

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) YEAR 2 OVERVIEW AND YEAR 3 UPDATE.

Summary of Issue:

This report provides information about the delivery of Year 2 of the Tonbridge and Malling UKSPF Investment Plan, and gives an early update on Year 3 of the UKSPF Investment Plan. Whilst it is hoped that they will not be required, contingency plans for the use of any potential underspend during Year 3 are also set out.

Information about progress on the West Kent Rural Grant Scheme (funded through the Rural England Prosperity Fund) has also been provided in this report.

Recommendation:

That the report **BE NOTED**.

That the contingency arrangements set out in this covering report **BE AGREED**

That any further minor amendments to the Investment Plan required for the purposes of ensuring delivery of the UKSPF Programme **BE DELEGATED** to the Strategic Economic Regeneration Manager.

1 Background

1.1 In April 2022, the council was provisionally allocated £1m for the period up to March 2025 to go towards projects that supported the government's Levelling Up agenda. In order to access the first year of funding for this programme, the council was required to pull together an Investment Plan setting out how the funding would be spent. Following both internal discussion and engagement with external partner organisations and MPs, an Investment Plan was produced which addressed the three programme priorities of 'Communities and Place'; 'Local Business Investment' and 'People and Skills'.

1.2 With Cabinet having approved the Tonbridge and Malling UKSPF Investment Plan in July 2022 and DLUHC approving the plan in December 2022, 76% of the Year 1 (2022/23) budget was spent, with the remainder carried over into Year 2 (2023/24).

1.3 The Council had more time to prepare for Year 2 of the programme, and was able to spend 100% of the budget (including the carry forward from Year 1), delivering a range of projects that have delivered a wide range of outputs and outcomes.

2. Year 2 Delivery (2023/24)

2.1 The Investment Plan set out a wide range of projects for Year 2, which are set out in Table 1 below. The funding allocation per project includes the initial sum allocated in the Investment Plan, plus the carry forward from Year 1:

Table 1: Initial Year 2 Programme

Project	Description	UKSPF Funding Allocation	
		Capital	Revenue
Youth Provision	Diversions activities to reduce ASB amongst young people		£20,003
Mobile CCTV	Installation of mobile cameras to tackle ASB		£10,000
Tonbridge Town Centre Review	Funding contribution towards the plans for the regeneration of the area east of the High Street.		£20,000
Tonbridge Wayfinding	Artistic signage to improve the legibility of Tonbridge town, with particular emphasis on routes between the station and the town centre.	£14,134	
Digital Information Boards	Digital boards across the borough to improve messaging regarding community events and activities.	£40,000	
Shopfront and Vacant Unit Improvement Scheme	Grant scheme to help independent retailers, food and drink businesses, and landlords of vacant units improve their frontages and also carry out energy efficiency measures.	£10,000	£1,500
Community Development Grant Scheme	Grants of up to £2,000 to support community activities and volunteering.		£33,962
Living Bus Shelter Roofs	Piloting of a bus shelter with a green roof in Quarry Hill, Tonbridge.	£30,000	

Green Business Grant Scheme	Grants of up to £5,000 to support local business to reduce their carbon footprint.	£10,000	£2,000
West Kent Business Support Programme	Support and advice service for small and micro-businesses, including networking events, seminars and mentoring.		£29,500
		£104,134	£116,965

2023/24 Total - £221,099

2.2 During the course of 2023/24, there were a handful of projects that stalled and as such adjustments were made to the programme accordingly in order to ensure that the council kept on target for the spend and retention of the allocation. DLUHC has a relatively flexible, light-touch approach to changes to individual investment plan programme, and as such the level of changes made to the programme fell way below their thresholds for seeking their permission (movement of 30% or more of the total programme allocation from one priority to another).

2.3 In total, there were three changes to the programme as set out in Table 2:

Table 2: Programme Adjustments

Project	Issue	Remedy
Mobile CCTV	Including carry forward from Year 1, the budget of £10,000 for the mobilisation of the cameras was not all required.	The budget was reduced to £4,000 and the remaining £6,000 was allocated to a Year 3 project – ‘Safer Sustainable Car Parks’ to fund project development and preparation.
Tonbridge Wayfinding	Limited progress due to lack of resources to support the delivery of the project and the protracted nature of dealings with Network Rail.	The budget was allocated to the Shopfront and Vacant Unit Improvement Grant Scheme. A budget in the Business Rates Retention Pilot (BRRP) reserve – which is not time-limited - has been ring-fenced for the wayfinding project
Digital Information Boards	Limited progress was made on this project by the Project Lead.	A project initially being funded through the BRRP Reserve (Digital Inclusion Project) was allocated this time-limited UKSPF funding. The equivalent BRRP funding of £40,000 has been earmarked for the Digital Information Boards project should it be required.

