



UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Investment Plan Drafting Template

Version 2
May 2022

Your location

To be eligible for funding, you will need to be applying on behalf of a lead authority in one of the [delivery geographies](#).

Select the lead authority Tonbridge & Malling

For Scotland and Wales only: Who else is this investment plan being submitted on behalf of? Select all that apply

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Local challenges and opportunities

In this section, we will ask you:

- If you've identified any challenges or opportunities, you intend to support
- Which of the UKSPF investment priorities these fall under

ARE THERE ANY LOCAL CHALLENGES YOU FACE WHICH FALL UNDER THE COMMUNITIES AND PLACE INVESTMENT PRIORITY?

(If yes) Describe these challenges, give evidence where possible

Tonbridge & Malling borough is generally regarded as an area that offers a good quality of life. Recent surveys have scored the borough highly in this regard – the Happy at Home Index in 2020 placed Tonbridge 15th in Great Britain and first in the South East, with the Halifax Quality of Life survey (UK Best Place to Live) placing the borough 14th in the UK in 2020.

However, despite this, the borough still has a number of local challenges that it faces, many of which have been exacerbated during the covid 19 pandemic:

Our Communities:

It is recognised that in the Levelling Up White Paper, Tonbridge and Malling Borough does fare better than many parts of the United Kingdom. However, as also recognised in the paper, Levelling Up is not simply about a North-South divide, and there are, indeed, significant variations in prosperity at the local level. Tonbridge & Malling is no exception in this respect, with areas of affluence alongside much more deprived communities.

There are four key neighbourhoods within Tonbridge and Malling that classically are included within the definition of our most deprived communities, falling within the lowest quartile of Lower Super Output Areas in England for the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019. These are:

- Trench in Tonbridge (LSOA 009c) – with particular challenges related to crime rates and skills and employability.
- Snodland (LSOA 002g) – with particular challenges related to skills.
- South Aylesford (LSOA 005a) – with particular challenges around skills and employability and housing.
- East Malling (LSOA 003a) – with particular challenges linked to employment and

skills and crime levels.

The challenges within these areas are already recognised and activities to support these communities are being delivered by a number of active local community partnerships which are contributing towards our local Levelling Up agenda. For example, in Trench there is the TN10 Community Partnership, which is a multi-agency partnership aimed at improving the socio-economic well-being of local residents and focusses much of its delivery through this group.

However, it is clear that despite this concerted effort, our most deprived communities are continuing to struggle disproportionately as these partnerships do not have sufficient resources to meet the demands of the local communities. This is clearly demonstrated by the fact that all four areas now rank lower than they did when the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2015 were published (the lower the ranking the greater the level of deprivation in comparison to other areas in the country):

- Trench (009c) – ranked 5,509 overall in 2019 (down from 5,523 in 2015)
- Snodland (002g) – ranked 7,156 overall in 2019 (down from 9,808 in 2015)
- South Aylesford (005a) – ranked 5,342 overall in 2019 (down from 8,860 in 2015)
- East Malling (003a) – ranked 4,333 overall in 2019 (down from 6,064 in 2015)

In more recent months, anecdotal evidence suggests that these areas are suffering disproportionately from the cost-of-living crisis.

The Tonbridge & Malling Community Safety Partnership Plan 2021-22 highlights that whilst the borough remains one of the safest in the county, there are some worrying recent trends that have occurred in recent years. During 2020-21 there was ‘...an increase in recorded incidents of anti-social behaviour reported to the Police (up from 1,693 to 2,962) and reports of Domestic Abuse (from 2,883 to 2,929)’. This is an issue that is also picked up in the Kent Community Foundation’s Kent Needs Analysis for 2022. These trends are not universal across the borough and there are clearly a number of hotspot areas for anti-social behaviour (such as East Malling and Trench); however, the Community Safety Unit does not currently have the resources to adequately meet the expectations of local residents.

Our High Streets:

The performance of our High Streets is a key priority, and this is illustrated in the Borough Economic Recovery Plan 2021-2023, which states that:

“Whilst our town centres have been evolving for a number of years, the Covid-19 crisis has greatly accelerated these transformative changes. With an increased number of transactions online, our High Streets are no longer just ‘retail centres’, but will need to evolve into destinations where people go to get an ‘experience’, be it going to a park, having a coffee, visiting the gym or enjoying a meal out. Whilst some of this change is happening organically, it is important that we continue to support our businesses through these changes by continuing to make our town centres attractive places to visit and to pilot innovative approaches”

The Borough Council recently commissioned consultants PRD to undertake an in-depth analysis of its four largest high streets – Tonbridge, West Malling, Snodland and Borough Green – to gain a better understanding of how they have each fared during the Covid-19 pandemic and to understand the extent to which they are recovering and evolving to carve out their niche in the face of increased competition from internet retailing and out of town retailing. Each of these high streets is very different and faces different challenges, painting a diverse pattern across the borough.

Tonbridge – whilst vacancy rates have been relatively low in recent years and the high street has been quite resilient during the covid-19 pandemic, the key challenges for Tonbridge were identified as being:

- a poor variety of shops.
- a poor local environment that is too car dominated and is impacting on the extent to which footfall is coming back to the town post-Covid.
- a need to build on the town’s key assets – the castle and the river.

- a need to bring in more (well-attended) events into the town centre.

In addition, a recent survey of Tonbridge High Street businesses (January 2022) highlighted that only 58% claimed to be confident of sustaining their organisation going forward, and volume of in-person sales continues to be around 10% below pre-pandemic expectation.

West Malling – has a varied and attractive town centre offer, with low vacancy levels (despite some high profile, empty units) along the high street and has generally performed resiliently during the pandemic and is seemingly recovering well. However, a recent survey of West Malling high street businesses (January 2022) showed that just 33% were confident of sustaining their organisation going forward, considerably lower than in Tonbridge.

Snodland – has seen significant local growth in recent years through the Holborough Lakes development, and the new Peters Village, and yet this has had relatively little impact on the economic performance of the high street, and it continues to service a very local audience. The town centre has struggled over the pandemic period (with 100% of businesses surveyed stating this to be the case), with some of the key challenges being:

- an uninviting public realm and shopfront environment that does not encourage visitors to dwell.
- a number of prominent long-term vacancies that create an ‘unloved feel’ to the high street.
- Poor pedestrian connectivity between the town centre and recent developments.

Borough Green – is a relatively small high street that nonetheless plays a foundational role in providing civic services to its catchment area, which has afforded the area a degree of resilience during the pandemic period. However, 80% of local businesses surveyed still do not feel confident about the future of their business and overall sales have declined by 15.3%. It seems that local businesses are struggling to adapt or pivot their business models as effectively as other comparator town centres, with a minimal 5.6% rise in online sales since April 2019.

As such it is clear that if our high streets are to flourish into the future, that these challenges need to be met, otherwise they will gradually lose out to competition from elsewhere.

Our Environment:

Having a good quality environment is essential to community well-being. There are two main strands to the environmental challenge that the borough faces – carbon reduction and tackling air quality issues. Whilst both of these challenges clearly go wider than the borough, it is key that the borough council leads by example.

Carbon Reduction: whilst carbon emissions have fallen over the past 20 years, much more needs to be done. The Tonbridge & Malling Climate Change Strategy (2020-2030) highlights that the Tyndall Centre for Climate Research has carried out an analysis of the UK’s carbon budget for delivering the Paris Agreement’s commitment to staying “well below 2°C and pursuing 1.5°C global temperature rise”. Based on their assessment, they recommend that Tonbridge and Malling borough stay within a maximum cumulative carbon dioxide emissions budget of 6.4 million tonnes (MtCO₂) between 2020 and 2100. Based on 2017 carbon dioxide emissions, Tonbridge and Malling would use the entire budget by 2027. Staying within the carbon budget will only be possible if the borough rapidly transitions away from fossil fuel use.

