

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

Date: Monday 21 November 2022
Time: 4.30 p.m.
Venue: Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone

Membership: Councillor Burton

AGENDA

Page No.

1. Urgent Items
2. To consider whether any items should be taken in private due to the possible disclosure of exempt information
3. Minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2022 1 - 9
4. Rural England Prosperity Fund Investment Plan 10 - 40

INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC

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Issued on 11 November 2022

Alison Broom

Alison Broom, Chief Executive

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 20 JULY 2022

Present: Councillor Burton (Leader of the Council)

1. UK SHARE PROSPERITY FUND, LOCAL INVESTMENT PLAN
See Record of Decision.
2. DURATION OF MEETING
12.30pm to 12.45pm.

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISION OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Decision Made: 20 July 2022

UK Share Prosperity Fund, Local Investment Plan

Issue for Decision

The Council has been allocated funding as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Release of the funding is dependent on submission of a Local Investment Plan (LIP) to the Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC); DLUHC has provided substantial guidance for the scope of how the funding should be applied, the outcomes it achieves and the profiling of spend. The deadline for submission is 1st August 2022. Work has been undertaken informally with the Cabinet and key partners to create a proposed list of priority projects for the Local Investment Plan the two Policy Advisory Committees whose remit this falls within are being consulted on the proposals prior to decision by the Leader of the Council.

Decision Made

1. The planned projects and actions in Appendix Four to the report are approved as the Local Investment Plan for Maidstone.
2. The Head of Policy, Communications and Governance be delegated responsibility to submit the plan to government by 1 August 2022.

Reasons for Decision

1. Introduction And Background

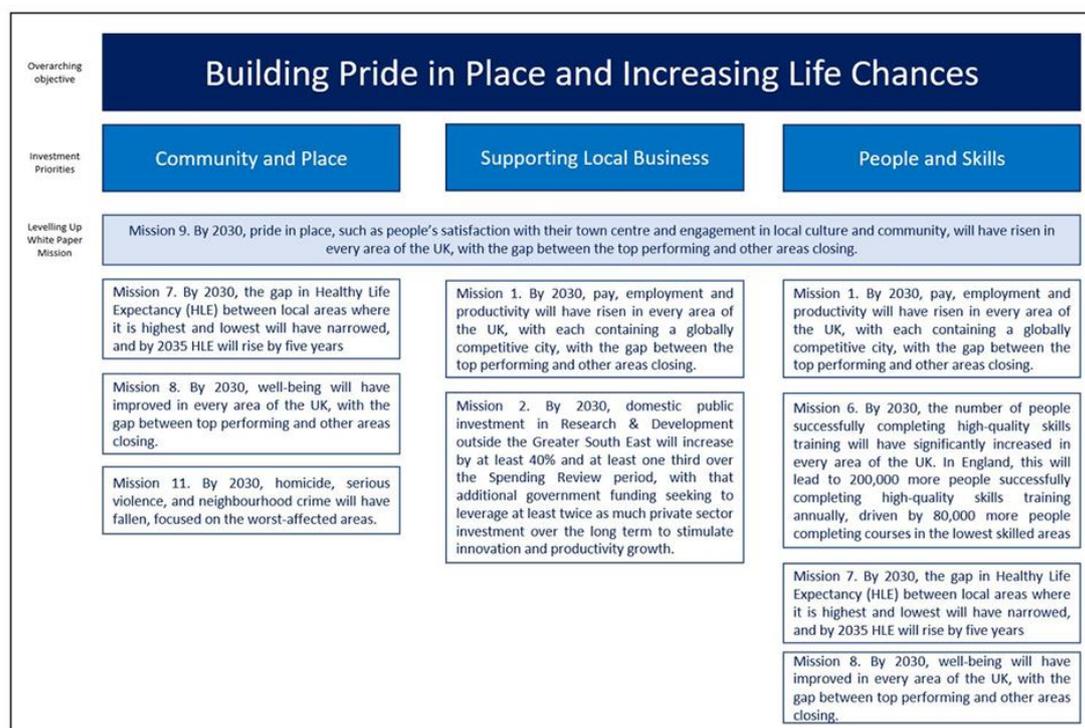
- 1.1 The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) forms part of a suite of complementary Levelling Up funding. It builds on the competitive Levelling Up Fund and Community Ownership Fund through long term, stable funding, allocated to all places. In England the fund has been allocated at District Level in two tier areas.

Vision and Objectives of the UKSPF

- 1.2 The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will support the UK Government's wider commitment to level up all parts of the UK by delivering on each of the four parts of Levelling Up:

- Boost productivity, pay, jobs and living standards, especially in those places where they are lagging.
- Spread opportunities and improve public services, especially in those places where they are weakest.
- Restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where they have been lost.
- Empower local leaders and communities, especially in those places lacking local agency

1.3 The primary goal of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund is to build pride in place and increase life chances across the UK. This aligns with Levelling Up White Paper missions, particularly: 'By 2030, pride in place, such as people's satisfaction with their town centre and engagement in local culture and community, will have risen in every area of the UK, with the gap between the top performing and other areas closing.' More detail is set out in the table below.



