



Portfolio Holder Report

The portfolio holder will make a decision on this item after seven days have elapsed (including the date of publication).

Report of:	Portfolio Holder	Date of publication
Marianne Hesketh, Corporate Director Communities	Councillor David Henderson, Resources Portfolio Holder and Councillor Alice Collinson, Planning Policy and Economic Development Portfolio Holder	6 April 2023

UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund allocations

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To seek approval to implement the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF), including delivery of the rural business grant programme.
- 1.2 To seek approval to award UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) for the commission of business support services for the borough.

2. Outcomes

- 2.1 Delivery of a two year capital programme of interventions within rural areas of the borough, as set out in the council's REPF addendum to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan.
- 2.2 Support our businesses to grow, prosper and recover through delivery of the REPF and the UKSPF 2023-2025.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That the council accept the REPF allocation of £400,000 from HM Government and make the funds available for agreed activities in accordance with the approved REPF addendum to the UKSPF Investment Plan (subject to change), as set out at Appendix 1.

- 3.2** That the capital programme be updated to reflect the REPF spend profile, which is split over two financial years as follows: 2023/24 £100,000 and 2024/25 £300,000.
- 3.3** That the council be responsible for the administration and management of the REPF, the assessment and determination of the allocations and the payment of grants. The S.151 Officer will oversee the fund, making sure that plans are deliverable and taking responsibility, within the delegated delivery model, for their effective delivery. The S.151 Officer must also approve all changes and use of the REPF in line with the overall grant conditions.
- 3.4** That approval be given to authorise the Corporate Director Communities, in conjunction with the S.151 Officer, to approve grants to external bodies in line with REPF, UKSPF, Cabinet Office guidance and in accordance with the council's Financial Regulations, Financial Procedure Rules and Procurement Regulations up to a value of £100,000 and to enter into suitable Grant Funding Agreements.
- 3.5** In accordance with 3.4, that approval is given to commission Lancashire County Council (LCC) to deliver a rural business grant programme, to the value of £148,000 which comprises £140,000 capital spend from the REPF (£30,000 in 2023/24 and £110,000 in 2024/25) and £8,000 of revenue spend which has been allocated from the UKSPF.
- 3.6** In accordance with 3.4, that approval is given to commission Boost Lancashire, who are supported by LCC and the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP), to act as the delivery body for management of the UKSPF programme for Business Support Services for the borough. The cost of £200,000 will be met by the UKSPF and spread over two financial years, commencing with £100,000 in 2023/24 followed by £100,000 in 2024/25.
- 3.7** That approval is given by the Resources Portfolio Holder to allow the procurement of services in 3.5 and 3.6 under exemptions to contract procedures, contained within the Financial Regulations and Finance Procedure Rules on the grounds that "the goods, works and services are of a specialised nature carried out by only one or a limited number of firms with no reasonably satisfactory alternatives".
- 3.8** That the Resources Portfolio Holder delegates authority to the Corporate Director Communities, in conjunction with the S.151 Officer, to allow for the appointment of consultants under the exemption to Contract Procedures contained within the Financial Regulations and Financial Procedure Rules, on the grounds that if a framework agreement is available that necessitates the council not having to go out to tender and where the goods, works and services will still provide the council with best value for money.

3.9 The REPF addendum is subject to change as project viability is continually reassessed, and the Resources Portfolio Holder agrees to delegate authority to the Corporate Director Communities, in conjunction with the S.151 Officer, to amend the addendum provided the changes are in line with the REPF and UKSPF requirements.

4. Background

4.1 The Portfolio Holder Report published on 3 November 2022 detailed the background to the UKSPF programme and REPF top-up, describing the Investment Plan submitted to HM Government (HMG) in July 2022 which was expected to be agreed by HMG by the end of 2022. The council accepted the funding of £3,949,132 (which includes £20,000 for preparing the Investment Plan) and agreed to make these funds available for agreed activities within the borough, in accordance with the approved Investment Plan. The UKSPF allocation is split over three financial years as follows: 2022/23 £496,836 (includes £20,000 Investment Plan), 2023/24 £953,673 and 2024/25 £2,498,623. Given the lateness of the approval from HMG, councils will be allowed to carry forward underspends from year one. The report also made it clear that the REPF allocation of £400,000 over two years from 1 April 2023 would be the subject of a further report, which is this report.