The stakes are high for the borough. A recent study by Kent County Council on ‘Climate Change Risk and Impact Assessment for Kent and Medway’ (2020) concluded that “Development pressure, population growth, demographic change and economic drivers, coupled with geographical location and underlying geology mean that Kent is particularly vulnerable to current and future impacts of climate change”.

There will therefore be significant challenges ahead, which will need to be confronted in order to make a difference.

Tackling Air Quality Issues: Ongoing assessments of air quality within the borough of Tonbridge and Malling have identified six areas where levels of Nitrogen Dioxide have at some point exceeded the annual objective limit of 40µg/m³ and have been declared Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs). These are:

- M20, between New Hythe Lane and Hall Road,
- Tonbridge High Street between Vale Road and The Botany,
- A26, Wateringbury Crossroads
- A20 Aylesford
- A20 Larkfield
- A25 Sevenoaks Rd/Western Rd Borough Green

Recognising the links between local air quality, planning, transportation, and climate change pollutants, work is being undertaken through the Kent & Medway Air Quality Partnership to secure a co-ordinated approach to the monitoring and improvement of air quality in Kent. However, improving air quality within our priority areas does continue to be a challenge, but it is key that every effort is made to tackle it, especially bearing in mind the negative impact poor air quality has on health and well-being.

ARE THERE ANY LOCAL OPPORTUNITIES UNDER THE COMMUNITIES AND PLACE INVESTMENT PRIORITY THAT YOU INTEND TO SUPPORT?

(If yes) Describe these opportunities, give evidence where possible

Supporting our Communities

One of the key opportunities is to greater harness the level of excellent work that the community and voluntary sector undertaken within our communities. There are already local community partnerships in place across a number of our more deprived communities – for example, the TN10 Partnership, East Malling Partnership, Snodland Partnership - that ensure there is a collaborative approach to delivering services, but by offering new funding opportunities to help resource the work that is needed within these communities it will help to give new drive and purpose to these partnerships and also enable a much greater level of support to be given to our most in need residents.

As with the local community partnerships, the Community Safety Partnership is a well-regarded body that helps to deliver focussed initiatives in a collaborative way. There is an opportunity for the partnership to use new funding to take a more comprehensive approach to tackling anti-social behaviour in the borough and to stem the steady rise in instances over the past couple of years.

Supporting our Town Centres

Whilst our town centres do face a number of challenges, there are also many opportunities that can be harnessed given the resources to do so. Our recent studies have highlighted that the following are key priorities that should be harnessed:

- Taking a strategic approach to the Council's own extensive land ownership (especially in and around Tonbridge) to improve the town centre offer, connectivity and the environment.
- Building on our existing working relationship with town centre groups and businesses to instigate positive change – for example, a previous iteration of the shopfront improvement scheme brought together a large number of local high street businesses, over 30 of whom actively embraced the scheme and carried out works to their frontages which resulted in a lot of positivity and an improvement to parts of our high streets.
- Making our town centres smarter and more efficient, and increase awareness of events so that they become a greater draw and help to increase visitor numbers – whilst there is a lot of good work undertaken to promote town centre events, more needs to be done to build awareness and add greater vibrancy to our towns.

Supporting Carbon Reduction and Improving Environmental Well-Being

In a recent survey of local residents, undertaken by the Council in October 2021, environmental issues came up high on the agenda, with matters such as enhancing parks and open spaces, protecting the countryside, supporting energy efficiency and tackling climate change all scoring highly.

Indeed, this enthusiasm for supporting the environment is matched by the business community, who have engaged well with a number of recent green business initiatives. A recent grant scheme saw a high level of interest, with applications exceeding the funding available by some margin.

As such, having flagged up the environmental challenges the borough council faces, there is a real opportunity for the Borough Council and partner organisations to lead by example and build upon existing initiatives and deliver projects that contribute towards carbon reduction and environmental well-being.

ARE THERE ANY LOCAL CHALLENGES YOU FACE WHICH FALL UNDER THE SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS INVESTMENT PRIORITY?

(If yes) Describe these challenges, give evidence where possible

The recently produced Case for West Kent (2022) provides a headline summary of the West Kent economy (West Kent is recognised as a functional economic area in our Local Plan evidence base) that highlights the following:

- Comparative analysis within the context of Kent & Medway shows that the West Kent economy performs relatively well – with 20% of the population, 23% of the jobs, 26% of enterprises and 28% of economic output. In comparison to Kent, it therefore punches above its weight.
- The West Kent economy has over representation in high value service sectors such as Information and Communication, Financial and Insurance and Professional, Scientific and technical Activities.
- **However**, there are weaknesses. There is a large discrepancy between resident and workplace-based earnings, which broadly highlights the large influence of London and the reliance of the local economy on the Capital. In addition, the predominance of Green Belt, AONB and other designations does create a desirable place to live, but also places constraints on development.
- West Kent also only ranks 'mid-table' when considered in the context of the ring of local authority areas equidistant from Central London, across a range of variables.

Across a borough-wide geography, there are also some more local business investment challenges that are identified in the Borough Economic Recovery Strategy 2021-23. These include:

- In recent years, only around 60-65% of businesses in the borough generally last 3 years or more, indicating that a number of fledgling businesses are struggling to gain a sustainable footing. As such whilst there is a high degree of entrepreneurialism within the local economy, there is also a high level of churn and a large number of businesses each year that do not develop. With the closure of the West Kent Chamber of Commerce and Industry in 2020 and the Centre for Micro-Business in 2021, two key local providers of intensive support and advice have disappeared from the area, creating a drop in provision that could have otherwise helped to mitigate this issue.
- A number of businesses are looking to reduce their carbon footprint and become more energy efficient or self-sufficient, especially in light of current energy prices, and the huge burden this is placing on local businesses. However, many of our micro-sized enterprises (which make up around 89.1% of businesses in the borough) need support in carrying out this change – not only financially but also in terms of accessing the required information and knowing how to proceed.

ARE THERE ANY LOCAL OPPORTUNITIES UNDER THE SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS INVESTMENT PRIORITY THAT YOU INTEND TO SUPPORT?

(If yes) Describe these opportunities, give evidence where possible

As illustrated in the challenges section above, there is a strong degree of commonality between the economic performance of our adjoining West Kent authorities and Tonbridge & Malling borough (functional economic area), and this has led to a strong degree of partnership working through the West Kent Partnership over recent years. Where feasible, it makes strong sense to use the West

Kent Partnership as a vehicle for delivery of UKSPF initiatives across this geography where common issues arise.

There is also a great local opportunity to build upon the relationships that have been developed within the local business community following over two years of intensive support and guidance during the covid-19 pandemic and its aftermath. Thousands of local businesses engaged with the borough council during this period, with a large number of them continuing to engage with the council on a regular basis for help and information. This is therefore an excellent platform from which to launch new initiatives that make a real difference to the local business community and foster sustainable economic growth.

ARE THERE ANY LOCAL CHALLENGES YOU FACE WHICH FALL UNDER THE PEOPLE AND SKILLS INVESTMENT PRIORITY? (In Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland this should also include challenges relating to Multiply)

(If yes) Describe these challenges, give evidence where possible

The Kent and Medway Local **Skills** Improvements Plan (2022) identifies five key challenges across the county:

- A need to modernise the training offer to meet the pace of the current employer and industry need, with a greater emphasis within the current offer on new technologies and systems used in industry, and on the flexibility of Apprenticeships.
- Increasing the volume of provision to increase supply – with evidence of a quantitative gap between new entrants to the industry and employer demand.
- Investing in soft transferrable skills – including wider considerations of work readiness, work ethic and ‘getting the basics right’.
- Upskilling and re-skilling the existing workforce, especially via accessible, non-qualification locally based short courses.
- Better communications, driving better-informed perceptions of modern industry.