Funding

1.4 Maidstone has been awarded £1,199,253 to spend over the next three years profiled as follows:

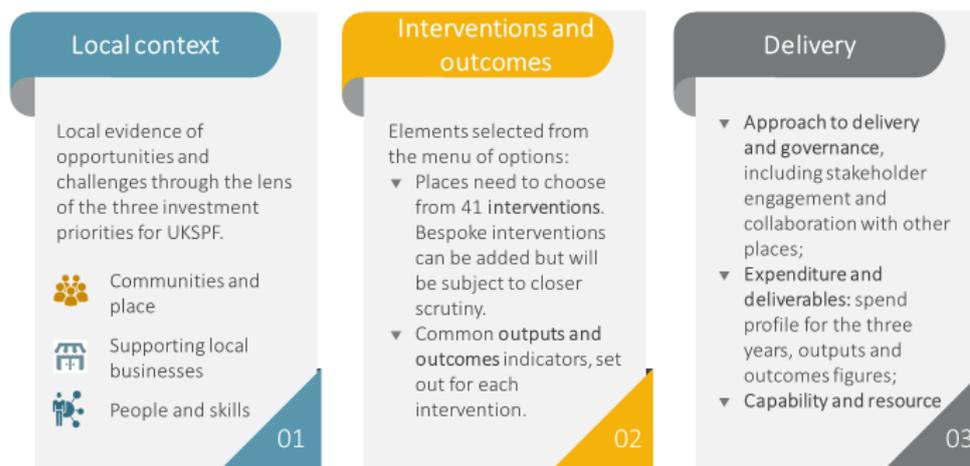
Year	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Amount	£145,540	£291,081	£762,632
Support Cost (up to and	£5,821.60	£11,643.24	£30,505.28

taken out of in year total)			
Minimum Capital Spend out of total	10% £14,554	13% £37,840.53	20% £152,526.40

1.5 Release of the funding is dependent on submission of a Local Investment Plan (LIP) to the Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC); DLUHC has provided substantial guidance for the scope of how the funding should be applied, the outcomes it achieves, the profiling of spend and the split between capital and revenue funding. This does not preclude alternative interventions being put forward in the LIP although to do so would require additional evidence to be included. The deadline for submission is 1 August 2022.

The Local Investment Plan

1.6 The local investment plans will feature three broad components:



1. **Local context:** this provides an opportunity for places to set out their local evidence of opportunities and challenges through the lens of the three investment priorities for UKSPF. Please see summary at Appendix One
2. **Selection of outcomes and interventions:** where places identify the outcomes they wish to target based on their local context, and the interventions they wish to prioritise, under each investment priority, from the menu of options. These should be clearly linked to local opportunities and challenges. Interventions and outcomes taken from the UKSPF prospectus have been included in the shortlisting at Appendix Four

3. **Delivery:** this will represent the most detailed stage of the investment plans and is broken down into the following:

- a) Approach to delivery and governance: where places outline the structures and processes that will support the delivery of their chosen interventions. Places will be expected to set out the engagement they have undertaken as part of the development of their Plan, including their engagement with MPs.

MBC has engaged with both MPs and a range of partner organisations to identify the challenges, outcomes and potential project proposals for our Local Investment Plan. Details are set out in paragraph 2.8 below.

It is proposed that strategic oversight is achieved through regular updates to the Executive and regular engagement with the MBC Anchor Institutions Group plus Maidstone MPs

Delivery of the projects will be within existing MBC staff resources complemented by One Maidstone (the Business Improvement District) and Involve Kent, with programme management overseen by The Head of Policy, Communications and Governance. Project management support will be funded through the UKSPF. There will be an operational programme board comprising representatives for each of the delivery partners managed by the Head of Policy, Communications and Governance.

- b) Expenditure and deliverables: detailing what places want to deliver with their investment plan, including the spend profile for the three years of the fund as well as outputs and outcomes figures, and where places have already identified specific projects, they wish to fund under each of the investment priorities.

It is proposed that the MBC Investment Plan focusses on Maidstone Town centre. This is consistent with our Strategic Plan, Our Economic Development Strategy, our associated Covid Recovery and Renewal Plan and complements the objectives of our Community Safety Plan. Appendix Three sets out the range of proposed projects. Given the scale of funding it is proposed to invest in a small number of projects to achieve maximum impact.

- c) Capability and resource: to allow places to outline the resource they have to manage and work on UKSPF, as well as their capability and previous experience of delivering similar funds.

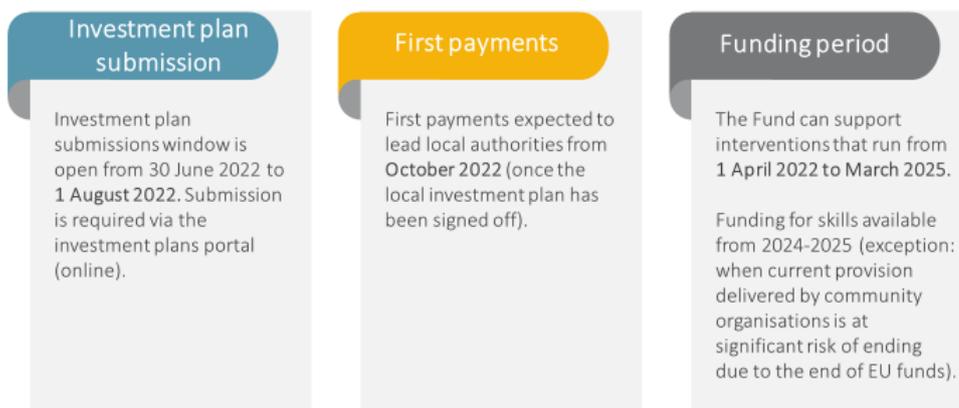
To be completed by Head of Policy, Communications and Governance as part of submission once decisions on the governance and specific projects to be included in the LIP have been made. The projects include feasibility studies, expert support from within the Council and external support from partners.

