



Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 18 February 2025

Report of Councillor Philip Knowles
Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing

UK Shared Prosperity Fund Programme Update

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

The report provides an update on the UK Shared and Rural England Prosperity Fund Programme(s). It outlines the investment into South Kesteven's communities and highlights the approach for the rest of 2024/25 until the programmes closure on 31st March 2025.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the contents of this report and the progress being made to ensure that the funding allocation is utilised before the deadline of 31 March 2025.

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication? No

What are the relevant corporate priorities? Connecting communities
Sustainable South Kesteven
Enabling economic opportunities
Housing
Effective council

Which wards are impacted?

All Wards

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 The allocation of funding is in accordance with the grant criteria and the delegations approved by Council.

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 This report highlights the activities undertaken as part of the UKSPF Programme. It should however be noted that the Council has a UKSPF Board that meet quarterly to give a steer from elected members on the use of UKSPF monies – an update from this Board is required to be considered at an Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This report satisfies this requirement under the UKSPF Board Terms of Reference.

Completed by: James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 The Council's overarching aspiration as set out in the Corporate Plan 2024-2027 is to ensure that the District is "A thriving District to live in, work and visit". A key priority is to enable and support a dynamic, resilient and growing local economy, which benefits all our communities. Continuing to distribute government grants, including the Rural Prosperity Fund will support the Council in meeting these aspirations.
- 2.2 The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) was a central pillar of the previous UK government's Levelling Up agenda and has provided £2.6 billion of funding for local investment between April 2022 and March 2025. It aims to improve pride in place and increase life chances across the UK by investing in communities and place, supporting local business, and people and skills.

- 2.3. The main UKSPF replaced the European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund, with all areas of the UK receiving an allocation.
- 2.4. The Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) is a top-up to the UKSPF and succeeds EU funding from LEADER and the Growth Programmes which were part of the Rural Development Programme for England. The REPF supports capital projects for small businesses and community infrastructure. The programme seeks to improve productivity and strengthen the rural economy and rural communities. It is complementary to funding used to support rural areas under the UKSPF, with the funding period running from April 2023 to March 2025. Lead local authorities, such as South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) have flexibility over how they deliver the UKSPF and REPF.
- 2.5. In relation to the Main UKSP Fund, the financial position following the recent UKSPF Board Meeting (27 January 2025) is set out in the table below:

Total grant allocation	£3,898,582
Total committed	£3,919,843
Total spent (actuals)	£1,033,660
Total uncommitted	-£21,261

- 2.6. Whilst this indicates an overspend on the Main programme, there are some projects that have been allocated funding that will not be able to fully use the allocated funding. Additionally, there are some projects that have been originally allocated against the Main programme that meet the criteria for the Rural Fund. As there is currently an identified underspend in the Rural Fund, any projects that can be funded that way, can be moved across into that programme.
- 2.7. The position in relation to the Rural Fund following the recent UKSPF Board meeting is set out in the table below:

Total grant allocation	£540,460
Total committed	£441,600
Total spent (actuals)	£241,761
Total uncommitted	£98,860

- 2.8. As the deadline for both the Main and Rural elements of the UKSPF approaches, the Economic Development Team is monitoring those projects where grant allocations have been made however the full funding has not yet been drawn down by the recipient. Some of those projects are considered to be “at risk” of not fully using the funding before 31 March 2025. Officers are working with the

applicants to understand if any of the funding allocated can be used. This is being monitored and the figures updated weekly.

- 2.9. Decisions about how the UKSPF funding could be spent would be taken in line with the Council's normal Financial Regulations as set out in the Constitution. It was agreed by Council (20 July 2023 – Background paper 5.2) that the UKSPF Board would review all projects where the spend would exceed £5,000 before a decision would be made. If there is any underspend, the UKSPF Board has agreed to a range of projects that the Council is able to fund from UKSPF that would have been funded by other means including from the Climate Change Reserve. This should mean that the overall fund allocated to SKDC is fully utilised.
- 2.10. The last update to the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee was September 2024 ([UKSPF Programme Update.pdf](#)) following which further information was requested about the projects have been delivered as a result of the UKSPF. A full analysis will be provided once the fund has been closed. However, details of some of the projects that have been supported by UKSPF are provided below:

Play Park Improvements

The following play parks have benefited from replacement or additional play equipment:

- Arnoldfield, Grantham (SKDC) – replacement of zip wire and nest swing, completed December 2024
- Troughton Walk, South Witham (SKDC) – replacement of double swing set and nest swing, completed December 2024
- Empingham Rd, Stamford (SKDC) – 1st phase completed January 2025 which included replacement of embankment slide and double flat seat swing set. The 2nd phase, which includes the replacement of the toddler slide unit, is due to be completed 7th February 2025.
- Dysart Park, Grantham (SKDC) – additional fitness equipment and older children's play equipment has been provided in partnership with the Rotary Club of Grantham. The older children's play equipment comprises a multi play unit including a banister slide, spinning pole, net climber, vertical rope climb, climbing grips, social seating, and multiple level decks. There will also be a wipeout surf balance board. The fitness equipment includes a calisthenics fitness station designed to enable nine simple exercises to increase strength, tone muscles and increase flexibility, near this will be a ladder wall and five-a-day fitness panel, where users turn a wheel to choose different exercises. The installation is due to be completed by the end of February 2025.

A number of Parish Councils and community groups have also benefited from new, or replacement play/sporting equipment funded from UKSPF. This includes:

- Tallington Parish Council
- Heydour Parish Council
- The Bythams Woodland Trust
- Barkston Parish Council
- Uffington Cricket Club

CCTV Upgrade and Relocation Project

In March 2024, Cabinet approved the contract award for the Upgrade of CCTV network and to enable connected towns, including the provision of wireless hubs. The project includes upgrading the existing analogue network across the town centres of Grantham, Stamford, Bourne and Market Deeping. This upgrade will also include free to access public Wi-Fi networks across the IP fibre network which will help position the council as a digital enabler, supporting digital inclusion. The project was part funded by UKSPF.

Audio Description Equipment

Audio Description Equipment at the Stamford Arts Centre has been funded by UKSPF. The headphones allow users to control the volume of the film individually to suit the needs of each user. The equipment has also been used for some live performances. Feedback has been extremely positive.

WatchWord

WatchWord offers a discrete closed-captioning system for users and equipment has been funded by UKSPF. This will allow users to wear augmented reality glasses that allow that user to view closed-captioning specific to the film they are watching. The benefit of this system is that it allows users the freedom of choosing to pick screenings when it is convenient to them rather than having to attend a dedicated captioned screening chosen by the venue.

Community Art Project

A community art project has been secured through UKSPF funding. Local Artists have been confirmed for Grantham, Bourne, Stamford and The Deepings who will work with community groups to create bespoke pieces of art for each location.

Fairman Knight & Sons

Rural England Prosperity funding has helped support the UK's first insect farm for commercial uses. The insect farm produces black soldier fly which feeds on waste and produces larvae which is sold to the onshore fish farm, pet food and

broiler shed industries. The business intends to be initially carbon neutral moving towards being carbon negative in the future.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1. The UKSPF and REPF funding must be spent by 31 March 2025. All outstanding projects where funds have been committed but not fully drawn down are being closely monitored by Officers. Any unspent money will likely need to be returned to MHCLG so it is important that this process continues and where funds are unable to be fully spent by the grant recipient, it can be reallocated to other projects in accordance with the UKSPF Board's decision (27 January 2025).
- 3.2. The report is for noting and it is expected that the funds allocated to the Council will be fully expended.
- 3.3. Once the programme has closed and the monitoring has been completed, a further update of the projects that have been delivered with UKSPF funding will be provided.

4. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 4.1 The Council is required to continue to monitor the progress of the UKSPF programme to ensure that projects have been delivered and the relevant monitoring, reporting and evaluation takes place. This is set out in the Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities. As this report updates the committee on progress so far, no other options have been considered.

5. Background Papers

- 5.1 UKSPF update to FEOSC September 2024 [UKSPF Programme Update.pdf](#)
- 5.2 [Agenda for Council on Thursday, 20th July, 2023, 1.00 pm | South Kesteven District Council](#)