Within the context of these countywide challenges, the West Kent Partnership Skills sub-group has highlighted the following as particular key challenges for West Kent:

- the quantitative gap in a number of key sectors – for example, the West Kent area has a strong horticultural and agricultural sector that is struggling to recruit new entrants. This often comes down to misconceptions about the nature of work in this sector and a perceived lack of career opportunities. A recent Fresh Food and Produce Jobs Fair in March 2022 at East Malling, which was delivered by the DWP in partnership with the Borough Council highlighted the extent of this issue, with a number of local producers explaining the severe challenges in recruiting staff.
- the need for re-skilling of the existing workforce – there is a huge need for green retro-fitting our economy and making sure that our businesses have people with the right skills in order to move to a low carbon economy. According to the LGA, Kent and Medway alone will require 30,000 local green jobs by 2050 to meet targets for delivering a net zero economy.
- The extent of barriers to employment or volunteering especially amongst our residents that are furthest away from the jobs market. For some residents, the barriers are such that even small improvements towards building confidence, addressing mental health or physical health challenges and learning new life skills would be an important step towards a positive outcome.

Statistical evidence from the Department for Work and Pensions illustrates that across the South East region, the largest groups that are economically inactive are people aged 50-64 years old (around 413,000) and those aged 16-24 years old (around 341,000). From February 2021 to February 2022, the number of economically inactive 16–24-year-olds has fallen by 10.5%, but for 50–64-year-olds the figure has risen very slightly by 0.3%. Even despite this fall in economically inactive young people across the region, Kent continues to have one of the highest levels of NEETs in the South East, relative to total population (2530 young people in 2021).

Overall, Tonbridge and Malling fares comparatively quite well, with the level of economic inactivity amongst 16–64-year-olds in Tonbridge and Malling being quite low at 18.4% for the period January–December 2021, although this does still represent **around 14,000 people** in the borough.

Indeed, there are significant inequalities in the borough, that closely align with the information provided in the ‘Communities and Place’ section, and these represent very real barriers to becoming economically active. Evidence of these barriers is illustrated by the fact that life expectancy is 5.9 years lower for men and 7.5 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Tonbridge and Malling than in the least deprived areas – illustrating that there are strong health inequalities within the borough.

ARE THERE ANY LOCAL OPPORTUNITIES UNDER THE PEOPLE AND SKILLS INVESTMENT PRIORITY THAT YOU INTEND TO SUPPORT? (In Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland this should also include challenges relating to Multiply)

(If yes) Describe these opportunities, give evidence where possible

Over the past 5 years, the Borough Council (through the West Kent Partnership) has developed excellent links with local schools through the West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network, as well as delivered the West Kent Skillsfest and more local schools-based activities. With a growing requirement on schools to engage with the local business community, there is a real opportunity for the West Kent partners to use the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to undertake meaningful projects that help to open the eyes of our young people to the employment opportunities there are locally.

There is also the opportunity to undertake some targeted support work with partners to help our economically inactive residents to take some positive steps towards reducing some of the barriers to employment or volunteering they face through targeted help. The Borough Council has worked closely with both the Maidstone and Tonbridge Job Centres over a number of years on the delivery of initiatives such as local jobs fairs, but given this strong foundation, there is an opportunity to work more closely in helping to deliver positive outcomes for our residents.

Given that there are clear geographical concentrations of need within the borough, there is an opportunity to work with existing providers and partner organisations to deliver intensive support within the communities. In addition to this, given the growth in the green economy, there is also an opportunity to tap in to the skills set of our older workforce to help drive this forward.

Interventions

In this section, we will ask you about:

- Interventions you’ve chosen for each year of funding
- Outcomes you want to deliver
- Any interventions that are not listed here
- How these interventions fall under the UKSPF investment priorities, and your rationale for them
- Interventions not included in our list will be assessed before being approved, where you will need to show a clear rationale, how the intervention is value for money, what outcomes it will deliver and how you will monitor and evaluate the intervention. This may include a theory of change or logic chain.

WHAT ARE THE OUTCOMES YOU WANT TO DELIVER UNDER THE COMMUNITIES AND PLACE INVESTMENT PRIORITY? SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.

Outcome	Tick if applicable
Jobs created	
Jobs safeguarded	
Increased footfall	

Increased visitor numbers	
Reduced vacancy rates	✓
Greenhouse gas reductions	
Improved perceived/experienced accessibility	
Improved perception of facilities/amenities	✓
Increased number of properties better protected from flooding and coastal erosion	
Increased users of facilities / amenities	✓
Improved perception of facility/infrastructure project	
Increased use of cycleways or paths	
Increase in Biodiversity	
Increased affordability of events/entry	
Improved perception of safety	✓
Reduction in neighbourhood crime	✓
Improved engagement numbers	✓
Improved perception of events	✓
Increased number of web searches for a place	
Volunteering numbers as a result of support	✓
Number of community-led arts, cultural, heritage and creative programmes as a result of support	
Increased take up of energy efficiency measures	
Increased number of projects arising from funded feasibility studies	✓
Number of premises with improved digital connectivity	
None of the above	

SELECT THE INTERVENTIONS YOU INTEND TO USE WHICH MEET THE COMMUNITIES AND PLACE INVESTMENT PRIORITY. YOU CAN SELECT AS MANY AS YOU LIKE.

Intervention

A full list of nation-specific interventions is available in the relevant annex to the Prospectus.

E1 – Funding for improvements to town centres and high streets, including better accessibility for disabled people, including capital spend and running costs.

E3 – Creation of and improvements to local green spaces, community gardens, watercourses and embankments, along with incorporating natural features into wider public spaces

E5 – Design and Management of the built and landscaped environment to ‘design out crime’

E6 – Support for local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities

E9 – Funding for impactful volunteering and/or social action projects to develop social and human capital in local places

E10 – Funding for local sports facilities, tournaments, teams and leagues to bring people together

E14 – Funding to support relevant feasibility studies.

DO YOU PLAN TO USE ANY INTERVENTIONS NOT INCLUDED IN THE COMMUNITIES AND PLACE LIST?

State the name of each of these additional interventions and a brief description of each of these

No

Explain how each intervention meets the Communities and Place investment priority. Give evidence where possible, including why it is value money and the outcomes you want to deliver.

Not applicable

Do you consider that any of these interventions may provide a subsidy to potential recipients of the funding under the intervention's planned activity?
All bids must also consider how they will deliver in line with subsidy control as [set out in the guidance](#).

No

Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the intervention is a subsidy and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted.

Not applicable.

HAVE YOU ALREADY IDENTIFIED ANY PROJECTS WHICH FALL UNDER THE COMMUNITIES AND PLACE INVESTMENT PRIORITY?

Describe these projects, including how they fall under the Communities and Place investment priority and the location of the proposed project.

A number of projects have been identified under the Communities and Place investment priority, broadly falling under three key themes – 'Supporting Our Town Centres', 'Supporting our Local Communities and Business', and 'Supporting Carbon Reduction and Improving Environmental Well-Being' – all of which are central to meeting the priority. Whilst they provide a unique opportunity to address some of the key challenges and opportunities within our borough, they also offer up the chance to lever in additional funding and as such create a bigger impact. This approach to leveraging in funding is also applicable to projects in the other two investment priorities.

Supporting Our Town Centres:

Review of Tonbridge Town Centre (Tonbridge) – in 2014, a key regeneration initiative to transform Tonbridge Town Centre was aborted when Sainsbury pulled out citing viability issues - <https://www.theplanner.co.uk/news/tonbridge-regeneration-scheme-called-off-by-sainsburys>. Since this time the Borough Council has worked in partnership with a wide number of organisations to spearhead a number of other, smaller-scale town centre regeneration projects such as the regeneration of Town Lock (in partnership with the Environment Agency), River Walk and the High Street itself (in partnership with Kent Highways). However, with the covid pandemic abating, the Borough Council has re-focussed on its extensive landholdings (predominantly surface car parking) to the east of the High Street and look at how this land could be better used to support the town centre – to bring in new uses to the town, attract more people to the high street, raise its profile and create a more pleasant environment for residents and visitors alike. Consultants Mace Group have been commissioned to undertake some initial visioning work and to identify priorities and opportunities, but feasibility work will be required in order to look at the viability of uses on various sites and to ensure that this initiative adds the required value to the successful operation of the town centre.