- 1.7 The plan will be submitted via an online platform. The Head of Policy, Communications and Governance has been identified as the lead officer to complete the submission. £20,000 was made available to support development of the investment plan in addition to the UKSPF money. The Council appointed Mutual Ventures, a consultancy with expertise in strategic planning, investment planning and business case development in the public sector to deliver sustainable social, economic, and cultural value to local people, to assist and advise in the development of a plan which will be approved by Government.
- 1.8 To produce a successful plan, lead local authorities are tasked with working with a diverse range of local and regional stakeholders, civil society organisations, employer bodies responsible for identifying local skills plans, and businesses or business representative groups to achieve Fund outcomes in their areas. To achieve this, an event was held with key stakeholders facilitated by Mutual Ventures. This included Kent County Council, Mid Kent College, the police, health partners, the community sector, One Maidstone and a faith group. This engagement enabled us to bring together our Anchor Institutions as proposed in the Town Centre Strategy scoping report presented to and agreed by the Policy and Resources Committee in March 2022. There have been more detailed conversations with our key delivery partners for the LIP following the workshop. Other potential projects identified with our Anchor Institutions will be considered as part of our wider Town Centre Strategy. MBC contributed through officer expertise in housing, community safety, communications, events, biodiversity and climate change, parks, public health, economic development and financial inclusion. Details of this engagement will be set out in our submission.
- 1.9 A summary of the outputs of the workshop can be seen at Appendix Two. Key challenges and opportunities considered were greening in the town centre, creating pride in place, changing the narrative around the town centre to enhance its reputation and creating an attractive and interesting destination. Emphasis was placed on the importance of greater partnership working, improving community infrastructure, and improving mental health.
- 1.10 MPs should provide an advisory role to lead local authorities, reviewing the investment plan prior to submission to UK government for sign-off. Meetings have been held with Helen Grant, MP and Helen Whatley, MP who have both indicated support for the plan and the ideas put forward. The draft plan has been sent to them both for comment and their views will be included in the final report for consideration by the Leader.

- 1.11 Regular discussions have been held with the Executive throughout this process. The Executive have identified their priority for the fund to promote pride in place, through promotion of the Town Centre, local businesses and events including uplifting the quality of spaces and buildings with a strong emphasis on heritage and culture.
- 1.12 A full list of the 18 projects that have been produced through engagement with the Anchor Institution Group, Members and Officers submitted and considered by the Executive can be seen at Appendix Three. There are too many to be delivered with the amount of funding available and hence officers, in conversation informally with the Executive and our partners, have suggested a prioritised short list of projects.
- 1.13 The short list of projects and spend per year are at Appendix Four, with an easy read financial breakdown at Appendix Five.

Important Dates

- 1.14 There are key timescales set out by DLUHC for the submission of the investment plan, timings of the projects and connected funding, this is set out below.



- 1.15 The timing of shortlisted projects and the period from which they will be funded is set out in Appendix Four and Appendix Five.
- 1.16 To get the investment plan submitted there is a strict timeline to which we need to adhere.
- Economic Regeneration and Leisure PAC - July 2022
 - Communities, Housing and Environment PAC - 12 July 2022
 - Leader of the Council decision- 20 July 2022
 - Final Submission date – 1 August 2022
- 1.17 Not meeting the final submission date on the 1 August 2022 may result in losing the funding.

Consultation of Policy Advisory Committees

- 2.1 This issue was considered by the Economic Regeneration and Leisure Policy Advisory Committee on 5 July 2022 and the Committee supported the recommendations of this report. In addition, further requests were made and these are attached at Appendix 6: (draft) Excerpt of the Minutes of Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee Meeting held on 5 July 2022.
- 2.2 The matter is also due to be considered by the Communities, Housing and Environment Policy Advisory Committee on the 12 July 2022, with the outcome of that Committees consideration to be reported to the Leader of the Council prior to this decision being taken.

Alternatives considered and why rejected

- 3.1 The short list of projects can be seen below and full details including the correlating interventions as identified by government, outcomes, estimated spend and which year the project falls can be seen at Appendix Four with a summary of spend by year at Appendix Five.
 - A. Building Pride in Place through promotion of the Town Centre and Events
 - B. A Safe and Attractive Town Centre achieved through Greening and Lighting, supported by green volunteers
 - C. A Community Arts Hub and Maker Space
 - D. Links from the Town Centre to Lockmeadow - Activity/Outdoor Gym – Callisthenics
- 3.2 The Leader of the Council could choose to revisit the original list of potential projects and propose an alternative shortlist than as shown above at 3.1. This could also include narrowing the current proposed shortlist by removing projects, expanding it to include additional projects or combining projects as has been done already.
- 3.3 It is important to note that if the Leader of the Council chooses to do this, that any recommendation should be made with consideration of the available funds and the profiling of that funding that as set out at 2.4. DLUHC are very clear in their prospectus that funding has to be spent as profiled so we are not able to spend our allocation for future years early. Any spend beyond the in-year allocation would constitute growth to the Council's budget for that year. Any underspend would need to be returned to DLUHC.
- 3.4 The Leader of the Council could choose to a new project or ask for an additional project to be explored. Should the Leader of the Council consider this option then the timeline as set out at 2.14 should be considered as well as the requirement to engage key stakeholders.

3.5 Reject Entirely, if the Leader of the Council decides that the Council should not create a Local Investment Plan the Council would risk losing the allocation set out in the UKSPF. If a completely new plan was proposed this would require significant work in a very short space of time, with the final deadline for submission set as 1 August 2022.

Background Documents

None

I have read and approved the above decision for the reasons (including possible alternative options rejected) set out.



Signed: _____
(Leader of the Council - David Burton)

Full details of the report for the decision can be found online at:

[Leader of the Council - 20 July 2022, 12.30pm](#)

Should you be concerned about this decision and wish to call it in, please submit a call-in form signed by any three Members to the Head of Policy, Communications and Governance by: **5pm on 27 July 2022**

Agenda Item 4

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

21 November 2022

Rural England Prosperity Fund Investment Plan

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Economic Regeneration and Leisure PAC	8 November 2022
Communities Housing and Environment PAC	15 November 2022
Leader	21 November 2022

Will this be a Key Decision?	Yes
Urgency	Not Applicable
Final Decision-Maker	Leader
Lead Director	Angela Woodhouse, Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance
Lead Officer and Report Author	Angela Woodhouse, Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance and Anna Collier, Insight, Communities and Governance Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	Rural Wards

Executive Summary

This report sets out the plan for spending the Rural England Prosperity Fund which has been allocated to the council as an addendum to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocated earlier this year.

