

<b>To:</b>	<b>Robin Betts, Cabinet Member for Housing, Environment and Economy</b>
<b>From:</b>	<b>Jeremy Whittaker, Economic Development and Special Projects Manager</b>
<b>Director:</b>	<b>Damian Roberts, Chief Executive</b>

## **BRIEFING NOTE: EXECUTIVE - NON-KEY DECISION**

### **UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND (UKSPF) 2025/26 UPDATE.**

#### **Summary of Issue:**

This report provides information about the delivery of the Tonbridge and Malling UKSPF Investment Plan programme for 2025/26, including the West Kent Rural Grant Scheme (funded through the Rural England Prosperity Fund). Whilst the vast majority of projects are progressing well, a contingency plan has nonetheless been set out to ensure that all of the funding available is spent on delivering initiatives that support local communities and businesses.

#### **Recommendation:**

That the report **BE NOTED**.

That the contingency arrangements set out in this report under Section 5 **BE AGREED**

That any further minor amendments to the Investment Plan programme to ensure maximum spend **BE DELEGATED** to the Economic Development and Special Projects Manager.

## **1 Background**

- 1.1 In April 2025, the Council submitted its UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) returns to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to finalise the 2022-2025 Programme. Having previously had contingency plans formally agreed by the Cabinet Member in December 2024, 100% of the available UKSPF fund was spent on projects to support local communities and businesses, and 98% of the REPF was spent on capital projects in our rural areas (the slight underspend was caused by underspending projects that had been awarded funding through our West Kent Rural Grant Scheme).
- 1.2 As an interim measure, Government announced a one-year extension of UKSPF and REPF for 2025/26, and it has subsequently been confirmed that neither fund will continue beyond March 2026. Our programme, which covers a range of projects across the three UKSPF Priority Areas along with a

continuation of the West Kent Rural Grant Scheme, was approved by Cabinet in March 2025.

- 1.3 Good progress has been made on delivering these initiatives in the first half of the year and this report highlights the achievements to date (as stated in the 6-month return to Government, along with some proposed contingency plans in the event that changes need to be made in order to spend all of the available funding.

## 2. UKSPF - Delivery (2025/26)

- 2.1 The Tonbridge and Malling UKSPF Investment Plan sets out a wide range of projects for 2025/26, which are set out in **Table 1** below:

**Table 1: Investment Plan 2025/26 Programme – Projects**

UKSPF Priority	Project	Description	Capital	Revenue	Total
Communities and Place	Youth Provision	Maintaining outreach and summer programme work.	£0	£18,000	£18,000
	Mobile CCTV	Continuation of scheme – funding to move cameras	£0	£4,000	£4,000
	Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Enforcement Team	Set-up of an Enforcement Team to tackle ASB in the borough.	£0	£45,000	£45,000
	Community Development Grant Scheme	A further round of the popular Community Grants Scheme.	£0	£76,660	£76,660
	Tonbridge Town Centre Regeneration	Contribution towards regeneration plans	£0	£30,000	£30,000
		Riverside Walk lighting scheme plans	£0	£20,000	£20,000
	Carbon Descent Plans	Ongoing capital work at our leisure centres.	£30,000	£0	£30,000
Supporting Local Business	Green Business Grant Scheme	Round 5 of the scheme to support organisations to reduce emissions	£30,401	£0	£30,401
	West Kent Business Support Programme	Funding covering mentoring support and events (including Expo 26)	£0	£25,000	£25,000
People and Skills	People and Skills Fund	Round 2 of scheme to support people closer to employment	£0	£35,000	£35,000
Man & Admin		If at 4%	£0	£13,085	£13,085
<b>Total</b>			<b>£60,401</b>	<b>£266,745</b>	<b>£327,146</b>

- 2.2 During the first half of 2025/26, overall progress has been solid – with just over 35% of the annual budget spent. However, the pace of delivery on the various

projects has varied quite considerable to date, with some projects fully or nearly fully spent, whilst other projects have yet to spend anything, even if they have made solid progress over the past 6 months. This variation across the projects is provided in Table 2:

**Table 2: Year 3 Position as of 30 September 2025**

Project	Description	UKSPF Funding Spend		% Spent
		Capital	Revenue	
Youth Provision	Diversions activities to reduce ASB amongst young people		£12,000	66.7%
Mobile CCTV	Installation of mobile cameras to tackle ASB		£2,430	60.8%
ASB Enforcement Team	Funding to contribute towards the cost of the enforcement officers.		£44,008	97.8%
Community Development Grant Scheme	Grants to support community activities and volunteering.		£0	0%
Tonbridge Town Centre Review – Regeneration Plans	Funding contribution towards the masterplan for the regeneration of the area east of the High Street.		£30,000	100%
Tonbridge Town Centre Review – Riverside Walk	New lighting scheme between Town Lock and Vale Road, Tonbridge.		£9,195	46.0%
Carbon Descent Plans	Capital investment to support our Leisure Centres in their journey towards Net Zero.	£0		0%
Green Business Grant Scheme	Grants of up to £5,000 to support local business to reduce their carbon footprint.	£0		0%
West Kent Business Support Programme	Support and advice service for small and micro-businesses, including networking events, seminars and mentoring.		£0	0%
People and Skills Fund	Initiatives to support unemployed residents to take steps towards finding work.		£10,611	30.3%
Management and Administration	Contribution towards programme management.		£8,405	64.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>£116,650</b>		<b>35.7%</b>

2.3 In terms of those projects that have so far spent 30% or less of their budget, the following updates set out an indication of progress to date:

- **Community Development Grant Scheme:** whilst the funding round had closed and recommendations pulled together on the distribution of the funding pot by 30 September, it wasn't until Cabinet had approved the allocations on 14 October that the funding started to be distributed. As of

November 2025, all of the funding had been distributed and monitoring is being undertaken.

- **Carbon Descent Plans:** the carbon descent works (installation of air source heat pumps) are well underway and it is expected that the PSDS funding from Government (which is being prioritised) will be fully spent before the end of the calendar year, with the UKSPF allocated to the project being spent in January-March 2026.
- **Green Business Grant Scheme:** by 30 September 5 applicants had been offered funding for their projects, with 1 project subsequently withdrawing. The remaining 4 projects are well-advanced and will receive their funding upon completion and following the submission of the necessary evidence. These projects are expected to all be completed by the end of January 2026. There is likely to be some underspend (see Table 3).
- **West Kent Business Support Programme:** by 30 September, the programme was well advanced although final information was awaited from Sevenoaks DC (Subsidy Control Assessment) before the contract could be signed and the funding contribution paid out. A draft Subsidy Control Assessment has subsequently been received and approved.

### 3. Match-funding and Achievements

- 3.1 Since 2022/23, the UKSPF and REPF programmes have attracted over £3,000,000 of public and private match-funding, the majority of which came from the various grant schemes and the Tonbridge Town Centre Review work. In the first 6-months of 2025/26, the match-funding amount is currently only just over £20,000, however this will be much greater by the end of the year as schemes such as the Community Development Grant Scheme, Green Business Grant Scheme and Carbon Descent Plans attract sizeable match-funding contributions.
- 3.2 In 2025/26, achievements in the first 6 months include:
- 947 people benefitting from direct support (Youth Provision and Community Enforcement Team)
  - 43 businesses directly benefitting from non-financial support (WK Business Support Programme)
  - 10 projects commenced to support people to progress towards employment (People and Skills)
  - 4 businesses offered financial support (Green Business Grant Scheme)
  - 2 studies completed (Town Centre Masterplan and Riverside Walk)

- 3.3 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 6-monthly basis. As well as TMBC, this group has membership from the DWP, KCC, Tonbridge Town Team, Kent Community Foundation, Clarion Futures, Mid Kent College, North Kent College, RBLI and the Invest West Kent. The next meeting of this group takes place on 21 November 2025. With the programme coming to an end, and with all funding allocated, the attendance at the most recent meeting was much lower than previous meetings.