Tonbridge Wayfinding (Tonbridge) – as mentioned previously, connectivity around Tonbridge is poor and this is clearly illustrated by the lack of legibility and poor arrival experience when coming in to the town via the railway station. This often means visitors do not realise the ease with which they can access local parks, the Castle or other facilities and amenities off the High Street. The Tonbridge Wayfinding project proposes to deliver new wayfinding art installations in the town centre to improve pedestrian movement, and encourage greater dwell time. These wayfinding signs would be sited at five key town centre locations (including the station, the library, Medway Wharf Road and also provide a secondary route to the Racecourse Park)

Digital Information Boards (Borough-wide but predominantly in Tonbridge) – Provision of digital information boards (up to 12) to promote local facilities, town centre events and activities. Information boards to be located in key locations including entrances to public open spaces and car parks across the Borough and will replace the roadside static boards currently in place. This will not only enable multiple messages to be given in each location, but will also create a much more welcoming impression for visitors to our town centres.

Shopfront Improvements and Tackling Vacancies (Borough-wide with a focus on Tonbridge, Snodland, West Malling and Borough Green) – this proposal is to deliver a grant scheme to encourage the improvement to shop frontages and the re-animation of vacant premises, prioritising our four main High Streets. The scheme will offer grants of up to £3,500, covering up to 60% of eligible costs to independent businesses and local organisations. There will be an application process with submissions considered by a local panel that will assess using criteria looking at the level of positive impact on the local area, prominence of building, quality of proposal/works and value for money. It is estimated that the scheme will be able to support 17-25 schemes. The scheme will be supported by an adviser who will help with pulling applications together, as it will help to give local businesses and organisations the confidence to apply.

Supporting our Local Communities and Businesses:

Community Development Grant Scheme (Borough-wide but with a focus on Trench (Tonbridge), East Malling, Snodland and Aylesford) – this initiative will help to support the existing community and voluntary partnerships and networks that strive to support and make a positive difference to our most challenged communities. The Community Development Grant Scheme will provide support of up to £5,000 per applicant and support approximately 30-35 projects in total that will help to improve quality of life, and tackle the cost-of-living crisis. Potential priorities areas for the fund are likely to include mental health support and supporting people with high dependency. Applications will be considered by a community panel.

Youth Provision (Borough-wide but with a focus on East Malling and Snodland) – the Community Safety Partnership will commission organisations such as Olympia Boxing, Challenger Troop and Community Cycling to run regular activities for young people, particularly in East Malling and Snodland. These activities will help steer young people away from low-level anti-social behaviour and address concerns amongst young people that there is a lack of facilities and activities for them, thereby fostering a sense of local pride and belonging.

Mobile CCTV (Borough-wide) – this initiative involves the purchase of two mobile CCTV cameras that can be placed in various locations across the borough as the need arises. It will enable the Community Safety Partnership to respond proactively to anti-social behaviour reports from local community groups and the Parish Councils, especially in rural areas that have no coverage as things stand.

Supporting Carbon Reduction and Improving Environmental Well-Being

Carbon Descent Plans (Larkfield and Tonbridge) - having declared a Climate Emergency and set out an aspiration to be carbon neutral by 2030, it is important that the council leads by example. In terms of the Council's own estate, the two main leisure centres are the largest carbon emitters and therefore various works need to be undertaken to install renewable technologies to not only reduce the carbon footprint but also to demonstrate improvements that can be made by being more sustainable. This work will begin with undertaking carbon descent plans at our two wet-side facilities, Larkfield Leisure Centre and Tonbridge Swimming Pool, and ultimately lead to a programme of works.

Safer Sustainable Car Parks (Borough-wide) – has effectively two key strands – to improve perceptions of safety and to reduce anti-social behaviour through improved lighting (supporting local communities) whilst at the same time reducing energy consumption of our car parks through the replacement of existing inefficient lighting with LED lanterns and the introduction of new LED where required.

Green Bus Stops Pilot (2 AQMA areas in the Borough) - Piloting two places in the borough (town centre or AQMA) to deliver green bus stops (green roofs consisting of grass and flowers).

Do you consider these projects may provide a subsidy to potential recipients of the funding under the proposed planned activity?

All bids must also consider how they will deliver in line with subsidy control as [set out in the guidance](#).

No

Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the proposed projects constitute a subsidy and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted.

The BEIS Guidance on the UK's international subsidy control commitments (June 2021) highlights that a subsidy is a measure which meets all of the following:

- Is given by a public authority
- Makes a contribution to an enterprise conferring an economic advantage that is not available on market terms
- Affects international trade

Whilst both the Community Development Grant Scheme and the Shopfront Improvements and Tackling Vacancies Grant Scheme would be both given by a public authority (Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council), and as small grant schemes they could be seen to confer an economic advantage to an enterprise that is not available on market terms (although this is unlikely in relation to the Community Development Grant Scheme), neither scheme would affect international trade for the following reasons:

- Both schemes are focused on supporting locally based organisations or enterprises that are unlikely to be engaging in international trade.
- The grant levels on offer through the schemes are relatively low (a few thousand pounds).

The conclusion that these interventions would be exempt accords with the BEIS guidance that "(s)ubsidies to truly local companies or a small tourist attraction are unlikely to be caught as this is unlikely to affect international trade".

WHAT ARE THE OUTCOMES YOU WANT TO DELIVER UNDER THE SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS INVESTMENT PRIORITY? SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.

Outcome	Tick if applicable
Jobs created	
Jobs safeguarded	
Increased footfall	
Increased visitor numbers	
Reduced vacancy rates	
Greenhouse gas reductions	✓
Number of new businesses created	
Improved perception of markets	
Increased business sustainability	
Increased number of businesses supported	
Increased amount of investment	
Improved perception of attractions	
Number of businesses introducing new products to the firm	
Number of organisations engaged in new knowledge transfer activity	
Number of premises with improved digital connectivity	
Number of businesses adopting new to the firm technologies or processes	✓
Number of new to market products	
Number of R&D active businesses	
Increased number of innovation active SMEs	
Number of businesses adopting new or improved products or services	
Increased number of innovation plans developed	
Number of early stage firms which increase their revenue following support	✓
Number of businesses engaged in new markets	
Number of businesses engaged in new markets	

Number of businesses increasing their export capability	
Increased amount of low or zero carbon energy infrastructure installed	
Number of businesses with improved productivity	
Increased number of projects arising from funded feasibility studies	
Increased number of properties better protected from flooding and coastal erosion	
None of the above	

SELECT THE INTERVENTIONS YOU INTEND TO USE WHICH MEET THE SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS INVESTMENT PRIORITY. YOU CAN SELECT AS MANY AS YOU LIKE.

Intervention

A full list of nation-specific interventions is available in the relevant annex to the Prospectus.

E24 – Funding for new and improvements to existing training hubs, business support offers, ‘incubators’ and ‘accelerators’ for local enterprise which can support entrepreneurs and start-ups through the early stages of development and growth by offering a combination of services

E29 – Supporting Decarbonisation and improving the natural environment whilst growing the local economy

DO YOU PLAN TO USE ANY INTERVENTIONS NOT INCLUDED IN THE SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS LIST?

State the name of each of these additional interventions and a brief description of each of these

No

Explain how each intervention meets the Supporting Local Business investment priority. Give evidence where possible, including why it is value money and the outcomes you want to deliver.

Not applicable

Do you consider that any of these interventions may provide a subsidy to potential recipients of the funding under the intervention’s planned activity?

All bids must also consider how they will deliver in line with subsidy control as [set out in the guidance](#).