Purpose of Report

Recommendation for Decision

This report makes the following recommendations to the Leader of the Council:

1. That the Intervention for the Rural England Prosperity Fund, as set out in the report, be approved, and submitted to the Government by the Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance.
2. That there should be a guideline figure of £50,000 on the value of applications, but schemes which are significantly above or below this figure be considered on their merits.

3. That a business directory of green solution providers be developed to give advice and support to applicants.

Rural England Prosperity Fund Investment Plan

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place <p>The investment plan proposed aligns with the council's objectives for Homes and Communities and Safe, Clean and Green.</p>	Anna Collier, Insight, Communities and Governance Manager
Cross Cutting Objectives	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected <p>The report recommendation supports the achievement of the cross-cutting objectives by enabling rural communities to apply for funding to improve community infrastructure whilst also contributing to our ambition to achieve net zero by 2030.</p>	Anna Collier, Insight, Communities and Governance Manager
Risk Management	<p>The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. We are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy</p>	Anna Collier, Insight, Communities and Governance Manager
Financial	<p>The proposals set out in the recommendation will be funded by the Council's Rural England fund allocation. A funding breakdown is set out at 2.10.</p>	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team

Staffing	This fund is an addendum to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund so no money from the fund is allocated for supporting delivery as UKSPF allows for up to 4% of that fund to be spent each year supporting the delivery of local investment plans. The proposal is that work will be managed with our existing staffing with additional project management support funded through the 4% of the UKSPF allowance to be combined with other major project support	Anna Collier, Insight, Communities and Governance Manager
Legal	Acting on the recommendations is within the Council's powers.	Legal Team
Information Governance	The recommendations do not impact personal information (as defined in UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018) the Council Processes.	Anna Collier, Insight, Communities and Governance Manager
Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment	Anna Collier, Insight, Communities and Governance Manager
Public Health	We recognise that the recommendations will have a positive impact on population health or that of individuals.	Anna Collier, Insight, Communities and Governance Manager
Crime and Disorder	We recognise that the recommendations have the potential to have a positive impact on local communities for example through the creation or improvement of community infrastructure.	Anna Collier, Insight, Communities and Governance Manager
Procurement	The Council will act within the Council's financial procedure rules and the rules of the Rural England Prosperity Fund.	Anna Collier, Insight, Communities and Governance Manager
Biodiversity and Climate Change	The implications of this report on biodiversity and climate change have been considered and align with the intentions of the MBC Action Plan to encourage renewable energy generation, reducing carbon, supporting EV	Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

	infrastructure development, improving and developing green and blue space for Nature Based Solutions and community cohesion.	
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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council submitted its UKSPF Local Investment Plan to the Government in August 2022. The Rural Fund is a top-up to the UKSPF and is available to eligible local authorities in England. It succeeds EU funding from LEADER and the Growth Programme which were part of the Rural Development Programme for England.
- 2.2 The Rural England Prosperity Fund (referred to as the Rural Fund) objectives sit within the UKSPF investment priorities for:
- Supporting Local Business; and
 - Community and Place
- 2.3 They also relate to two of the Levelling Up White Paper Missions:
- Mission 1 – Living standards; and
 - Mission 9 – Pride in place
- 2.4 The Rural Fund has been developed by the Government as a top-up to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and provides capital funding to:
- support new and existing rural businesses to develop new products and facilities that will be of wider benefit to the local economy. This includes farm businesses looking to diversify income streams.
 - support new and improved community infrastructure, providing essential community services and assets for local people and businesses to benefit the local economy.
- 2.5 Projects must be in a rural area. For Rural Fund 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

Interventions

- 2.6 The Government have identified a list of interventions, objectives, outputs, and outcomes attached at Appendix A. Below is information taken directly from the Rural Fund prospectus:
- "The list of interventions also provides example projects you could fund, such as grants for:
 - food processing equipment to scale up from domestic to commercial kitchens (non-farming businesses only)
 - converting farm buildings to other business uses
 - rural tourism such as investments in visitor accommodation and farm diversification for event venues

- 2.7 Investments should demonstrate value for money and additionality. We'll provide materials to help support your assessment of projects and to share best practice.
- 2.8 You should also consider how investments contribute to net zero and nature recovery objectives. These include:
- the UK's commitment to cut greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050
 - wider environmental considerations, such as resilience to natural hazards the 25 Year Environment Plan commitments
 - To support green growth, think about how projects can work with the natural environment to achieve objectives. At a minimum, you need to consider the project's impact on our natural assets and nature.
 - You should prioritise projects that deliver the greatest economic, environmental, and social benefits.
- 2.9 Rural Fund projects can be part of a wider UKSPF intervention. They can provide extra funding where the objectives are the same to add value.

Funding

- 2.10 The Council's fund allocation is £539,728 and all the funding must be capital spend delivered over two years 2023/24 and 2024/25. It is understood that the funding will be profiled over two years with a smaller amount in the first year.
- 2.11 This fund is an addendum to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund so no money from the fund is allocated for supporting delivery as UKSPF allows for up to 4% of that fund to be spent each year supporting the delivery of local investment plans. The proposal is that work will be managed with our existing staffing with additional project management support funded through the 4% of the UKSPF allowance to be combined with other major project support.
- 2.12 To access the funding the council has been asked to provide specific additional information as an addendum to our UKSPF Local Investment Plan. The information requested includes the local context including evidence of challenges, market failures and opportunities. We will also have to set out the interventions and outcomes we have selected and explain how these meet local challenges and opportunities. The final section to be completed concerns delivery, including an indicative spending profile for the 2 years of the fund and approach to engagement with rural partners and plans for future engagement.

