

## UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Volunteering and Enrichment Project

### Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (TMBC) and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC)

September 2023

#### Background:

In December 2022, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (TMBC) and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) had their **UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)\*** Investment Plans approved by Government. In developing these plans, the two authorities worked together to plan joint initiatives that would help meet the priority needs of both boroughs.

As well as delivering joint initiatives under the 'Communities and Place' and 'Local Business' priorities of the UKSPF programme, along with Sevenoaks District Council, under the auspices of the West Kent Partnership (Invest West Kent), TMBC and TWBC have also planned to deliver a joint initiative through the 'People and Skills' priority during the 2024/25 financial year.

As such, we are looking to jointly commission a volunteering and enrichment project using funding allocated through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

\*The UK Shared Prosperity Fund is a central pillar of the UK government's Levelling Up agenda and provides £2.6 billion of funding for local investments in the period to March 2025. The Fund aims to improve pride in place and increase life chances across the UK; investing in communities and place, supporting local business, and supporting people and skills. For more information, please visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus> .

#### An Overview of Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells Boroughs:

- Economies perform very strongly when compared to other sub-areas of Kent & Medway;
- Both act as an employment hub for residents of Kent & Medway and neighbouring areas;
- Experience lower workplace-based earnings (in comparison to resident-based earnings) and have very challenging housing affordability;
- Do not perform as well as other locations on the periphery of the Greater London Area.



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Comparative analysis, within the context of Kent, shows Tonbridge and Malling borough and Tunbridge Wells borough to be economically successful. More broadly, West Kent accounts for 20% of the Kent & Medway population, 23% of jobs, 26% of enterprises and 28% of GVA (economic output). The area has experienced strong performance in terms of both jobs and GVA growth in recent years. Labour productivity (GVA per job filled) is very high in comparison to the other areas of Kent. However, workplace-based earnings are not particularly high, despite other strongly performing indicators.

The West Kent economy has over representation in high value service sectors such as Information & Communication, Financial & Insurance, Real Estate, and Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities.

The labour market also performs well. Resident-based economic activity and employment rates are very high in comparison to other areas of Kent. There is a high level of self-employment, which boosts overall employment and entrepreneurialism. A high proportion of working residents in our boroughs work in higher order occupations. As a result, it is unsurprising that resident-based earnings are very high relative to comparator areas.

However, there are a number of challenges within the local economy. Whilst unemployment is quite low, this does mask quite large discrepancies across the two boroughs, with those areas that fall within the 20% most deprived communities typically also suffering from higher rates of worklessness as well as health challenges.

In addition, the discrepancy between resident and workplace-based earnings is significant. This results from residents out-commuting for higher paid work, highlighting the influence of London. 21% of West Kent's working population commute to London. Stakeholder consultations have indicated that connections to London are a defining feature of West Kent, not only in terms of travel to work and migration, but also in terms of business links. The area has a particular concentration of financial services and creative businesses, with close links back to London.

High resident-based earnings, coupled with being a very desirable place to live, including attractive towns set within a largely rural area, featuring large areas designated as AONB and Green Belt, have contributed to very high house prices and very poor housing affordability. This has resulted in high levels of in-commuting to fill jobs, with affordability indicators based on workplace earnings being particularly problematic. Overall, 38% of resident workers out-commute and 34% of workplace-based workers in-commute.



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The predominance of Green Belt, AONB and other designations creates a highly desirable place to live, but also places constraints on development for both residential, commercial and employment purposes. For example, commercial market data from Locate in Kent highlights the very low level of planning consents for new offices in West Kent relative to other areas.

Whilst West Kent performs very strongly in a Kent context, analysis suggests it is ranked 'mid-table' when considered in the context of the ring of local authority areas equidistant from central London. Whether considering labour productivity, jobs growth, workplace earnings or housing affordability the West Kent districts do not feature near the top of the rankings. Across a suite of indicators, the top five locations were identified as Runnymede, Wokingham, Bracknell Forest, Windsor & Maidenhead and East Hertfordshire. These areas have typically attracted blue chip companies. There are some differences in the existing economic asset bases of some of these places, such as the presence of universities or close proximity to other large towns. However, the data suggests there is the potential for some greater economic success for the West Kent towns, particularly given their strong skills and occupational base within the resident workforce.

### **Key Requirements of the Brief:**

We are looking to deliver 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 and offers support that could ultimately lead to greater independence. As this initiative is a partnership between Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, it is important that the focus of your proposed activity is within these borough areas:

Our priorities are:

- Supporting young people (16 years +) with special educational needs.
- Supporting people with mental health problems that are out of work.
- Supporting residents within less prosperous communities (as defined by the IMD2019) – particularly Trench (Tonbridge), Aylesford, East Malling and Snodland in Tonbridge and Malling Borough and Sherwood, High Brooms, Showfields and Broadwater in Tunbridge Wells Borough.
- Ensuring that residents who have English as a second language are able to easily access support.



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It is not essential that all of the above priorities are addressed in a proposal. However, the main focus of any proposal should be, and the activity should be equally split between the two boroughs.

We are looking for proposals that address current gaps in local provision or add value to existing provision through an innovative approach.

In addition, each Council has agreed outputs and outcomes with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in line with our intention to fund the provision outlined above. These outputs and outcomes are as follows:

#### **Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council**

- Output: Number of volunteering opportunities supported **and** Number of socially excluded people accessing support.
- Outcome: Number of people experiencing reduced structural barriers into employment and into skills provision.

#### **Tunbridge Wells Borough Council**

- Output: Number of volunteering opportunities supported
- Outcome: Number of people experiencing reduced structural barriers into employment and into skills provision

We also require you to provide a time-scaled outline of your project, including milestones with completion dates.

#### **Budget:**

There is a total budget of £20,000 for this project.

Both Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council have allocated £10,000 from their UK Shared Prosperity Fund Programmes, and as such it is expected that any outcomes and outputs from the project are equally spread across the two boroughs.

This project will need to commence by April 2024 and be completed and paid by 31 March 2025. The partners will consider the opportunity to start all or a part of the project in the 2023/24 financial year. Tenderers are requested to indicate if this is potentially beneficial to deliverability and outcomes.



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**Timescale:**

This project will need to commence by April 2024 and be completed and paid by 31 March 2025. Please provide dated milestones as part of your tender submission, so that project progression is clear.

To put forward proposals please provide a written submission outlining your proposal along with a portfolio of your previous work by 31 October 2023.



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