No

Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the intervention is a subsidy and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted.

Not applicable

HAVE YOU ALREADY IDENTIFIED ANY PROJECTS WHICH FALL UNDER THE SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS INVESTMENT PRIORITY?

Describe these projects, including how they fall under the Supporting Local Business investment priority and the location of the proposed project.

The following two initiatives will form the foundation of our approach to the Local Business investment priority.

West Kent Green Business Grant Scheme (Borough-wide) – this scheme will aim to support business development in the green economy as well as support businesses looking to improve their energy efficiency and reduce the carbon footprint of their premises. It is currently envisaged that there will be two strands to this fund:

- Section A: Grants of up to £5,000 will be available for businesses in the green economy (based on the Low Carbon and Environmental Goods and Services (LCEGS) definition) to

support up to 40% of the eligible costs of business development initiatives. Eligible areas of expenditure would be: Research and Development, Physical Infrastructure, Equipment and Machinery, Promotion and Marketing and Digital/IT Support.

- Section B: Grants of up to £5,000 will be available to businesses in the borough to improve their energy efficiency and reduce the carbon footprint of commercial premises in the borough. Priority sectors for support would be: Food Production, Tourism and Hospitality, Distribution and Logistics, Construction and Independent Retail.

This scheme will look to lever in match funding from the private sector, with grants on offer amounting to 40-50% of total eligible project cost.

West Kent Business Support Programme (Borough-wide) – this programme will focus on providing mentoring and financial support to small and start-up businesses through a work hub network. There will effectively be three strands to this programme:

- The establishment of a full-time business adviser to work with 60 businesses to provide 8 hours mentoring and advice.
- The provision of micro-grants of £500 to businesses that engage with the mentoring programme in order to help them develop their business.
- The delivery of business events and training (including a network wide annual conference and procurement event)

Do you consider these projects may provide a subsidy to potential recipients of the funding under the proposed planned activity?

All bids must also consider how they will deliver in line with subsidy control as [set out in the guidance](#).

No

Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the proposed projects constitute a subsidy and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted.

The BEIS Guidance on the UK’s international subsidy control commitments (June 2021) highlights that a subsidy is a measure which meets all of the following:

- Is given by a public authority
- Makes a contribution to an enterprise conferring an economic advantage that is not available on market terms
- Affects international trade

Whilst both the West Kent Green Business Grant Scheme and the West Kent Business Support Programme would be both undertaken by a public authority, and as small grant schemes they could be seen to confer an economic advantage to an enterprise that is not available on market terms, neither scheme could be considered to affect international trade for the following reasons:

- Both schemes are focused on supporting locally based organisations or enterprises that are unlikely to be engaging in international trade.
- The grant levels on offer through both schemes are low, and in the case of the West Kent Business Support Programme, are incredibly low - only amounting to £500.

The conclusion that these interventions would be exempt accords with the BEIS guidance that “(s)ubsidies to truly local companies or a small tourist attraction are unlikely to be caught as this is unlikely to affect international trade”.

WHAT ARE THE OUTCOMES YOU WANT TO DELIVER UNDER THE PEOPLE AND SKILLS INVESTMENT PRIORITY? SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.

Outcome

Tick if applicable

Number of economically inactive individuals in receipt of benefits they are entitled to following support	
Increased active or sustained participants of UKSPF beneficiaries in community groups [and/or] increased employability through development of interpersonal skills	
Increased proportion of participants with basic skills (English, maths, digital and ESOL)	
Number of people in supported employment [and] number of people engaging with mainstream healthcare services	
Number of people sustaining engagement with keyworker support and additional services	
Number of people engaged in job-searching following support	✓
Number of people in employment, including self-employment, following support	
Number of people sustaining employment for 6 months	
Increased employment, skills and/or UKSPF objectives incorporated into local area corporate governance	
Number of people in education/training	
Increased number of people with basic skills (English, maths, digital and ESOL)	
Fewer people facing structural barriers into employment and into skills provision	✓
Increased number of people familiarised with employers' expectations, including, standards of behaviour in the workplace	
Fewer people facing structural barriers into employment and into skills provision	
Number of people gaining a qualification or completing a course following support	✓
Number of people gaining qualifications, licences, and skills	
Number of economically active individuals engaged in mainstream skills education, and training.	
Number of people engaged in life skills support following interventions	
Number of people with proficiency in pre-employment and interpersonal skills (relationship, organisational and anger-management, interviewing, CV and job application writing)	
Multiply only - Increased number of adults achieving maths qualifications up to, and including, Level 2.	
Multiply only - Increased number of adults participating in maths qualifications and courses up to, and including, Level 2.	
None of the above	

SELECT THE INTERVENTIONS YOU INTEND TO USE WHICH MEET THE PEOPLE AND SKILLS INVESTMENT PRIORITY. YOU CAN SELECT AS MANY AS YOU LIKE.

Intervention

A full list of nation-specific interventions is available in the relevant annex to the Prospectus.

E33 – Employment support for economically inactive people

E35 – Activities such as enrichment and volunteering to improve opportunities and promote wellbeing.

E39 – Green skills courses targeted around ensuring we have the skilled workforce to achieve the government's net zero and wider environmental ambitions.

DO YOU PLAN TO USE ANY INTERVENTIONS NOT INCLUDED IN THE PEOPLE AND SKILLS LIST?

State the name of each of these additional interventions and a brief description of each of these

No

Explain how each intervention meets the People and Skills investment priority. Give evidence where possible, including why it is value money and the outcomes you want to deliver.

Not applicable

**Do you consider that any of these interventions may provide a subsidy to potential recipients of the funding under the intervention's planned activity?
All bids must also consider how they will deliver in line with subsidy control as [set out in the guidance](#).**

No

Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the intervention is a subsidy and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted.

Not applicable

ENGLAND ONLY: People and Skills interventions can only be used in 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 if you have identified a local voluntary and community provision, previously supported by the European Social Fund, at risk of closure. If you have not identified a suitable provision, you will not be able to select interventions for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 and your investment plan will not be approved.

HAVE YOU ALREADY IDENTIFIED ANY PROJECTS for 2024-2025 WHICH FALL UNDER THE PEOPLE AND SKILLS INVESTMENT PRIORITY?

Yes

Describe the projects for 2024-25, including how they fall under the People and Skills investment priority and the location of the proposed project.

Community Carbon Literacy Training Grant (Borough-wide) – a micro-grant scheme to contribute towards carbon literacy training for initially 50 individuals from local Parish Councils, Community Groups, and Schools. Carbon literacy training to be provided by the Carbon Literacy Project through their online course: Carbon Literacy for Interested Organisations. The idea being to build carbon literacy within our communities.

West Kent Life Skills Project (supporting people furthest from employment) (Borough-wide but with a priority focus on our deprived communities) – this project is still to be defined fully, but would look to support local residents with considerable barriers to employment through support and training on a range of topics including health and well-being (particularly mental health), building confidence and tackling disadvantage. The ultimate aim of the initiative would be to help participants get closer to employability rather than necessarily getting them directly into employment.

West Kent Volunteering and Enrichment Project (Borough-wide) – linked to the above project there will also be a small programme of volunteering and enrichment activities for people furthest from the workplace in order to give them additional support and experience that builds confidence.

Green Retrofit Skills Project (Borough-wide) – again, this project is still to be defined fully, but the outline of the project would look to contribute towards a green transition in the local economy, with a particular focus (although not exclusively so) on supporting people that are 50+ years old to retrain and gain new skills.

Do you consider these projects may provide a subsidy to potential recipients of the funding under the proposed planned activity?
All bids must also consider how they will deliver in line with subsidy control as [set out in the guidance](#).

No

Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the proposed projects constitute a subsidy and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted.