4.2 LCC have a strong history of delivering the LEADER scheme, an EU programme and part of the Rural Development Programme for England. They have the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to act as a delivery body for the REPF business grant programme and contract supplier(s) to provide business support services to agreed criteria and standards. A specification, agreed with HMG for the outputs and outcomes, will form part of the agreement with LCC and will be monitored according to the requirements of the UKSPF and REPF reporting schedule.

4.3 Boost is Lancashire's Business Growth Hub. Their purpose is to help Lancashire's businesses grow. Boost has previously been backed by the European Regional Development Fund, led by the LEP and LCC. Through Boost, Lancashire businesses from start-ups to large companies can get access to a number of funded programmes in areas such as mentoring, scaling up, innovation, international trade, leadership development and accessing finance. They can also signpost businesses to relevant national business support programmes to find the support they need.

4.4 Boost have shown, based on recent experience, that they have the necessary skillset to deliver a business support programme tailored for local businesses. Since its inception in 2013, Boost has supported approximately 8,000 businesses in Lancashire. Between January 2019 and March 2022, Boost have provided information diagnostics and brokerage for 103 Wyre businesses, they have supported 16 potential entrepreneurs, 78 existing enterprises, 19 new enterprises and the creation of 14 jobs. A specification, agreed with HMG for the outputs and

outcomes, will form part of the agreement with Boost and will be monitored according to the requirements of the UKSPF reporting schedule.

5. Key issues and proposals

- 5.1** Wyre Council will also enter into a Service Level Agreement with LCC, where LCC will act as a delivery body for the rural business grant programme. The REPF allocation of £140,000 will cover small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas and will be composed entirely of capital grants. It will include funding for net zero infrastructure for rural businesses and diversification of farm businesses outside of agriculture to encourage start up, expansion or scale up of these businesses where this involves converting farm buildings into other commercial or business uses. The £8,000 revenue allocation, will be funded from the UKSPF and will provide a pre-application business planning workshop and one to one consultancy support for up to ten qualifying rural businesses. LCC have indicated that there will be no administration fee for the delivery of this service.
- 5.2** The REPF capital fund will be awarded to successful grant applicants of the programme. The expenditure has been profiled as follows: £30,000 in 2023/24 and £110,000 in 2024/25. The remaining REPF is provisionally allocated as per Appendix 1. However, this is illustrative only and subject to change.
- 5.3** Boost and Wyre Council will enter into a contractual agreement where Boost will act as delivery partner for the UKSPF business support programme over the two remaining financial years. The revenue expenditure has been apportioned as £100,000 in 2023/24 and £100,000 in 2024/25.
- 5.4** The commission of Boost will see a continuation of their current business support offer, as well as additional programmes based upon a specification of support services tailored for businesses within Wyre according to local need identified by the council's Economic Development Team.

6. Delegated functions

- 6.1** The matters referred to in this report are considered under the following executive function delegated to the Planning Policy and Economic Development Portfolio Holder (as set out in Part 3 of the council's constitution): "To deal with issues relating to the function of the Council as the Accountable Body or leading agency, for the management, administration or reporting arrangements of organisations promoting or delivering economic development or regeneration projects" and the executive function delegated to the Resources Portfolio Holder "To consider departures from Rules relating to financial and contractual matters if appropriate".

