

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.