Delivery

- 2.13 On reviewing the list of interventions, we have identified that the fund could be used to support and improve community infrastructure with a view to supporting our ambitions to reach net zero and reflecting that there are few funding schemes available for parishes and community groups to access.
- 2.14 The fund would be delivered by providing a grant scheme for Parishes and Community Organisations to apply for either

- grants for their village halls and community assets to improve facilities with a view to creating a greener and more sustainable community infrastructure, for example introducing Low carbon heating solutions, improving energy efficiency, insulation, renewable energy generations, nature base solutions solar panels to reduce electricity bills.
- grants to refurbish/fit out community assets so they can become multi use facilities supporting community activities.

2.15 Example projects from the government guidance:

Investment Priority	Intervention	Example Projects	Objectives	Indicative Outputs	Indicative Outcomes
Supporting rural communities	<p>Funding (capital grants) for investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups.</p> <p>This intervention corresponds to the UKSPF intervention E11.</p>	<p>Capital grants for provision of net zero infrastructure for rural communities and to support rural tourism activity, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EV charging points • community energy schemes such as scaled up biomass, heat pumps or solar <p>Capital grants for kitchens in community hubs which are capable of supporting food and drink entrepreneurs to get accreditation for food production.</p> <p>Funding for resilience infrastructure and nature-based solutions that protect local businesses and community areas from natural hazards including flooding and coastal erosion.</p>	<p>Strengthening our social fabric and fostering a sense of local pride and belonging, through investment in activities that enhance physical, cultural and social ties and amenities. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community infrastructure • local green space • community led projects 	<p>Number of EV charging points</p> <p>Number of visitors or locals using charging points</p> <p>Number of community energy projects funded</p>	<p>Improved perception of facilities or amenities</p> <p>Increased users of facilities or amenities</p> <p>Improved perceived or experienced accessibility</p> <p>Number of new businesses created</p>

- 2.16 Parish councils have already been approached to identify whether there was a need for this type of fund, and the suggestion has been met very positively, with examples of projects that they would like to be considered, such as Solar Panels, EV charging points, Broadband.
- 2.17 Views have been sought from Helen Grant MP and Helen Whatley MP and our Anchor Institution partners, which include representatives from the NHS, Police, Fire Service, KCC, faith groups, Housing Associations, and the VCS, have been consulted.
- 2.18 A cap could be placed on the value of applications. We recognise that some projects could score very highly across the scoring criteria but may be very costly, thus limiting the number of projects that could be supported. Similar schemes such as LoCASE have a cap of £10K, however having no cap or increasing the cap will enable parishes and community schemes to do more and reflects limited alternative funding sources. It is proposed that there should be a guideline figure of £50,000 on the value of applications, but schemes which are significantly above or below this figure be considered on their merits.
- 2.19 It is also recognised that a two stage process may be helpful to allow for initial survey or feasibility work to be undertaken and then a second phase for funding of the actions identified as deliverable.
- 2.20 A draft template for grant applications can be seen at Appendix B along with an example draft scoring matrix. The scoring matrix has been developed based upon achieving interventions objectives and outcomes.
- 2.21 The scoring matrix will be developed further and the decision making process will be finalised before launching the scheme.

Important dates

- 2.22 Dates are indicative and may be subject to change.
- 3 September 2022 - Rural Fund launch
 - 12 September 2022 - Rural Fund addendum platform launch
 - September 2022 - engagement sessions with local authorities and local partners to support the Rural Fund process
 - 3 October 2022 to 30 November 2022 - Rural Fund addendum submissions window
 - November 2022 to January 2023 - Rural Fund assessment period for government
 - January 2023 - anticipated date for approval of Rural Fund proposals
 - April 2023 - first payments expected to lead local authorities
 - April 2023 to March 2025 - funding period

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Having considered how the fund can have the most impact, legacy, and fairness the intervention proposed is to support rural communities via 'Funding (capital grants) for investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups', to support and improve community infrastructure with a view to supporting our ambitions to reach net zero via the administration of a grants scheme.
 - 3.2 The Leader could choose an alternative Intervention as shown at Appendix A or retain the current intervention with an alternative delivery method.
 - 3.3 It is important to note that if the Leader chooses to do this, any decision should be made with consideration of the available funds and the eligibility and spending criteria as set out at 2.10.
 - 3.4 The Leader could agree that a new project be explored. However, the timeline as set out at 2.22, should be considered as well as the requirement to engage key stakeholders.
 - 3.5 Reject Entirely. If the Leader agrees that the Council should not create an addendum to the Local Investment Plan for the delivery of the rural fund projects the Council would risk losing the allocation. If a completely new plan was proposed this would require significant work in a very short space of time, with the final deadline for submission set as 30 November 2022.
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4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Having given consideration as to how the fund can have the most impact, legacy, and fairness the intervention proposed is to Support rural communities via 'Funding (capital grants) for investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups', to support and improve community infrastructure with a view to supporting our ambitions to reach net zero via community grants.
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5. RISK

- 5.1 The projects selected for delivery as part of this fund will be overseen monthly by the Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance. Funding is allocated by government based on the provision of monitoring delivery, outputs and outcomes, which are reviewed at these meetings.
 - 5.2 The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. We are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.
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6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 PACs were consulted on the UKSPF projects in July 2022, this is a Top Up to the UKSPF Investment Plan, for the benefit of rural communities.
 - 6.2 The issue was considered by the Economic Regeneration and Leisure Policy Advisory Committee at its meeting held on 8 November 2022. The Committee supported the proposed intervention and made recommendations regarding the cap per grant and the development of a business directory of green solution providers to give advice and support to applicants. This is reflected in the recommendation. An extract from the Minutes of the meeting is attached as Appendix 4.
 - 6.3 The issue will be considered by the Communities, Housing and Environment Policy Advisory Committee at its meeting to be held on 15 November 2022, and its views will be reported at the meeting.
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7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 Once approved by the Leader of the Council the Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance will prepare the addendum to the UKSPF Investment Plan and submit it by the deadline of the 30 November 2022.
 - 7.2 Key officers will continue to develop the documentation and guidance ready for publication.
 - 7.3 The Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance already chairs a monthly operational programme board to monitor delivery of the UKSPF project, the delivery of the Rural Fund will be added to this meeting to monitor delivery.
 - 7.4 As with UKSPF projects it is proposed that strategic oversight is achieved through the MBC Executive and regular engagement with the MBC Anchor Institutions Group plus Maidstone MPs.
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8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix 1: Interventions
 - Appendix 2: Draft Application
 - Appendix 3: Draft Matrix
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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Local Investment Plan Report July 2022 - <http://app07:9080/documents/s82663/UK%20Share%20Prosperity%20Fund%20Local%20Investment%20Plan.pdf>