Following on from assessments made for the 'Communities and Place' and 'Local Business Investment' initiatives, it is noted that whilst the proposed projects for the 'People and Skills' element of the Investment Plan will be given by the public authority (Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council), it is not viewed that an economic advantage will be given to an enterprise that is not available on market terms and neither would any of the initiatives affect international trade as all schemes will be focussed on very locally based delivery.

HAVE YOU IDENTIFIED A LOCAL VOLUNTARY PROVISION AT RISK AS PART OF YOUR PEOPLE AND SKILLS INVESTMENT PRIORITIES?

No

(If Yes) Describe the local voluntary provision at risk and your rationale for supporting it.

Not applicable

Provide the European Social Fund Project Names and Project References for this voluntary and community provision at risk.

Not applicable

What year do you intend to fund these projects? Select all that apply.

2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
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Describe the projects for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024, including how they fall under the People and Skills investment priority and the location of the proposed project.

Not applicable

Do you consider these projects may provide a subsidy to potential recipients of the funding under the proposed planned activity?
All bids must also consider how they will deliver in line with subsidy control as [set out in the guidance](#).

No

Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the proposed projects constitute a subsidy and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted.

Not applicable.

SCOTLAND, WALES & NORTHERN IRELAND ONLY

HAVE YOU ALREADY IDENTIFIED ANY PROJECTS WHICH FALL UNDER THE PEOPLE AND SKILLS INVESTMENT PRIORITY?

Yes

No

Describe the projects, including how they fall under the People and Skills investment priority and the location of the proposed project.

Not applicable

Do you consider these projects may provide a subsidy to potential recipients of the funding under the proposed planned activity?

All bids must also consider how they will deliver in line with subsidy control as [set out in the guidance](#).

Yes

No

Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the proposed projects constitute a subsidy and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted.

Not applicable

Approach to delivery and governance

In this section, we will ask you about:

- Structures you have in place to support delivery
- Support you have from stakeholders and the local community
- How you've engaged with MPs as part of your investment plan
- Opportunities you have identified to work with other places

Places need to show how MPs that cover the lead local authority have been engaged on the investment plan and whether they support it. More detail on the role of MPs can be found here.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Have you engaged with any of the following as part of your investment plan? Select all that apply.

Public sector organisations

Private sector organisations

Civil society organisations

Describe how you have engaged with any of these organisations. Give examples where possible.

In terms of Public Sector organisations, engagement has taken place in a number of different ways.

Engagement with Kent County Council and Kent Districts and Boroughs has been through the Kent Economic Development Officers Group which meets on a fortnightly basis and shares information and project ideas. In addition, the West Kent local authorities have also met regularly through the West Kent Partnership officer group which has focused predominantly on the 'Supporting Local Business Investment' and 'People & Skills' priorities, although there have also been discussions around the 'Communities and Place' priorities in order to share data and experiences of delivery.

The Borough Council also engaged early on with Town and Parish Councils to find out what their key challenges and priority themes were. The feedback from this exercise has been useful in reinforcing the case for some of the proposed projects set out in this Investment Plan.

In addition, Public and Private Sector Organisations as well as Civil Society Organisations have played a key role in our Local Partnership group which were set up in May 2022 and have quickly got to grips with the key challenges and opportunities that the area faces, and the resultant development of the Local Investment Plan.

In working with the Local Partnership groups, the Borough Council first gave consideration to key challenges and opportunities, and produced a list of potential project ideas from officers and partner organisations. These were then assessed against the UK Shared Prosperity Fund priorities and outcomes, as well as local strategies and evidence. The projects were then considered by the Borough Council Management Team and Cabinet in order to work loosely towards an initial priority list of interventions. These lists were then discussed with the Local Partnership groups, with views on the merits or otherwise of particular proposals discussed as well as other potential project ideas, or key themes that should be prioritised. One example was the feedback received about the need to provide some focus on people furthest from the work place, with the Department for Work and Pensions providing useful statistics to demonstrate this point.

Outside of meetings, there was also a considerable amount of discussion via email and telephone in order to obtain all the necessary information in pulling together the Investment Plan. For example, whilst Kent Community Foundation were unable to make the initial meeting, there was a follow up meeting where they shared a recent piece of research that has helped to reinforce the case put forward for the 'Communities and Place' section of the Investment Plan.

Once the Local Partnership groups had helped in pulling together an Investment Plan, this was then reported to Cabinet on 05 July 2022 in advance of submission later in the month.

Summarise the governance structures you have in place, including how any advisory panels or associated partnership groups are made up

In order to ensure focussed discussion with a range of partnership organisations within a short window of opportunity, we established a couple of Local Partnership groups – one covering 'Communities and Place' and another covering 'Business, People and Skills'. Both these groups have been chaired by the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health, with the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration also sitting on the partnership groups and acting as the key link between them and TMBC Cabinet. The membership of these two groups comprised the following organisations:

'Community and Place' Group:

- Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council (Lead Authority)
- Tonbridge Town Team (Town Centres)
- Action with Communities in Rural Kent (Rural)
- Kent Community Foundation (Communities)
- Tonbridge & Malling Community Safety Partnership (Crime Reduction)
- Local Community Partnerships rep (TN10 Community Partnership/Snodland Partnership/East Malling Partnership)

'Business, People and Skills' Group:

- Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council (Lead Authority)
- Department for Work and Pensions (Skills and Work-Readiness)
- NIAB East Malling Research (Business/Local Economic Partnership)
- Clarion Futures (Housing, Communities and Skills)
- Federation of Small Businesses (Business)
- Mid Kent College (Skills)
- Royal British Legion Industries (Skills and Work-Readiness)
- Kent County Council (Local Authority)
- West Kent Partnership (Economy)

The next meeting in July will consolidate these groups into one Local Partnership that will meet on a quarterly basis. Updates on the Local Partnership and the delivery of the Investment Plan will be reported into the Borough Council's Finance, Regeneration and Property Scrutiny Committee on a regular basis.

Due to time constraints and availability, we have engaged with both our MPs on a separate basis (two separate meetings on 10 June 2022) and shared the work of the Local Partnership. Both Tracey Crouch MP and Tom Tugendhat MP are fully supportive of the proposed Investment Plan.

Confirm all MPs covering your lead local authority have been invited to join the local partnership group.

Yes	
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Are there MPs who are not supportive of your investment plan?

	No
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(If Yes) Who are the MPs that are not supportive and outline their reasons why.

Not applicable

PROJECT SELECTION**Are you intending to select projects in any way other than by competition for funding?**

Yes

(If Yes) Describe your approach to selecting projects, and why you intend to do it this way.

In the vast majority of cases, and where feasible, projects will either be delivered by competition for grants or procurement of works, however there are likely to be a small number of instances where this might not be the case, mostly because they involve existing contracts that were competitively acquired, for example:

- Green Bus Stops Pilot – we will be required to work through the existing bus shelter provider in order to deliver this particular initiative (currently a five-year agreement which started in 2019)
- Tonbridge Town Centre Review – it would make sense for reasons of consistency of approach to use the existing consultants that have undertaken a high-level Phase 1 review of the town centre to undertake future studies where possible.

DO YOU INTEND TO WORK WITH OTHER PLACES ON ANY OF THE INTERVENTIONS WHICH FALL UNDER THE COMMUNITIES AND PLACE INVESTMENT PRIORITY?**Which interventions do you intend to collaborate on? Select all that apply.**

Intervention	Tick if applicable
<i>A full list of nation-specific interventions is available in the relevant annex to the Prospectus.</i>	
E1 – Funding for improvements to town centres and high streets, including better accessibility for disabled people, including capital spend and running costs.	✓
E9 – Funding for impactful volunteering and/or social action projects to develop social and human capital in local places	✓

Describe any interventions not included in this list?

Not applicable

Who are the places you intend to collaborate with?

We intend to collaborate with Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks District Council for Communities and Place initiatives that specifically relate to town centre improvements and delivering our community development grant schemes, this collaboration will likely be related to information sharing and best practice rather than joint commissioning or delivery.