2.4 These changes to the programme meant that the end of year return to DLUHC demonstrated that the programme was being managed effectively and

responding in good time to project-level issues. Table 3 sets out the final picture for Year 2:

Table 3: End of Year Position

Project	Description	UKSPF Funding Allocation	
		Capital	Revenue
Youth Provision	Diversions activities to reduce ASB amongst young people		£20,100
Mobile CCTV	Installation of mobile cameras to tackle ASB		£4,476
Tonbridge Town Centre Review	Funding contribution towards the plans for the regeneration of the area east of the High Street.		£20,000
Tonbridge Wayfinding	Artistic signage to improve the legibility of Tonbridge town, with particular emphasis on routes between the station and the town centre.	£0	
Safer Sustainable Car Parks	New LED lighting in 19 car parks across the borough to improve perceptions of safety and reduce carbon footprint.		£6,005
Digital Information Boards	Digital boards across the borough to improve messaging regarding community events and activities.	£0	
Shopfront and Vacant Unit Improvement Scheme	Grant scheme to help independent retailers, food and drink businesses, and landlords of vacant units improve their frontages and also carry out energy efficiency measures.	£22,922	£1,500
Community Development Grant Scheme	Grants of up to £2,000 to support community activities and volunteering.		£33,340
Living Bus Shelter Roofs	Piloting of a bus shelter with a green roof in Quarry Hill, Tonbridge.	£31,212	
Green Business Grant Scheme	Grants of up to £5,000 to support local business to reduce their carbon footprint.	£10,000	£145
West Kent Business Support Programme	Support and advice service for small and micro-businesses, including networking events, seminars and mentoring.		£29,500
Digital Inclusion Project	Programme of hardware and training for digitally excluded residents in the borough.	£40,000	
Management and Administration	Contribution towards programme management.		£1,899
		£104,134	£116,965

2023/24 Total - £221,099

- 2.5 In total, the programme attracted over £250,000 of public and private match-funding, the majority of which came from the various grant schemes.
- 2.6 Achievements during the course of 2023/24 include:
- Over 1,000 young people engaged (Youth Provision)
 - Over 150 businesses participating (WK Business Support Programme)
 - 55 organisations/businesses receiving grants (CDGS, GBGS and Shopfront and Vacant Unit)
 - 19 businesses receiving mentoring (WK Business Support Programme)
 - 16 socially excluded people accessing digital support (Digital Inclusion Project)
 - 6 neighbourhood improvements undertaken (Mobile CCTV)
 - 2 vacant units brought back into use (Shopfront and Vacant Unit)
 - 2 feasibility studies completed (Tonbridge TC Review)
- 2.7 In addition to internal Project Leads meetings, which have taken place on a bi-monthly basis, a Local Group comprising key partner organisations (which is a requirement of the UKSPF funding) has met on a 4/5-monthly basis. As well as TMBC, this group has membership from the Department of Work and Pensions, Kent County Council, Tonbridge Town Team, Kent Community Foundation, Clarion Futures, Mid Kent College, North Kent College, Royal British Legion Industries and the West Kent Partnership. The slide pack for the 06 June 2024 meeting is provided in Appendix 1.

3. Year 3 Development and Implementation

- 3.1 A number of Year 3 projects are continuation projects from Year 2 – Youth Provision (£22,500 revenue); Mobile CCTV (£5,000 revenue); Tonbridge Town Centre Review (£20,000 revenue); Tonbridge Wayfinding (£3,500 revenue); Safer Sustainable Car Parks (£100,000 capital); Community Development Grant Scheme (£131,307 revenue), Shopfront Improvement Grant Scheme (£55,000 capital); Green Business Grant Scheme (£50,000 capital and £4,000 revenue) and West Kent Business Support Programme (£25,000 revenue) – however, there are a number of new projects:
- Carbon Descent Plan Implementation - £75,000 capital
 - Digital Information Boards - £80,000 capital
 - Community Carbon Literacy Training - £12,500 revenue
 - West Kent Volunteering and Enrichment Project - £10,000 revenue
 - West Kent Life Skills - £50,000 revenue
 - Green Retrofit Skills - £60,000 revenue

