split into three investment priority areas: Communities and Place, Supporting Local Businesses and; People and Skills (available in year 3 only).

Stroud District has been awarded £1,378,985.00 core UKSPF over the three-year funding period, with a further £2,742,440.00 awarded to Gloucestershire County Council for the Multiply programme. This is to support the take up of numeracy courses in innovative and new ways, encouraging an increase of skills levels within the County.

Government have announced the split of funding across the three years, for Stroud District this is outlined as follows:

Year 1 (2022-23): £167,353.00

Year 2 (2023-24): £344,705.00

Year 3 (2024-25): £876,927.00

Local Authorities have been advised all spend must be defrayed within the correct year, and Government will consider withholding the next years funding if we are not able to evidence credible spend plans for any underspend.

At the time of this paper being written, Stroud District's UK Shared Prosperity Funding Investment Plan is currently being developed. Partners from across the district and teams internally have been invited to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI's), the submission deadline was Friday 8<sup>th</sup> July.

## **2. ENGAGEMENT WITH PARTNERS**

- 2.1 A major part of the Investment Plan development is how we engage with our partners and communities to ensure the UKSPF is being utilised effectively across the area. Partners from communities, businesses, parishes, neighbouring local authorities, public sector organisations and skills providers have been engaged with throughout the development of the investment plan. Partners have been met with on a one to one basis as well as in UKSPF working group meetings.
- 2.2 In addition to the external engagement, an officer group was formed, made up of colleagues across the UKSPF thematic areas, this included colleagues from the following areas: Leisure, Human Resources, Economic Development Planning Strategy, The Canal Team, The 2030 Team, The Museum Team, Community Health and Wellbeing, and Regeneration.
- 2.3 When meeting with partners, understanding their opinions on the needs of the district was essential, finding out which proposed interventions they feel meets this best and how they feel the funding should be utilised.
- 2.4 Further to the engagement sessions with partners, they have been invited to send an Expression of Interest (EOI) in. There was an excellent level of engagement across the Community and submitted bids totalled £3.9 million. An initial assessment has been carried out and this has allowed the formation of the broad split of the funding allocation, as shown

in the table later in this report. Final decisions have not yet been made on individual projects that is likely to be the case until the funding award is confirmed in the Autumn.

- 2.5 Senior Officers and Officer groups across the County's Local Authorities have been working in partnership to ensure joined up consideration is made on county wide schemes. There have been regular meetings taking place to support the development of these.
- 2.6 Both MPs within the District have had written briefings on the progress of SDC's investment plan. A copy of this report will also be sent directly to them.

### **3. THE EXPRESSION OF INTEREST PROCESS**

- 3.1 Stroud has adopted a similar process to calls for projects as other Local Authorities in the County, this has been done to streamline the process and ensure when partners are bidding across areas they will not have to complete a variety of forms. As such, we have used the Expression of Interest (EOI) template and scoring matrix from the neighbouring Local Authority, Forest of Dean District Council.
- 3.2 The EOI asks for high level information on any potential projects, confirming they meet the needs of the district and the high level objectives of the funding and that the project can be delivered in the UKSPF timeframe (2022 – 2025).
- 3.3 To mitigate risk of underspend in each year, and ensure the annual budget is released in a timely manner from government, all potential project partner is asked to confirm projects completion and defrayal dates.
- 3.4 Following the submission deadline, all EOI's will be considered and scored, giving an understanding of which projects will deliver across objectives and offer the best value for money.

### **4. OUR PRIORITIES**

- 4.1 When the Government first announced the UKSPF, the district undertook a mapping exercise to understand where the proposed interventions outlined met the already agreed priorities of the District. The following strategies mapped against the UKSPF proposed interventions were:
  - 4.1.1 SDC Council Plan;
  - 4.1.2 CN 2030 Strategy;
  - 4.1.3 Emerging Cultural Strategy;
  - 4.1.4 Canal Projects priorities;
  - 4.1.5 Economic Development Strategy;
  - 4.1.6 Leisure and Wellbeing Strategy;
  - 4.1.7 Museum in the Park Policies;
  - 4.1.8 Physical Activity Strategy
- 4.2 From this exercise the highlighted interventions outlined were then taken forward through stakeholder engagement to understand the thoughts of the partners.
- 4.3 With the current national landscape and cost of living crisis, consideration has been given to how the UKSPF can support communities and the cost of living crisis. Working with

partners within the communities is essential to supporting residents with the current crisis and offering a wide breadth of support.

- 4.4 Further to the cost of living crisis is understanding the needs and pressures on our business community. As spend decreases and their supply chain and energy prices increase; they face fresh pressures, after only recently navigating the pandemic. Understanding the impact on our businesses, who are our communities and residents also, and ways that UKSPF can support them will offer a holistic and rounded approach to the management of the cost of living crisis.
- 4.5 Appendix B shows the proposed interventions and outcomes currently forming part of the draft Investment Plan.
- 4.6 Following on from assessing all proposed projects, via the EOI process, we have provisionally allocated the funding in the following split:

<b>Priority Area</b>	<b>Percentage of Allocation</b>
Communities & Places	62%
Supporting Local Businesses	33%
People & Skills ( <i>2024-25 only</i> )	5%

- 4.7 Minor alterations in this split may be necessary as projects are further developed and administration costs are applied. The Council is permitted to retain a 4% portion of the fund to represent the administration cost of the scheme. There is no other funding to meet the costs and therefore the full 4% will be used.
- 4.8 The draft investment plan is shown at Appendix A. The necessities of the Council publications deadlines mean that there will still be additions and improvements before the August 1<sup>st</sup> deadline. This is the reason for the requested delegation to the Strategic Director of Resources to make, with appropriate consultation up to the amendment date.

## **5. NEXT STEPS**

- 5.1 Following on from this decision, there is time to ensure all the Investment Plan is fully completed before the submission deadline of 1<sup>st</sup> August 2022. As set out in the report there will be further amendments and improvements, subject to the member consultation outlined.
- 5.2 Following submission of the Investment Plan, government will approve the plans and award the first year's funding. Once approval of the plan has been received, the District Council will announce which projects have been selected. Approval of investment plans is expected Autumn 2022.

## **6. IMPLICATIONS**

### **6.1 Financial Implications**

This report sets out a draft investment plan seeking to acquire £1.378 million of Central Government funding for priority projects. If the Investment Plan is successful the money will be passed on to projects, less the 4% administration allowance to be retained by the Council.

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## 6.2 **Legal Implications**

There are no specific legal implications relating to this report but there will be in relation to each project chosen to form the Investment Plan. Advice should be sought from One Legal to determine the appropriate legal power to undertake the specific projects, to ensure compliance with the Subsidy Control Act 2022 and protect the council's interests when giving grants.

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## 6.3 **Equality Implications**

Equality impact assessments have not been carried out at this stage as detailed projects do not form part of the Draft Investment Plan. The Investment Plan must set out how the Council has considered its Public Sector Equality Duty as part of the plan, and this will be completed before submission.

## 6.4 **Environmental Implications**

The Council's priorities of a Carbon Neutral District have been considered in every EOI as part of the scoring process. The proposed funding outcomes included in Appendix B include reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.