

Meeting of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund Board



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Friday, 30 May 2025, 10.00 am

Committee Members present

Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing
Councillor Helen Crawford
Councillor Tim Harrison
Councillor Philip Knowles (Chairman)
Councillor Bridget Ley
Councillor Lee Steptoe

Other Members present

Councillor Paul Stokes, Deputy Leader

Officers

Assistant Director of Planning and Growth, Emma Whittaker
Assistant Director of Finance, Deputy s151 Officer, David Scott
Democratic Officer, Lucy Bonshor

66. Appointment of Chairman

As this was the first meeting of the Board since the Council AGM on 22 May 2025, the Assistant Director of Planning and Growth asked for nominations for the position of Chairman of the Board. Two nominations for Chairman were proposed and seconded. Councillor Virginia Morgan and Councillor Philip Knowles, on being put to the vote Councillor Philip Knowles received the highest number of votes and was declared Chairman for 2025/26.

Decision

That Councillor Philip Knowles continue as Chairman of the UKSPF Board for the 2025/26 year.

Councillor Philip Knowles in the Chair

67. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

The Chairman asked for nominations for Vice-Chairman of the Board.

One Member asked if it was necessary to have a Vice-Chairman as the previous Vice-Chairman had not been included in discussions around Board meetings and the agenda.

It was confirmed that a Vice-Chairman was required especially if the Chairman declared an interest in an application before the Board. It was stated that the Vice-Chairman would be included in meetings with the Chairman going forward in respect of the Board.

Councillor Virginia Moran was proposed and seconded and unanimously agreed as Vice-Chairman.

Decision

That Councillor Virginia Moran continue as Vice-Chairman of the UKSPF Board for the year 2025/26.

68. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Ashley Baxter, Councillor Patsy Ellis, Councillor Nikki Manterfield, Councillor Virginia Moran and Councillor Paul Wood.

69. Disclosures of Interest

No interests were disclosed.

70. Minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2025

Minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2025 were proposed, seconded and **AGREED.**

71. Overview of 2025/26 UKSPF Scheme

The Assistant Director of Finance gave an overview to the Board of how the scheme would be operated during 2025/26. The Government had announced in December 2024 that an additional or “transition” year of UK Shared Prosperity (UKSPF) funding would be allocated in 2025/26. Previously the funding had been awarded directly to all lead authorities, however, unlike previous years the funding would now be awarded to the Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority (GLCCA) rather than South Kesteven District Council.

GLCCA had confirmed that funding would be distributed to each of the Councils within the Greater Lincolnshire area. South Kesteven District Council would be allocated £1,212,660 in UKSPF funds with a further £162,103 allocated via the Rural top-up funds.

At the Council meeting on 27 February 2025, the Council had agreed the broad principles of the SKDC investment plan which had been submitted to GLCCA. The GLCCA had then submitted a combined investment plan to the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government which combined the investment plans of each of the Councils within the Greater Lincolnshire area on 30 April 2025.

As with the original fund, the fund priorities and themes remained the same and a copy of the investment plan submitted by South Kesteven to the GLCCA was appended to the report at Appendix A. It was confirmed that approval of the investment plan was still awaited from Government, a response was expected in June 2025.

Responsibility of the fund would be with the GLCCA who had stated that there would be a review of the fund in September 2025. Where a local authority was not able to fully distribute funds within its district by September 2025 the GLCCA had stated that any underspend would be pooled elsewhere across the Greater Lincolnshire area. Officers stressed that funding allocated to South Kesteven District Council needed to be committed by the end of September 2025.

It was anticipated that funds would not be released to the Council until June 2025 but this was dependent upon the MHCLG making the funds available to GLCCA.

The Terms of Reference for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund Programme Board were agreed at Council on 22 May 2025 and were appended to the report at Appendix B. At the Council meeting on 22 May 2025 the following delegation was also agreed:

Delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, HR and Economic Development, to approve the grant allocations and to undertake any necessary actions including allocation of any uncommitted funds to specific interventions; and reallocation of funds and movement of revenue funds to capital expenditure.

The Board has a specific remit to set the direction for the programme and support the Lead Officer in overseeing the overall progress and making recommendations in accordance with the Council's scheme of delegation for executive functions.

To ensure that the funding is fully allocated, Officers had been developing a bidding and award process for allocating the 2025/26 funding. It was suggested that only two intervention themes were opened up to a formal bidding process and these were:

Parish and Community Fund - £179k
Decarbonisation Projects - £135k

Communications around expressions of interest in respect of these two interventions would be launched week commencing 2 June 2025 and all Councillor would be emailed with details. The Community Engagement Manager who

manages the Community Fund would be helping with the assessments and eligibility of the expressions of interest and will be helping with the completion of the final application forms as required.