Rural England Prosperity Fund: interventions, objectives, outputs and outcomes

To access Rural Fund allocations, you must provide an additional information addendum to your UKSPF investment plan.

The addendum covers 3 areas.

1. Local context - referencing the Fund’s investment priorities: supporting rural business and supporting rural communities.
2. Interventions - select from a menu of options and explain how they respond to local context.
3. Delivery - how and when you’ll deliver the interventions you’ve selected.

Each place has flexibility to invest in activities or ‘interventions’ that support rural businesses and rural communities. These are within the context of the Fund’s aims.

Interventions are split by investment priority. Each investment priority gives details of:

- the interventions and objectives
- indicative outputs and indicative outcomes
- example projects

Review the interventions and identify activities that support Fund objectives in your area.

Investment priority	Intervention	Example projects	Objectives	Indicative outputs	Indicative outcomes
Supporting rural business	Funding (capital grants) for small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas. Including capital funding for net zero infrastructure for rural	Creation and expansion of rural leisure and tourism businesses. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creating event venues or farm tourism facilities 	Creating jobs and boosting community cohesion. Increasing private sector investment in growth- enhancing activities, through	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of businesses supported • Number of farm businesses supported • Number of farm diversification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jobs created • Jobs safeguarded • Number of new businesses created • Number of businesses adopting new to the firm technologies or processes

	<p>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.</p>	<p>such as accommodation, wedding venues and leisure facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provision of facilities for pet and equines such as kennels, livery and pet health venues <p>Purchase of equipment for food processing for non-farmer-owned businesses. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • purchasing new process and packaging machinery such as brewing equipment and onsite vending machines • equipping development kitchens, or modernising existing kitchen equipment for increased energy efficiency or increased productivity through automation 	<p>targeted support for small and medium-sized businesses to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • undertake innovation • adopt productivity enhancing, energy efficient and low carbon technologies and techniques 	<p>projects supported</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of micro businesses supported 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of businesses with improved productivity • Number of businesses experiencing growth
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		<p>(Support for farmer-owned businesses is available under the Farming Investment Fund (FIF)).</p> <p>Funding for resilience infrastructure and nature-based solutions that protect local businesses and community areas from natural hazards including flooding and coastal erosion.</p>			
Supporting rural business	<p>Funding (capital grants) for growing the local social economy and supporting innovation. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community businesses • cooperatives and social enterprises • research and development sites 	<p>Creation of multi-functional rural business hubs providing shared workspace and networking opportunities for rural businesses. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • flexible access to commercial kitchens • co-working spaces • business infrastructure such as broadband and 	<p>Creating jobs and boosting community cohesion. From capital grant support for starting businesses to visible improvements to local retail, hospitality and leisure sector facilities.</p> <p>Enhancing rural visitor economy and rural leisure opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of businesses supported • Number of farm businesses supported • Number of farm diversification projects supported • Number of micro businesses supported 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jobs created • Jobs safeguarded • Number of new businesses created • Number of businesses adopting new to the firm technologies or processes • Number of businesses with improved productivity

	<p>This intervention corresponds to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) intervention E26.</p>	<p>electric vehicle (EV) charging points</p> <p>Establishment of rural community businesses, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community-owned shops (for example provision of premises) • equipment to support the showcasing of local food and drink products such as regional information display boards 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of businesses increasing their export capability
Supporting rural business	<p>Funding (capital grants) for the development and promotion (both trade and consumer) of the visitor economy, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • local attractions • trails • tourism products more generally 	<p>Development of local visitor trails and infrastructure to support this, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information boards • visitor centres <p>Grants to develop local tourist attractions.</p> <p>Development of local visitor experiences</p>	<p>Creating jobs and boosting community cohesion.</p> <p>Enhancing rural visitor economy and rural leisure opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of businesses supported • Number of visitor experiences supported • Number of farm businesses supported • Number of micro businesses supported 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jobs created • Jobs safeguarded • Number of new businesses created • Number of businesses increasing their turnover

	This intervention corresponds to the UKSPF intervention E17.	based on the local offer.			
Supporting rural communities	Funding (capital grants) for investment and support for digital infrastructure for local community facilities. This intervention corresponds to the UKSPF intervention E15.	Capital grants for provision of gigabit capable digital infrastructure at rural hubs for community use, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> village halls pubs post offices (Projects must align with the government's Project Gigabit programme).	Strengthening our social fabric and fostering a sense of local pride and belonging, through investment in activities that enhance physical, cultural and social ties and amenities. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> community infrastructure local green space community-led projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of organisations receiving grants Number of facilities supported, created or installed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jobs created Jobs safeguarded Increased users of facilities or amenities Improved perception of facility or infrastructure project Improved perception of facilities or amenities
Supporting rural communities	Funding (capital grants) for investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups.	Capital grants for provision of net zero infrastructure for rural communities and to support rural tourism activity, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EV charging points 	Strengthening our social fabric and fostering a sense of local pride and belonging, through investment in activities that enhance physical,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of EV charging points Number of visitors or locals using charging points Number of community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved perception of facilities or amenities Increased users of facilities or amenities

