

To:	Robin Betts, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Regeneration and Property
From:	Jeremy Whittaker, Strategic Economic Regeneration Manager
Director:	Adrian Stanfield, Interim Chief Executive

BRIEFING NOTE: EXECUTIVE - NON-KEY DECISION

UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND (UKSPF) LIFE SKILLS PROJECT – SUPPORTING ECONOMICALLY INACTIVE PEOPLE

Summary of Issue:

Having already been approved by Cabinet as an intrinsic part of the Tonbridge and Malling UKSPF Investment Plan in 2022, this report sets out further details of a ‘Life Skills Project’ that forms part of the Year 3, and seeks approval of the details set out in the brief. This project aims to support economically inactive residents to move closer to mainstream provision and employment by providing additional and/or specialist life and basic skills support where there are local provision gaps.

Recommendation:

That the report **BE NOTED**.

That the brief provided in Appendix 1 and the next steps set out in this covering report **BE AGREED**

That any minor amendments to the brief required for the purposes of clarity and presentation **BE DELEGATED** to the Strategic Economic Regeneration Manager.

1 Background

1.1 In July 2022, Cabinet approved our Tonbridge and Malling UKSPF Investment Plan, setting out a three-year programme of activity aimed at supporting three priority areas – ‘Community and Place’, ‘Supporting Local Business’ and ‘People and Skills’. With Year 1 (2022/23) of the programme now completed, and good progress being made on current projects (Year 2 – 2023/24), preparations are now being made for Year 3 projects to make sure that they are up and running in April 2024. One of the projects allocated for Year 3 aims to support a ‘Life Skills Project’ that meets Intervention E33 of the UKSPF Programme:

“E33: Employment support for economically inactive people: Intensive and wrap-around one-to-one support to move people closer towards mainstream provision and employment, supplemented by additional and/or specialist life

and basic skills (digital, English, maths* and ESOL) support where there are local provision gaps”

- 1.2 A budget of £50,000 has been allocated in the Tonbridge and Malling UKSPF Investment Plan to this initiative for 2024/25.

2. Approach

- 2.1 The borough council is working jointly with Sevenoaks District Council (SDC), who are also putting in £50,000 towards this project. The benefits of working with SDC are that it increases the overall pot of funding for the project to £100,000, thus making it more attractive to organisations submitting an application to the project, and also brings efficiencies, which are to be welcomed especially given existing resources. Applicants will be able to apply for up to £25,000, as such we would expect around four project proposals to be supported, possibly five if proposals come in at a lower amount.
- 2.2 In recent months, a brief has been produced (Appendix 1) that has helped to shape the project further. The brief has been left a little open ended as we are looking to applicants to highlight gaps in provision and/or areas where greater resources are required. However, we have loosely identified some priority areas for the project both in terms of activities and recipients of support.
- 2.3 Subject to approval, it is proposed that the brief be sent out to potential service providers in January 2024 and also advertised more widely in order to build awareness of the opportunities this project brings, with a view to working with the preferred supplier in the lead up to 2024/25 and ensuring a relatively early start for the projects in that financial year.

3 Legal Advice

- 3.1 The matters set out in this briefing note are considered routine or uncontroversial and a legal opinion has not been sought.

4 Financial and Value for Money implications

- 4.1 In total, £50,000 of UKSPF funding is allocated towards this project in the Tonbridge and Malling UKSPF Investment Plan. Sevenoaks District Council has also allocated £50,000 from their UKSPF Investment Plan towards this initiative, making a total budget of £100,000.
- 4.2 There are no financial and value for money implications for the council.

5 Risk Assessment

- 5.1 There is no risk associated with the recommendations set out in this report.

6 Public Sector Equality Duty

- 6.1 In commissioning this project, the Accountable Body will ensure that there is due regard to the need to achieve the objectives set out under s149 of the Equality Act 2021.

7 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny

- 7.1 We do not consider that this matter needs to be considered by O&S/SSC before a decision is made.
- 7.2 It is not a key decision as it simply provides further information on a project that was previously approved by Cabinet in July 2022 as part of the overall UKSPF Investment Plan, and has no impact on the overall budget. The decision does not cut across 2 or more portfolios nor does it propose a new or amended strategy. We are therefore of the view that this decision can be taken by the Cabinet Member.

8 Communications

- 8.1 Once the call for proposals is open, our social media channels will be used to promote the opportunity for applications.
- 8.2 Once projects are up running there will be a number of opportunities to communicate the benefits of the project through our website and social media activity, as well as internally through staffnet.

9 Conclusion

- 9.1 This project aims to provide additional resources into supporting our residents that are furthest from the workplace, and would complement some of the existing work of the Economic Regeneration Team in working on its internship and apprenticeship scheme with Oaks Specialist College, volunteering projects with West Kent Mind, work with Digital Kent on addressing Digital Exclusion and the delivery of Jobs Fairs with the local Job Centres.

10 Annexes

- 10.1 Appendix 1 – E33 Call for Projects.