A number of other community-based projects that the Council was aware of would be supported and were shown in the next agenda item for Members consideration.

Members discussed the overview with questions being asked about the timescales involved. It was stated that all expressions of interest had to be in by 1 August 2025 when they would be evaluated and applications requested to be completed within a two week period.

Each expression would be evaluated within a matrix and weighted against the criteria so that it was clear which areas were oversubscribed and which expression had the best outcome and benefits. Concern was expressed by some Members who felt that applications for funding appeared to be Grantham centric. It was stated that there were potential projects under other themes such as Sports and Community Facilities and the Rural funding could not be spent in Grantham but within the District. Further discussion was focused on ensuring that funding was spread across the District as with previous years, and that applications were better assessed, to ensure that issues such as applications requiring planning permission were highlighted early. Officers were mindful of the lessons learnt in the previous years in respect of the applications for funding received and would ensure that schemes would be viable going forward.

The report was proposed, seconded and accepted by the Board.

Exclusion of Press and Public

It was proposed, seconded and agreed to exclude the press and public at this point in the meeting as it was likely that information contained within the remaining items on the agenda were exempt under paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

72. Identified investment projects for 2025/26 UKSPF fund

It was noted that the supplementary papers that had been circulated were in respect of agenda item 7 and were not a separate agenda item.

SK-CP-01 Safer Streets Programme – extension of existing safer street patrols

Funding requested: £40,000

The project was an extension of part of the existing Safer Street Project which mainly operated in Grantham. A Safer Street bid had been successful from the Home Office through the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner in 2023 which provided funding to implement safer street patrols within the nighttime

economy. It also increased CCTV double crewing. The Safer Street Funding had ended in March 2025 and no further funding was available to support the project from the OPCC or the Police. Funding was being requested to extend the operation of patrols and double crewing of CCTV with the added flexibility to patrol across the South Kesteven as required. Members discussed the application with questions being asked about Police funding, officers safety and Police liaison. It was proposed, seconded and agreed to **ENDORSE** the request for funding.

SK-CP-02 Safer Street Programme – Shopwatch/Pubwatch Scheme
Funding requested: £25,000

This funding request was considered in conjunction with the above request for funding which again asked to extend the existing Shopwatch/Pubwatch scheme which currently operated in Grantham. Members considered it together with the above funding request and it was proposed, seconded and **ENDORSED**.

SK-CP-03 High Street Improvements - Shopfronts
Funding requested: £100,000

The project was to provide grant funding for businesses within South Kesteven's four market town centres to support improvements to shopfronts and signage in line with the updated South Kesteven Shopfront Design Guide. Grants would be up to £5,000 and would be made available to businesses within the town centre areas of Grantham, Bourne, Stamford and Market Deeping (as defined in SKDC's Local Plan).

Members discussed the funding application and it was asked that consideration be given to the small independent traders ahead of the bigger shop traders. It was stated that communications around the grants would endeavour to reach the independent shop traders although it was open to all shop traders. A question was asked about the Shopfront Guide and it was stated that within the guide there was a sub-section specific to each of the four towns. Further discussion followed in respect of the tight timescale to distribute the funding across the district. Members were supportive of the proposal for funding with small independent shops being prioritised preferably and on being put to the vote it was **ENDORSED** with the funding "ringfenced" for clarity.

SK-CP-04 Open Space – Campbell Close Play Park
Funding requested: £60,000

The funding request was in connection to drainage works to ensure the play site remained usable all year round due to an existing spring running underneath the surface which caused the ground to flood easily. The installation of a footpath following drainage works would make the play area site more accessible for users this would also lead into the Council's Play Strategy. Discussion followed with one Member clarifying for those Members who did not know the area the

problems that were encountered at the location. Questions were asked about the Council's reserves to enable works to be completed but it was stated that external funding would ease pressure on the Council's resources. It was stated that other areas within the district had similar problems with examples being given. On being put to the vote it was proposed, seconded and the funding request **ENDORSED**.

SK-CP-05 Sports and Community Facilities – Harrowby Lane Car Park
Funding requested: £35,000

The funding request was for a grass matting system to be installed at the car park at the edge of the playing field. Members noted that the facilities had previously been granted a considerable amount of money from the UKSPF fund in the previous year. One Member stated that the club had been "a victim of its own success" as more people were now using the facilities but car parking was now becoming problematical with people parking on grass verges. It was also noted that the car park in question was a Council asset that it was leased to the football club. Further discussion followed with some Members expressing concern that Grantham seemed to be getting more funding projects than other areas of the district. More discussion followed in respect of the car park but it was reiterated that the Council was the landlord in respect of this particular asset and it was in the Council's interest to protect its assets where possible. It was proposed, seconded and agreed that the funding request be **ENDORSED**.

