

## UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND (UKSPF)

### Executive Summary

In April 2022 the Government launched the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) with the aim of helping local places to build pride in place and increase life chances.

Woking Borough Council received £1m of the UKSPF plus an additional £20,000 in investment plan preparation and reporting budget. An investment plan was submitted to (what was then known as) the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and approved in October 2022.

In January 2024, the investment plan was amended following a key project, the Digital Centre of Excellence, not proceeding. Six new projects were approved by Executive, with three additional projects identified as meeting the UKSPF criteria, should any of the approved projects not go ahead. This report seeks approval from Executive to re-allocate £50,000 of UKSPF to the Digital Inclusion project, which was one of three 'reserve' projects identified.

### Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

#### RESOLVE That

- (i) £50,000 of UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) be re-allocated and used to renew the Digital Inclusion project; and
- (ii) a change request be submitted to Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

### Reasons for Decision

Reason: The Digital Inclusion project meets the UKSPF criteria for the funding available, whilst also supporting the Council's strategic objectives.

The Executive has the authority to determine the recommendation(s) set out above.

## UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

**Background Papers:** None.

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**1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 In April 2022 the Government launched the UKSPF with the aim of helping local places to build pride in place and increase life chances. Woking Borough Council received £1m of the UKSPF plus an additional £20,000 in investment plan preparation and reporting budget. An investment plan was submitted to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and approved in October 2022.
- 1.2 This agreed plan included Green Infrastructure improvements, Surrey County Council decarbonisation loan scheme, and the creation and management of a green innovation hub (renewable energy/ green tech) titled “The Digital Centre of Excellence”. The Digital Centre of Excellence Project was later suspended following the provider being unable to meet the requirements of the service.
- 1.3 In January 2024, the investment plan was amended to re-allocate the funding previously earmarked for the Digital Centre of Excellence. Six new projects were approved by Executive, with three additional projects identified as meeting the UKSPF criteria, should any of the approved projects not go ahead.

**2.0 Investment Plan – January 2024**

- 2.1 Following the Executive decision in January 2024, the amended investment plan was agreed as follows:

SPF Project	2024/25	Total
Green Infrastructure (already agreed)	£214,483	£349,000
SCC Loan Schemes (already agreed)	£50,000	£50,000
E11 - Transfer of community centres	£140,000	
E10 - Transfer of sports pavilions	£150,000	
E6 – Support for arts and culture	£130,000	
E3 – Parks and Play areas	£101,000	
E8 and E23 – Supporting economic growth and local businesses	£50,000	
E9 – Citizen’s Advice Woking	£30,000	
<b>Total</b>	<b>£865,483</b>	<b>£1,000,000</b>

**3.0 Investment Plan Change Request**

- 3.1 One of the projects agreed in January 2024, ‘Supporting Economic Growth and Local Business’ has not progressed as planned. This project aimed to support economic growth across Woking by bringing together businesses to work collaboratively as a “Place Board”. However, Council resources have needed to focus on the delivery of the Improvement and Recovery Plan and, following further consideration, it is felt that this is not the right time to launch this initiative.

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- 3.2 It is instead proposed that the £50,000 allocated to the Supporting Economic Growth and Local Business project be re-allocated to renewing the Digital Inclusion project. This project was previously funded by a grant from the NHS. The funding would be directed to the Surrey Coalition of Disabled People, to enable them to roll out their 'Tech Angels' project in Woking. The Tech Angels project connects people who are at the highest risk of digital exclusion with volunteer 'Digital Buddies'. The digital buddies can support people to use online services, for example, making an online GP appointment. The scheme is already running in several areas throughout Surrey and can be rolled out quickly and within the UKSPF deadlines.
- 3.3 Extending the project would meet the UKSPF priority E36: *Intervention to increase levels of digital inclusion, with a focus on essential digital skills, communicating the benefits of getting (safely) online, and in-community support to provide users with the confidence and trust to stay online.*
- 3.4 The Digital Inclusion project was agreed by Executive in January 2024 as a 'reserve' project, suitable for UKSPF should any of the agreed projects not progress as planned.

### 4.0 Corporate Strategy

- 4.1 The delivery of the Digital Inclusion project aligns with a number of corporate priorities including: Engaged Communities and Prospering Communities.

### 5.0 Implications

#### Finance and Risk

- 5.1 Where funding is not spent by the end of 2024/25 it must be paid back. Therefore, it is important that any projects are capable of being delivered in-year.

#### Equalities and Human Resources

- 5.2 It is intended that the Digital Inclusion project will positively support people who are disabled, people with mental ill-health, carers, older people, and people from Black and minoritised ethnic groups.

#### Legal

- 5.3 There are no specific legal implications associated with the receipt of the funding (other than the requirement for this to be used within the parameters set by Government).

#### Environment and Climate Change

- 5.4 There are no negative implications for the environment or climate change.

### 6.0 Engagement and Consultation

- 6.1 Engagement and consultation was undertaken as part of the original UKSPF project identification exercise.

REPORT ENDS