

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) GREEN RETROFIT PROJECT

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 ‘Green Retrofit Project’ that forms part of the Year 3, and seeks approval of the details set out in the brief. In partnership with Sevenoaks District Council and Mid Kent College, this project aims to train people with the skills needed to kick start the green retrofit sector in the borough.

Recommendation:

That the project outline and the next steps set out in this report **BE AGREED**

That any minor amendments to the project required for the purposes of effective delivery **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 finalised for Year 3 projects to make sure that they are up and running in 2024/25. The final project to be progressed for Year 3 aims to support a ‘Green Retrofit Project’ that meets Intervention E39 of the UKSPF Programme:

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

1.2 This project forms part of a wider collective of UKSPF projects that are aimed at helping the Council on its journey towards Net Zero. Other projects in the programme that are aimed towards carbon reduction include:

- Carbon Descent Plans (Years 1 and 3) – supporting the carbon reduction of our leisure centres.
- Green Business Grant Scheme (Years 2 and 3) – encouraging local businesses and organisations to reduce their carbon footprint through capital grants.
- Carbon Literacy Grants – small grants for community groups and small businesses (Year 3)
- Safer Sustainable Car Parks (Years 2 and 3) – moving to energy efficient lighting in our car parks.

1.3 A budget of £60,000 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 looking to work in partnership with Mid Kent College as well as Sevenoaks District Council (SDC), who are also putting in £60,000 towards this project. The benefits of working with SDC are that it increases the overall pot of funding for the project and achieves economies of scale. Folkestone and Hythe District Council are also interested in supporting this initiative.

2.2 Through the Local Skills Improvement Plan, Mid Kent College are the specialist college in Kent for green technologies and retrofit and have recently been awarded Government funding to build a new centre at their Maidstone campus to provide hands-on experience in retrofitting energy efficiency measures, such as insulation, installing PV panels and energy-efficient boilers. This builds upon the recently completed zero-carbon construction 'skills factory' which is made up of recycled materials and provides classroom-based opportunities for learning

2.3 Given this growing expertise, the country's carbon reduction aspirations and the need for the economy to transition away from carbon and increase energy security, the need is clear for a project to help train up as many local people as possible to stimulate a local retrofit market and ultimately meet the growing demand.

2.4 The College will provide a few pilot courses during March-May 2024 which will be fully funded through the Local Skills Improvement Fund and the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) and will be available to individuals and residents across Kent. These will act as a useful indicator to ascertain likely take up and demand for future courses amongst a Sevenoaks and Tonbridge and Malling cohort. It is then envisaged that subject to the necessary approvals, that the contribution of the Councils' UKSPF funding towards course delivery will start in May 2024.

2.5 These pilot courses will cover:

- Level 2 Understanding Domestic Retrofit

- Level 3 Domestic Retrofit Advisor
- Level 4 Domestic Retrofit Assessor
- Level 5 Retrofit Co-ordinator
- Level 3 Award in Energy Efficiency
- Level 3 Award in Low Temperature Heating and Hot water Systems in Dwellings
- ILM Certificate in Leadership and Management for Sustainability and Business Improvement
- ILM Certificate in Leadership and Management for Sustainability, Innovation and Culture Change.
- Electrical Renewable Energy Systems – Solar PV
- Installation and Maintenance of Heat Pump Systems (non-refrigerant circuits) Mandatory core unit
- Installation and Maintenance of Air Source Heat Pump Systems (non-refrigerant circuits)
- Installation and Maintenance of Ground Source Heat Pump Systems (non-refrigerant circuits)
- Electrical Renewable Energy Systems- Electrical Energy Storage Systems

2.6 Those courses that prove to have the highest levels of demand/interest amongst Sevenoaks and Tonbridge and Malling participants will then be made available to local residents and businesses during the period May 2024 – March 2025. The precise numbers of people trained through this programme are still to be determined, but it is hoped that between 50-75 people either living or working in the borough will benefit from this initiative.

3 Legal Advice

3.1 A waiver to work on this project with Mid Kent College has been approved by both the council and Sevenoaks District Council on the basis that Mid Kent College has the county licence to deliver Retrofit Training Academy accredited courses. No other providers exist in the county and given the partnership approach we would like to align with our Kent partners and deliver the training in the county.

4 Financial and Value for Money implications

4.1 In total, £60,000 of UKSPF funding is allocated towards this project in the Tonbridge and Malling UKSPF Investment Plan. Sevenoaks District Council has also allocated £60,000 from their UKSPF Investment Plan towards this initiative.

4.2 This project is completely externally funded and so there are no direct financial and value for money implications for the council.

5 Risk Assessment

5.1 The main risk associated with this project is that there proves to be no or little demand for the courses being made available. This issue has been mitigated

to a certain extent through the piloting of courses which have already been funded by other sources during March-May 2024.

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 project is 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 ensuring our residents and businesses are well-positioned to take advantage of the growing green retrofit sector, and would complement some of the existing work of the Council in striving to meet the challenges of reducing the carbon dependency of the local economy.

10 Annexes

- 10.1 None