SK-CP-06 Sports and Communities – Harrowby Lane Football Club
Funding requested: £9,225

The request for funding was for the installation of new LED lights at the football club. Although this was discussed in connection with the previous funding application Members asked that the applications be taken separately. It was confirmed that the application had been received under the previous UKSPF funding but it had not been able to be achieved within the timescale. It was proposed, seconded and agreed to **ENDORSE** the funding request.

SK-BG-01 Business Growth – Business Lincolnshire Growth Grants
Funding requested: £20,000

The proposal was to award a top-up of £20k (£10k to NBV and £10k to the Growth Hub) to ensure that this is start-up support for a minimum of 17 South Kesteven businesses and support for up to 10 businesses established for more than 12 months. NBV grants are £500 and Growth Hub grants of £1,000 at a 50/50 match for businesses. Members discussed the proposal and felt that communication around accessing the grant was vital. On being put to the vote it was proposed, seconded and **ENDORSED**.

SK-BG-02 Business Growth – Chamber of Commerce Grant scheme
Funding requested: £122,800

The proposal for funding was for a renewed Business Growth Grant to be administered and delivered by the Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce to support SMEs and investment in projects that delivered measurable business growth. Grants would be awarded on a 50% intervention rate with remaining project costs match funded by businesses. The target was in relation to medium sized businesses. Members discussed the proposal and it was stated that communication around the grant was vital for it to succeed with good business plans that were viable essential. On being put to the vote it was unanimously **ENDORSED**.

SK-BG-03 Business Breakfasts
Funding requested: £5,000

The proposal was for a series of business breakfast or lunch talks in all four market towns with a minimum of 4 events, 1 per town on subjects of interest to local businesses. Target audiences of 50 attendees. Members discussed the proposal with some Members feeling that these type of events were no longer appropriate with others stating that they were good networking opportunities, especially for smaller businesses. On being put to the vote the proposal was **REJECTED**.

SK-PS-01 Skills Summit
Funding requested: £10,000

The proposal was to build on the success of the Skills Summits that took place in Grantham and Stamford during 2025. The events aim was to galvanise the businesses and schools who previously took part and to expand the exhibitor offer to include other local organisations as well as community groups and charities. The summit was aimed at year 10 upward. One Member asked why it was just Grantham and Stamford and this was primarily to do with venues and access by those exhibiting although other venues would be looked at for suitability. It was suggested that transport be looked into so that schools in Bourne and Deepings could also access the event. On being put to the vote the funding application was **ENDORSED**.

SK-PS-02 Inspire+ Move and Food Project
Funding requested: £40,000

The proposal was for a continuation of the previously funded Move & Food programme providing healthy food and activities for children during school holidays. The programme also aimed to support educational development, integrating active lessons and developing personal skills such as teamwork, communication, leadership, resilience and problem solving.

The Board were informed that the programmes that had been endorsed for this specific intervention so far exceed the funds available and with the Board's permission it was proposed that the GLCCA be contacted to see if the underspend of money in relation to Business and Growth could be moved to the People and Skills intervention.

Further funding applications within the report had all previously had funding allocated from the UKSPF.

SK-PS-03 Grantham College; Employability and Skills training + NEET Support

SK-PS-04 The Advanced Social Economy Incubator Harlaxton

SK-PS-05 Connect2Grow Steadfast

Members of the Board were very supportive of the work undertaken in connection with Inspire+, however it was felt that in relation to the Inspire+ application and the above three applications that the Board wished to see the outputs from last year and what the funding for the programmes had achieved before any further funding was endorsed. It was agreed that outputs would come before the Board before a decision on funding allocation was made.

The Assistant Director of Planning and Growth referred to the Board's permission to seek approval from the GLCCA in respect of moving money from one intervention to another. It was proposed, seconded and **AGREED** for the officer to approach the GLCCA.

A report on the clarification of previous outputs from the above proposals would come before the Board as soon as possible, it was hoped to arrange a meeting in June 2025. A comment was made that papers in respect of the proposals for discussion needed to be circulated with the agenda to allow Members time to read them. It was noted that due to the meeting of the Board happening so close to the Council AGM, this had impacted timeframes to some degree. Members urged Officers that communications in respect of expressions of interest needed to be as wide as possible.

The Chairman thanked the Officers for their hard work to date and closed the meeting at 12:10.

73. Supplement

Please see previous item.