	<p>This intervention corresponds to the UKSPF intervention E11.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> community energy schemes such as scaled up biomass, heat pumps or solar <p>Capital grants for kitchens in community hubs which are capable of supporting food and drink entrepreneurs to get accreditation for food production.</p> <p>Funding for resilience infrastructure and nature-based solutions that protect local businesses and community areas from natural hazards including flooding and coastal erosion.</p>	<p>cultural and social ties and amenities. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> community infrastructure local green space community-led projects 	<p>energy projects funded</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved perceived or experienced accessibility Number of new businesses created
Supporting rural communities	<p>Funding (capital grants) for creation of and improvements to local rural green spaces.</p> <p>This intervention corresponds to the UKSPF intervention E3.</p>	<p>Capital grants to establish or enhance rural green and blue infrastructure including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> community gardens green spaces watercourses and embankments 	<p>Strengthening our social fabric and fostering a sense of local pride and belonging, through investment in activities that enhance physical, cultural and social ties</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amount of rehabilitated land or premises Square metres (m²) of land made wheelchair accessible or step free 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased footfall Increased visitor numbers Increased use of cycleways or paths Jobs created Improved perception of

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • greening of streets and paths • incorporating natural features into wider public spaces 	<p>and amenities. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community infrastructure • local green space • community-led projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amount of public realm created or improved • Number of facilities supported or created • Amount of green or blue space created or improved 	<p>facilities or amenities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased users of facilities or amenities • Improved perceived or experienced accessibility
Supporting rural communities	<p>Funding (capital grants) for existing cultural, historic and heritage institutions that make up the local cultural heritage offer.</p> <p>This intervention corresponds to the UKSPF intervention E4.</p>	<p>Capital grants to develop, restore or refurbish local natural, cultural and heritage assets and sites.</p> <p>Improving visitor experience and accessibility of these assets. For example by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creating wheelchair accessible and step free access that goes beyond statutory requirements • providing all terrain wheelchairs allowing access to new areas of sites 	<p>Strengthening our social fabric and fostering a sense of local pride and belonging, through investment in activities that enhance physical, cultural and social ties and amenities. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community infrastructure • heritage assets • local green space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of organisations receiving financial support other than grants • Number of organisations receiving grants • Number of tourism, culture or heritage assets created or improved • Amount of green or blue space created or improved • Amount of land or premises supported 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased footfall • Increased visitor numbers • Increased use of cycleways or paths • Jobs created • Improved perception of facilities or amenities • Increased users of facilities or amenities • Improved perceived or experienced accessibility

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • m² of land made wheelchair accessible or step free • Number of facilities supported or created 	
Supporting rural communities	<p>Funding (capital grants) for local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities.</p> <p>This intervention corresponds to the UKSPF intervention E6.</p>	<p>Funding for provision of maker spaces.</p> <p>Funding for local art galleries, museums and libraries for altering premises or providing spaces for exhibitions to support displays for artists to showcase work.</p> <p>Capital grants to enable cultural, heritage and creative events and provision of venues for locally-led:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • music and theatre performances • tours • author events • film screenings 	<p>Strengthening our social fabric and fostering a sense of local pride and belonging, through investment in activities that enhance physical, cultural and social ties and amenities. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community infrastructure • local green space • community-led projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of potential entrepreneurs provided assistance to be business ready • Number of organisations receiving grants • Number of local events or activities supported 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jobs created • Jobs safeguarded • Increased footfall • Increased visitor numbers • Improved engagement numbers • Improved perception of facilities or amenities • Number of community-led arts, cultural, heritage and creative programmes as a result of support • Improved perception of events

Supporting rural communities	<p>Funding (capital grants) for active travel enhancements in the local area.</p> <p>This intervention corresponds to the UKSPF intervention E7.</p>	<p>Creation of new footpaths and cycle paths, particularly in areas of health need.</p> <p>Upgrading of existing footpaths and cycle paths, particularly in areas of health need.</p>	<p>Strengthening our social fabric and fostering a sense of local pride and belonging, through investment in activities that enhance physical, cultural and social ties and amenities. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community infrastructure • local green space • community-led projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amount of new or improved cycleways or paths • Number of facilities supported or created • Amount of green or blue space created or improved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased use of cycleways or paths • Improved perception of facilities or amenities
Supporting rural communities	Funding (capital grants) for rural circular economy projects.	<p>Capital grants to enable setting up or enhancement of rural community-led repair cafes or mend workshops. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provision of premises • tools or equipment to support 	<p>Strengthening our social fabric and fostering a sense of local pride and belonging, through investment in activities that enhance physical, cultural and social ties and amenities. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of organisations receiving grants • Number of people reached 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved engagement numbers • Improved perception of local facilities or amenities • Number of community-led programmes as a result of support

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • local green space • community-led projects 		
Supporting rural communities	<p>Funding (capital grants) for impactful volunteering and social action projects to develop social and human capital in local places.</p> <p>This intervention corresponds to the UKSPF intervention E9.</p>	<p>Capital grants to enable people to develop volunteering and social action projects locally, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • purchase of equipment • improvements to premises to enable local volunteering groups such as youth charities, carers groups or refugee support groups 	<p>Strengthening our social fabric and fostering a sense of local pride and belonging, through investment in activities that enhance physical, cultural and social ties and amenities. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community infrastructure • local green space • community-led projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of organisations receiving grants • Number of local events or activities supported • Number of projects supported 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved engagement numbers • Volunteering numbers as a result of support

The Rural Fund Application Form

Contact Details

First person's contact details

Full name	
Telephone number	
Email	
Name of Organisation	
Role in organisation	

Second Person's Contact details

Please provide a second contact in case you are unavailable – this must be somebody from the same organisation as the first person listed above.

Full name	
Telephone number	
Email	

Role in organisation	
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About your group or organisation

Please select your type of organisation.

If successful we may ask you to provide evidence such as a governing document which must be valid at the time of application or constitution.