We would also be open to working with other areas across the country that are delivering similar initiatives in order to share ideas and information, and to ensure best practice.

DO YOU INTEND TO WORK WITH OTHER PLACES ON ANY OF THE INTERVENTIONS WHICH FALL UNDER THE SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS INVESTMENT PRIORITY?**Which interventions do you intend to collaborate on? Select all that apply.**

Intervention	Tick if applicable
<i>A full list of nation-specific interventions is available in the relevant annex to the Prospectus.</i>	
E24 – Funding for new and improvements to existing training hubs, business support offers, incubators and accelerators for local enterprise which can support entrepreneurs and start-ups through the early stages of development and growth by offering a combination of services	✓

E29 – Supporting decarbonisation and improving the natural environment whilst growing the local economy	✓
Describe any interventions not included in this list?	
Not applicable	
Who are the places you intend to collaborate with?	
We intend to collaborate with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Sevenoaks District Council (through the West Kent Partnership) and with Kent County Council on these initiatives. We have a strong track record of delivery of local business support activities over the past 15 years, including support for start-up and scale-up businesses. We also have a good working relationship with Kent County Council in delivering green business grants.	

DO YOU INTEND TO WORK WITH OTHER PLACES ON ANY OF THE INTERVENTIONS WHICH FALL UNDER THE PEOPLE AND SKILLS INVESTMENT PRIORITY?

Which interventions do you intend to collaborate on? Select all that apply.

Intervention	Tick if applicable
<i>A full list of nation-specific interventions is available in the relevant annex to the Prospectus.</i>	
E33 – Employment support for economically inactive people	✓
E35 – Activities such as enrichment and volunteering to improve opportunities and promote well-being.	✓
E39 – Green skills courses targeted around ensuring we have the skilled workforce to achieve the government's net zero and wider environmental ambitions.	✓

Describe any interventions not included in this list?

Not applicable

Who are the places you intend to collaborate with?

As per the Local Business Investment priority, we intend to collaborate with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Sevenoaks District Council (through the West Kent Partnership) and with Kent County Council on the people and skills investment priority. Again, we have a strong record of delivery through the partnership and its skills sub-group, which has helped to deliver a range of skills-based initiatives such as the West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network, West Kent KickStart and a programme of West Kent Jobs and Training Fairs over recent years.

PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

How have you considered your public sector equality duty in the design of your investment plan?

Upon receiving project proposal outlines, an analysis was undertaken to assess their appropriateness for inclusion within the Investment Plan. Part of this overall assessment involved a section which considered our Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 Equality Act 2010), specifically covering the following three aspects of the duty:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Consideration was given to whether the project proposal outlines had a positive, neutral or negative impact on our equality duty. All of the projects ultimately chosen for inclusion within the Investment Plan were considered to have a positive or neutral impact on the three aspects of the duty.

How will you consider your public sector equality duty when implementing your investment plan, including in the selection of projects?

Just as the Public Sector Equality Duty has been considered in pulling together the Investment Plan and the outline programme of initiatives, the same approach will be embedded into decision-making when it comes to the selection of projects, be it through the delivery of various grant schemes or the procurement of goods and services. For example, in running the Community Development Grant Scheme or the Green Business Grant Scheme, questions will be built into the application forms to ensure that the applicants have policies that eliminate discrimination and advance equality.

RISKS

Have you identified any key risks that could affect delivery, for example lack of staff or expertise?

Yes

(If Yes) Describe these risks or issues, including the contingency measures you have in place to mitigate them.

Risk/Issue - Loss of staff and difficulty recruiting, creating lack of required skills to deliver the programme. **Mitigation** – Regular review of staff resources and skills via service reviews.

Risk/Issue – Further outbreaks of Covid-19 (or similar) that require a change of focus of resources or increased disruption to staffing. **Mitigation** – the Borough Council has built up its business resilience measures in recent years and is now in a strong position to maintain business continuity through any future outbreaks.

Risk/Issue – Inflation increases and gives rise to higher costs than currently envisaged. **Mitigation** – realistic costs have been sourced and in the event of such a change the Borough Council would look to work closely with DLUHC to tweak the programme accordingly.

Have you identified any key fraud risks that could affect UKSPF delivery?

Yes

(If Yes) Describe these risks or issues, including the contingency measures you have in place to mitigate them.

Risk/Issue – an applicant to one of the proposed grant schemes provides false information in order to fraudulently claim public funds. **Mitigation** – necessary checks will be undertaken in assessing applications to ensure that they are genuine and provide correct information. In addition, funding will only be given to successful applicants once they have provided evidence of project delivery, or in the case of the business start-up support grant, once the business assessment/training/mentoring has been undertaken.

Capacity and capability

In this section, we will ask you about:

- The capacity and capability of your team to manage funding
- The resources you have in place for work related to UKSPF

Your answers here will help us know how to support you with delivery. They will not affect the amount of funding you will get.

Answer as honestly as possible.

TEAM RESOURCE

How many people (FTE) will be put in place to work with UKSPF funding?

Overall programme management – it is calculated that approximately 0.5 FTE will be in place to programme manage the UKSPF programme spread across three members of staff.

In addition, there will be a number of staff involved in the delivery and management of specific projects (as listed below). This approximately equates to an additional 2.5 FTE.

Describe what role these people will have, including any seniority and experience.

Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health – Chairperson of the Local Partnership and Programme Sponsor, with some involvement in delivery. Over 15 years of Local Government experience, now responsible for a wide directorate at TMBC. Strong programme and project management experience across a number of London authorities, including delivery of the Catford Town Centre Regeneration Programme and the Church Street Regeneration Programme (part of the Edgeware Road Housing Zone).

Economic Regeneration Manager – Programme Management and some project delivery particularly in relation to supporting the local economy. Over 20 years of Local Government experience, delivering and supporting a wide regeneration and economic development programmes across Kent, including Single Regeneration Budget programmes, EU funded projects and Local Growth Fund initiatives. Will also be the point of contact within the Council for the delivery of West Kent wide initiatives.

Economic Development Officer (currently vacant) – administrative and project delivery support. This officer will likely have limited experience of programme management. The position is currently being advertised with a view to having someone in place before October 2022. It is a fixed term (18 month) post.

In terms of delivery and management of specific UKSPF projects, the following officers will also play a key role:

Safer and Stronger Communities Manager – key to the implementation of community safety initiatives, such as youth provision and the mobile CCTV initiative. Has 20 years local government experience and partnership working with a wide range of organisations.

Head of Administrative and Property Services – will be instrumental in the delivery of Tonbridge Town Centre Review and the Carbon Descent Plan work. Has extensive experience of estate management and project delivery.

Policy, Scrutiny and Communities Manager – will oversee the delivery of the Community Development Grant Scheme and be closely involved in carbon reduction initiatives. Has over 20 years of local government experience, overseeing community partnerships and delivering community-based initiatives.

Leisure Services Manager (Development) – will oversee the Digital Information Boards initiative. Has considerable experience in delivering leisure events and overseeing capital projects in the borough over the past 15 years.

Engineering Manager – will oversee public realm projects that support environmental gain, such as safer sustainable car parks and green bus stops. The Engineering Manager has extensive experience of delivering a wide range of technical projects, including the installation of electric charging points.

Climate Change Officer – will work with the Policy, Scrutiny and Communities Manager to oversee the delivery of the carbon literacy training. The Climate Change Officer has overseen local government climate change strategies and activity for three years.

West Kent Partnership Manager & Skills Lead (External) – the current partnership manager will retire in July 2022 after 18 years in position leaving a strong legacy of partnership working across the three West Kent authorities. The position is currently out to advert.