#### **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. For the interim year (2025/26), a total funding allocation of £134,211 was confirmed for T&M in June 2025.
- 4.2 In June 2025, the scheme opened for applications, with rural communities and businesses eligible to apply for capital grants of up to £20,000.
- 4.3 As of the end of September 2025, 118% of the Tonbridge and Malling allocation had been awarded by the grants panel (which includes the Cabinet Member for Housing, Environment and Economy, along with other West Kent Councillors and rural business representatives). The over-allocation allows for a certain amount of underspend and non-delivery to take place and still ensure that the budget is fully spent on benefitting rural businesses and communities in the borough. Should none of the projects underspend or abort, then this over-spend will be covered through the Business Rates Pool.
- 4.4 The scheme closed for applications to all parts of West Kent in October 2025.
- 4.5 As of the end of October 2025, of the 9 projects that have been awarded funding to date, 3 have now completed their project (Wateringbury Post Office, Kings Hill Parish Council and NPC Tree Surgery). 29% (£38,400) of the total allocation has been spent (with payments made on completion of the project and receipted invoices, bank statements and photos supplied).
- 4.6 Work is ongoing to ensure the remaining projects deliver in a timely manner, with regular correspondence and meetings taking place. On the evidence from these discussions, it is estimated that all projects should have completed by end of January 2026.

#### **5. Contingency Plans:**

- 5.1 As things stand, the projects most at risk of non-delivery are set out in Table 3. Government has a relatively flexible, light-touch approach to changes to individual investment plan programmes, and as such the level of changes that may be needed to the programme would fall way below their thresholds for seeking their permission (movement of 30% or more of the total programme allocation from one priority to another).

**Table 3: Project Risk and Mitigation**

Project	Foreseen Issue	Risk (5x5)	Potential Mitigation	Mitigated Risk (5x5)
<b>CAPITAL</b>				
Green Business Grant Scheme (£30,401)	There will almost certainly be an underspend on this initiative of around £10,000 due to project non-delivery and underspend.	Likelihood – 5 Impact – 3 = 15	Reallocate to the other capital project in the UKSPF Programme: Carbon Descent Plans (Larkfield Leisure Centre Air Source Heat Pumps).  This has the added benefit of reducing the TMBC contribution towards this project.	Likelihood – 5 Impact – 1 = 5
West Kent Rural Grants Scheme (£134,211)	Underspend and non-delivery of projects that have been allocated funding leads to overall underspend.	Likelihood – 2 Impact – 3 = 6	We have overallocated by £25,000 to cover any unforeseen underspend or non-delivery. 3 projects have completed already. If all projects complete to budget, the additional funding will be covered through the Business Rates Pool.	Likelihood – 1 Impact 3 = 3
<b>REVENUE</b>				
People and Skills Fund (£35,000)	Underspend or non-delivery by projects.	Likelihood – 2 Impact – 2 = 4	This initiative is being funded by both UKSPF and s.106 funding, so any projects that are delayed or not delivered will be allocated to the s.106 pot which is less time critical.	Likelihood – 2 Impact – 1 = 2
West Kent Business Support Programme (£25,000)	Contract remains unexecuted by end of March 2025 and as such payment can't be made in time.	Likelihood – 2 Impact – 4 = 8	Close working with the West Kent Co-ordinator to ensure that this is signed off in good time.	Likelihood – 1 Impact – 4 = 4

- 5.2 For many of these contingency plans, the adjustments could be made near the end of the financial year as they would simply involve including expenditure that is already planned to be incurred into the programme.

However, it is suggested that a decision on whether to enact the contingency plans (or parts of them) be made in **January 2026** in order to give time to properly plan and ensure spend in the programme is maximised.

## **6 Legal Advice**

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

## **7 Financial and Value for Money implications**

- 7.1 There are limited financial and value for money implications for the council as the report relates to existing external funding. However, the use of UKSPF funding to support corporate priority projects has a positive impact on Council budgets.

## **8 Risk Assessment**

- 8.1 The recommendations in this report will mitigate against the risk of underspending on the Tonbridge and Malling UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan, and ensuring delivery of key council priorities.

## **9 Public Sector Equality Duty**

- 9.1 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.

## **10 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny**

- 10.1 We do not consider that this matter needs to be considered by O&S/SSC before a decision is made.
- 10.2 It is not a key decision as it simply provides further information on a programme that was previously approved by Cabinet in March 2025. It has no impact on the overall budget, and 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.

## **11 Communications**

- 11.1 As the programme progresses, there continue to be a number of opportunities to communicate the benefits of the programme through our website and social media activity, as well as internally through staffnet, promoting the role of the Council and Government.

## **12 Conclusion**

- 12.1 The UK Shared Prosperity Fund 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 will ensure that any underspend in the current projects 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.

## **13 Annexes**

13.1 None