Registered charity	
Parish Council	
Charitable incorporated organisation (CIO)	
CIC limited by guarantee (<i>and have charitable objectives</i>)	
Community benefit society (Bencom)	
Constituted community group	
Faith group, where the activity is not promoting religion	
Small Group with no formal constitution. (Non constituted groups will be considered on a case by case basis.)	

Please supply any relevant registration or reference numbers (if available)	
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Section 1: Eligibility

The fund is only eligible for organisations meeting certain criteria which are listed below. Please select all that apply and illustrate how you meet this in the box below

- 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

Word count: 250 words

Section 2: Your Proposal

1. The funding is only for Capital spend what resources do you have in place to ensure the project is delivered

Word Count: 350 words

2. What is the objective of the project, select all that apply

- Increase tourism
- Increase resilience in infrastructure
- Pride in place
- Strengthen community ties
 - Protection of local biodiversity
- Reduction in carbon
- Reduction in energy
- Protect businesses and community from natural hazards

3. Summarise your proposal – this should include what do you want to achieve, what do you aim to do and the estimated start/end dates.

Word Count: 500 words

4. Impact

4a. Please identify the estimated impact of your proposal by marking the appropriate section(s) below and provide supporting evidence in the text box.

- Carbon reduction
- Energy reduced
- Visitor numbers increased
- Local people supported
- Jobs created

- Number of users increased
- Cost Savings

Word Count: 500 words

4b. Have you engaged, worked with, had input from residents, those who currently use the facilities or business in the creation and development of the proposal?

YES/NO

If yes please outline the process and outcomes below to help illustrate the need of the project

4c. Are you aware of similar projects, businesses or equipment already in the area? If yes please provide brief details below

4d. Once completed who will have use and access to it?

4e. How will you monitor and assess the impact of your proposal? Please include details of any performance targets and indicators and proposed methodologies.

Word Count: 250 words

5a. How much would you like to apply for? (Applicants can apply for up to £20,000.)

5b. If this is funding will be in addition to existing funding, what funding is in place already

5c. Give a brief breakdown of how you will spend the funds, include what you have based this on (e.g quotes, research)

Further Information

6. Bank Details (non mandatory)

Bank:

Account Name:

Account No:

Sort Code:

***successful applicants will sign and accept a service level agreement**

*****(data protection statement to follow)***

Submit

Applications will close on XXXXX 2023 and all applicants will be contacted.

The Rural Fund Scoring Matrix

Organisation	Project	Amount Requested	Criteria	Evidence	Score awarded.
			Eligibility and objectives	Section 1 & Section 2 question 2.	<p>1 or 2: fund is eligible and some evidence that the project supports the fund objectives but no evidence of project’s impact on natural assets and nature.</p> <p>3 or 4: fund is eligible and evidence that the project supports the fund objectives, evidence of the project’s impact on natural assets and nature.</p> <p>5: fund is eligible and good evidence that the project supports the fund objectives. Good evidence of the projects positive and sustainable impact on natural assets and nature.</p>
			Local need and community benefit	Section 2, question 4	<p>1 or 2: some evidence that project will benefit those in the surrounding area but little evidence that there is a high demand for the project</p> <p>3 or 4: evidence of benefit those in the surrounding area. Evidence that project will meet proven need.</p> <p>5: good evidence that project will benefit a significant number. Good evidence that the project will meet a high and previously unmet need.</p>

			Financial position and viability of project	Section 2, questions 1 and 5.	<p>1 or 2: Project offers reasonable value for money, costs appear reasonable taking into account the number that will benefit.</p> <p>3 or 4: Project offers good value for money, costs are reasonable taking into account the number that will benefit.</p> <p>5: Project offers good value for money and costs are reasonable taking into account the number that will benefit.</p>
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DRAFT

Extract from the Minutes of the Meeting of the Economic Regeneration and Leisure Policy Advisory Committee held on 8 November 2022

Rural England Prosperity Fund Investment Plan

Councillor Burton, the Leader of the Council, introduced a report setting out a plan for spending the Rural England Prosperity Fund money which had been allocated to the Council as an addendum to the UK Shared Prosperity funding received earlier this year. The Leader of the Council explained that:

- The Council's fund allocation was £539,728 to be spent on capital projects over two financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25. The deadline for the submission of the plan for spending the allocation to Government was 30 November 2022.
- The proposed approach was to invite partners across the rural areas (Parish Councils and community groups etc.) to apply for grants to improve community facilities such as village halls and community assets with a view to creating a greener and more sustainable community infrastructure. This could involve the installation of battery energy storage systems, solar PV systems, EV charging points and air source heat pumps. This would have a direct benefit in reducing energy bills and showcase new technologies.
- It was also proposed to place a cap of £50,000 on the value of applications, although schemes costing above or below this figure would be considered on their merits.
- The aim was to support projects that would deliver best value for money, maximum impact, greening and a positive impact on local communities.
- The views of the Communities, Housing and Environment Policy Advisory Committee would be sought on the proposals.

In response to questions, the Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance advised the Committee that it was understood that the funding would be profiled over two years with a smaller amount in the first year. The scoring matrix attached to the report would be developed further and the decision-making process finalised before launching the scheme. The Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager and the Biodiversity and Climate Engagement Officer would be able to provide advice and support to applicants to help maximise the potential of their projects.

Members were supportive of the proposals. They considered that there should be flexibility regarding scheme size and there should be an inclusive approach. Applications should be asset based for a community and assessed on their merits. A business directory of green solution providers should be developed to give advice and support to applicants.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL:

1. That the Intervention for the Rural England Prosperity Fund, as set out in the report, be approved, and submitted to the Government by the Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance.
2. That there should be a guideline figure of £50,000 on the value of applications, but schemes which are significantly above or below this figure be considered on their merits.
3. That a business directory of green solution providers be developed to give advice and support to applicants.