- Strong capability: Has extensive experience and/or a proven track record of delivery in this area.
- Strong capacity: High degree of confidence that there is enough staffing/resource to manage funding in this area.
- Some capability: Has previous experience of delivery in this area.
- Some capacity: Confident that there is enough staffing/resource to manage funding in this area.
- Limited capability: Does not have previous experience and/or no track record of delivery in this area.
- Limited capacity: Limited confidence that there is enough staffing/resource to manage funding in this area. Additional resource may be needed to support delivery.

CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY

How would you describe your team’s current experience of delivering funding and managing growth funds?

Very experienced		
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How would you describe your team’s current capability to manage funding for procurement?

	Some capability	
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How would you describe your team’s current capacity to manage funding for procurement?

	Some capacity	
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How would you describe your team’s current capability to manage funding for subsidies?

Strong capability		
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How would you describe your team’s current capacity to manage funding for subsidies?

	Some capacity	
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COMMUNITIES AND PLACE CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY

Does your local authority have any previous experience of delivering the Communities and Place interventions you have select?

Yes		
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How would you describe your team’s current capability to manage funding for Communities and Place interventions?

Strong capability		
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Describe the key capability challenges (if you have any) for delivering Communities and Place interventions. This may include challenges within your local authority and/or your local/regional delivery system.

A recent Peer Challenge Review (February 2022) flagged up that the Borough Council “...has an experienced workforce who are committed and valued. They pride themselves in their roles and feel deeply connected to the community that they serve” and that recent digital capability innovations had enabled flexible working and increased resilience. However, within the local authority, the main

challenge around capability is that as a small local authority we do not have a huge amount of strength in depth when it comes to skills-set and the ability to deliver. As such, the loss of any experienced staff involved in this programme would likely have a noticeable impact on our capability.

Outside of the authority, there could be future similar challenges in the sense that some of our key partner organisations may struggle to recruit people with the necessary skills should existing staff move on, and as such struggle to deliver as currently expected.

Describe what further support would help address these challenges.

It is unrealistic to expect that these sorts of challenges will not arise over the course of the next three years, however it would be useful to ensure that there is strong dialogue between the local authority and a DLUHC point of contact to ensure that any issues are flagged up early and worked through.

In addition, where capability challenges were to arise, it would be incredibly useful to have access to a digital library of best practice and/or other local authority contacts that have delivered best practice in working with communities or place making.

How would you describe your team’s current capacity to manage funding for Communities and Place interventions?

	Some capacity	
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Describe the key capacity challenges (if you have any) for delivering Communities and Place interventions. This may include challenges within your local authority and/or your local/regional delivery system.

The recent Peer Challenge Review also flagged up that our current governance arrangements were unwieldy and limiting the capacity to focus on the day job. However, this is currently being addressed as part of the Peer Review Action Plan and a new executive system is in the process of being implemented that will reduce the number of reports and meetings, and free up capacity to deliver more quickly. Despite this, the borough council is a small authority with 255 staff (221 FTE) and therefore does not have huge resources at its disposal when it comes to additional delivery. As such, if there was to be another pandemic episode (or similar) over the course of the next three years then that would likely have a considerable impact on our capacity to deliver.

Describe what further support would help address these challenges.

Building in a degree of flexibility within the programme (should a pressing need arise) would be helpful. This was possible with Local Growth Fund initiatives that were impacted by the covid-19 pandemic, and helped to ultimately ensure successful delivery.

In addition (and as per above) it would also help if there were a dedicated point of contact at DLUHC to discuss any issues as soon as they arise.

SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY

Does your local authority have any previous experience of delivering the Supporting Local Business interventions you have selected?

Yes	
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How would you describe your team’s current capacity to manage funding for Supporting Local Business interventions?

	Some capability	
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Describe the key capability challenges (if you have any) for delivering Supporting Local Business interventions. This may include challenges within your local authority and/or your local/regional delivery system.

Given that these initiatives will be delivered through the West Kent Partnership, it is not envisaged that there will be capability challenges as the projects will be able to tap into the collective expertise of the three authorities, thus creating a degree of resilience.

Describe what further support would help address these challenges.		
Not applicable		
How would you describe your team's current capacity to manage funding for Supporting Local Business interventions?		
Some capacity		
Describe the key capacity challenges (if you have any) for delivering Supporting Local Business interventions. This may include challenges within your local authority and/or your local/regional delivery system.		
As these initiatives will be delivered in partnership through the West Kent Partnership, it is worth flagging up that the current West Kent Partnership Manager is retiring in July 2022 and a replacement is yet to be recruited. As such, if the recruitment process is unsuccessful then there may be short-term capacity issues. However, given that there will only be a small amount of delivery by the West Kent Partnership in Year 1, this is unlikely to be too disruptive and any capacity issues can be covered by the Economic Development Officers at Sevenoaks District, Tunbridge Wells Borough and Tonbridge & Malling Borough Councils.		
Describe what further support would help address these challenges.		
As mentioned previously, a constructive dialogue with a key point of contact at DLUHC would be most helpful in order to ensure issues are flagged and addressed as early as possible.		

PEOPLE AND SKILLS CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY		
Does your local authority have any previous experience of delivering the People and Skills interventions you have select?		
No		
How would you describe your team's current capability to manage funding for People and Skills interventions?		
Some capability		
Describe the key capability challenges (if you have any) for delivering People and Skills interventions. This may include challenges within your local authority and/or your local/regional delivery system.		
The Borough Council (along with the West Kent Partnership) has a very close and productive working relationship with the Department for Work and Pensions and training providers, and over the years has delivered a range of work and skills initiatives such as local jobs fairs, community information days and careers events in schools. However, the Borough Council does not have a skills specialist and is therefore reliant on its partners to ensure that the people and skills interventions in this plan are delivered effectively. Thankfully, the Borough Council has this effective working partnership to draw on, however without this, there would be capability challenges in delivering projects to a high quality.		
Describe what further support would help address these challenges.		
As our people and skills initiatives are probably the least defined at the moment (due to them taking place exclusively in 2024/25), it would be useful to have access to example of best practice and innovative (and effective) delivery.		
On this particular topic, it would also be helpful if there were some virtual people and skills workshop sessions that could help refine and pull together project plans.		

How would you describe your team's current capacity to manage funding for People and Skills interventions?

Some capacity

Describe the key capacity challenges (if you have any) for delivering People and Skills interventions. This may include challenges within your local authority and/or your local/regional delivery system.

The overall co-ordination of these initiatives will most likely fall to the Economic Regeneration Team at Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council (in partnership with the West Kent Partnership). However, the Economic Regeneration Team currently comprises 2 FTE, and one of those posts is fixed term for 18 months, so it is possible that by 2024/25, there may only be one member of staff in that team. As such, it is possible that there could be capacity challenges during 2024/25.

Describe what further support would help address these challenges.

Given that the potential capacity issues for 2024/25 are not a pressing issue, there should be sufficient time to address this challenge.

SUPPORT TO DELIVERY UKSPF

All lead authorities can use up to 4% of their UKSPF allocation to support the delivery of their chosen interventions but by exception, lead authorities will be able to use more than 4%. Are you planning to use more than 4%?

No

(If Yes) Explain why you wish to use more than 4%.

Not applicable

Approvals

Before submitting your investment plan, you should have approval from your:

- Chief Executive Officer
- Section 151 Officer
- Leader of your lead authority

Do you have approval from your Chief Executive Officer for this investment plan?

- Yes

Do you have approval from your Section 151 Officer for this investment plan?

- Yes

Do you have approval from the leader of your lead authority for this investment plan?

- Yes

If you do not have approval from any of these people, please explain why this is:

Not applicable

Additional documents

You will have received an email giving you access to a folder where you will need to upload supporting evidence to your investment plan. All applicants must complete and upload the following spreadsheet to the folder prior to submitting their investment plan:

- UKSPF Expenditure Profile spreadsheet
- UKSPF Indicative Deliverables spreadsheet

Your investment plan submission will be considered incomplete without the required documents.

Have you completed and uploaded the two spreadsheets to the SharePoint folder as requested?

- Yes