Financial and legal implications	
Finance	<p>The REPF allocation is capital only funding for business or community purposes, which is to be paid to the council in instalments: 2023/24 (£100,000) and 2024/25 (£300,000). Of this, the amount of £140,000 has been allocated to the rural business grant programme made up of £30,000 in 2023/24 and £110,000 in 2024/25. A revenue budget of £8,000 has also been allocated to the rural business grant programme from the UKSPF, to deliver the integral business planning consultancy service.</p> <p>The UKSPF revenue allocation of £200,000 to Boost Lancashire would be split over two financial years: £100,000 in 2023/24 and £100,000 in 2024/25.</p>
Legal	<p>A contractual agreement and a Service Level Agreement will be entered into with Boost and LCC respectively.</p> <p>Contract(s) will also be entered into by the commissioned organisations, that is Boost and LCC, with appointed supplier(s) to comply with the council's Financial Procedure Rules and Contracts Procedures and those adopted by LCC.</p>

Other risks/implications: checklist

If there are significant implications arising from this report on any issues marked with a ✓ below, the report author will have consulted with the appropriate specialist officers on those implications and addressed them in the body of the report. There are no significant implications arising directly from this report, for those issues marked with a x.

risks/implications	✓ / x
community safety	x
equality and diversity	x
sustainability	x
health and safety	x

risks/implications	✓ / x
asset management	✓
climate change	x
ICT	x
data protection	x

Processing Personal Data

In addition to considering data protection along with the other risks/ implications, the report author will need to decide if a 'privacy impact assessment (PIA)' is also required. If the decision(s) recommended in this report will result in the collection and processing of personal data for the first time (i.e. purchase of a new system, a new working arrangement with a third party) a PIA will need to have been completed and signed off by Data Protection Officer before the decision is taken in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

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List of background papers:		
name of document	date	where available for inspection
None	-	-

List of appendices

Appendix 1: Wyre Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) Addendum Summary

Appendix 1 Wyre Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF)
Addendum Summary (April 2023 to March 2025).



Proposed REPF Intervention	Year 1 indicative allocation	Year 2 indicative allocation	Indicative outputs	Indicative outcomes
Supporting Rural Communities				
<p>Investment in the creation of and improvements to local rural green spaces.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wyre Estuary Country Park Infrastructure projects that focus on improving access from Skippool, interpretation and signage, facilities, and that help to reduce levels of ASB. 	£30,000	£100,000	<p>Amount of green or blue space created or improved (m2)</p> <p>Number of facilities supported or created</p>	<p>Increased footfall</p> <p>Increased visitor numbers</p> <p>Improved perception of facilities/amenities</p> <p>Increased users of facilities/amenities</p> <p>Increased use of cycleways or paths</p> <p>Improved perceived or experienced accessibility</p>
<p>Investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community grants capital programme for infrastructure schemes e.g., kitchen upgrades in community hubs capable of supporting food and drink entrepreneurs to get accreditation for food production. 	£40,000	-	<p>Number of organisations receiving grants</p> <p>Number of facilities supported or created</p>	<p>Improved perception of facilities/amenities</p> <p>Increased users of facilities/amenities</p>

Appendix 1 Wyre Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF)
Addendum Summary (April 2023 to March 2025).



Proposed REPF Intervention	Year 1 indicative allocation	Year 2 indicative allocation	Indicative outputs	Indicative outcomes
Supporting Rural Communities				
Funding (capital grants) for rural circular economy projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for premises and/or equipment to enable community projects to be supported with local skills. 	-	£30,000	Number of organisations receiving grants Number of volunteering opportunities supported	Improved engagement numbers
Funding for active travel enhancements in the local area. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For example, capital grant towards the upgrade of a section of the canal towpath, and to facilitate leisure activity. 	-	£30,000	Amount of green or blue space created or improved (m2)	Increased use of cycleways or paths Improved perception of facilities/amenities
Supporting Rural Businesses				
Small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas. Including capital funding for net zero infrastructure for rural businesses, and diversification of farm businesses outside of agriculture to encourage start up, expansion or scale up of these businesses where this involves converting farm buildings into other commercial or business uses. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery of a sector-focussed business grant programme to support diversification 	£30,000	£110,000	Number of organisations receiving grants	Jobs created Jobs Safeguarded Number of businesses adopting new to firm technologies or processes Number of businesses experiencing growth
TOTAL	£100,000	£300,000		

* Please note: proposed interventions and amounts are indicative and may be subject to change through the programme.