2024/25 Total = £703,807

- 3.2 The deadline for the next return to DLUHC will be 01 November 2024, which will set out progress for the first half of 2024/25.
- 3.3 Whilst underspend is currently not anticipated for any of the projects at this early stage in the year, it should be flagged up that there are some projects that are

less advanced than others, and as such at greater risk of not spending to profile. These three projects are set out in Table 4:

Table 4: Project Mitigation

Project	Potential Issue	Potential Mitigation
Digital Information Boards	Project wasn't delivered at all in Year 2 and has been transferred over to a new project lead, who is getting up to speed. As such, there is a risk the project won't be fully delivered within this financial year.	<p>If there is any capital underspend, then this could be reallocated to one or some of the existing capital projects in the UKSPF Programme:</p> <p>Shopfront and Vacant Unit Improvement Grant Scheme – currently around £20,000 of Business Rates Retention Pilot Reserve being used as match, but could use UKSPF underspend instead.</p> <p>Carbon Descent Plans – the current UKSPF allocation is part of much larger capital spend, so could use up more UKSPF capital.</p> <p>Safer Sustainable Car Parks – currently 19 car parks being improved. This could be extended to other car parks.</p>
West Kent Life Skills	Potential underspend as currently a delay in awarding grants (Sevenoaks DC is the lead authority).	Any underspend, which is likely to only be a few thousand pounds will go towards 'Management and Administration'
Green Retrofit Skills	Potential underspend arising from take up of training opportunities being lower than originally forecast.	Any underspend will go towards 'Management and Administration'

4. West Kent Rural Grant Scheme Update

- 4.1 The West Kent Rural Grants is funded through the Rural England Prosperity Fund as an addendum to the UKSPF Investment Plan. A total funding allocation of £445,000 was awarded to T&M for a two-year period (25% in 2023/24 and 75% in 2024/25) in May 2023.
- 4.2 In July 2023, the scheme opened for applications, with rural communities and businesses eligible to apply for capital grants of up to £24,999. In 2023/24, the scheme was just open to applicants delivering projects in Tonbridge and Malling Borough and Sevenoaks District (with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council joining the scheme in 2024/25).
- 4.3 By September 2023, the funding for 2023/24 had been fully allocated with 12 projects awarded funding by the grants panel, which includes the Cabinet

Member for Climate Change, Regeneration and Property. In most instances, projects are paid in arrears upon receipt of evidence of completion, with stage payments being offered in exceptional circumstances.

4.4 In total, by the end of the financial year, 7 projects had completed, spending just under 70% of the budget. The remaining funding was carried over to 2024/25, with outstanding projects given until the end of June 2024 to complete their projects. To date, 9 projects have now completed and 3 are yet to complete.

4.5 Starting in January 2024, further rounds have been put in place to allocate the 2024/25 funding allocation. Four rounds have so far taken place with just under £240,000 of the 2024/25 funding having been awarded with further rounds scheduled during July 2024 to allocate the remaining funding, which currently amounts to around £100,000. As things stand, projects have until the end of March 2025 to complete.

5 Legal Advice

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

6 Financial and Value for Money implications

6.1 There are no financial and value for money implications for the council as the report relates to existing external funding.

7 Risk Assessment

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

8 Public Sector Equality Duty

8.1 In delivering this programme, 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.

9 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny

9.1 We do not consider that this matter needs to be considered by O&S/SSC before a decision is made.

9.2 It is not a key decision as it simply provides further information on a programme that was previously approved by Cabinet in July 2022, and has limited 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.

10 Communications

10.1 As the programme progresses, there are a number of opportunities to communicate the benefits of the programme through our website and social media activity, as well as internally through staffnet.

11 Conclusion

- 11.1 The UKSPF Programme has now been running since late 2022 and has supported the delivery of a number of positive socio-economic projects in the borough. The contingency measures in this report are proposed as a means to ensure that, should there be underspend in any of the current projects, that this is re-allocated in a way that ensures the funding is retained in the borough and used to support projects that benefit the local community and/or businesses.

12 Annexes

- 12.1 None