



# UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Programme Evaluation Report 2025-26

DELIVERING FOR OUR LOCAL BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITIES  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TEAM, TMBC



## Introduction

This evaluation report gives an overview of Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan for 2025/26, providing information on the individual projects and the outputs and outcomes achieved. Projects within the Investment Plan were delivered by a number of teams from across the Council (Property Services; Economic Development; and Corporate Policy and Communities) with support from Finance and Audit, Legal, and IT Services and overseen by the Economic Development team.

## Tonbridge and Malling UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) 2025-26

Following on from the successful delivery of the Tonbridge and Malling UKSPF Investment Plan 2022-2025, the UK's Autumn Budget of 2025 announced a further £900 million of funding from Government to be spent on local investment opportunities by March 2026.

Five UK-wide themes and twelve sub-themes were identified to replace previous interventions from which funding recipients could use to shape their local investment plans.

These were:

1. Healthy, Safe and Inclusive Communities
  - a. Improve health and wellbeing
  - b. Reduce crime and the fear of crime
  - c. Bringing communities together, tackling homelessness
2. Thriving Places
  - a. Development of the visitor economy
  - b. High streets and town centres improvements
3. Support for Business
  - a. Advice and support for business
  - b. Enterprise culture and start up support
  - c. Business sites and premises
4. Employability
  - a. Supporting people to progress towards and into employment
  - b. Support for young people who are or at risk of being NEET
5. Skills
  - a. Essential skills (including numeracy, literacy, ESOL and digital)
  - b. Employment related skills

## New Allocation of Funding

By March 2025, the Government had allocated the Council a total of £461,357 in funding with a break down, as follows:

| Allocation 2025-26 | Funding         |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| UKSPF Core Capital | £60,401         |
| UKSPF Core Revenue | £266,745        |
| REPF Capital       | £134,211        |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>£461,357</b> |

## Programme of Delivery

Due to the tight timescales involved with only a twelve-month window for delivery, it was agreed that the continuation of successful existing UK Shared Prosperity Fund initiatives would allow for greatest impact.

The following local investment plan was agreed by Cabinet in March 2025:

Table 1. Overview of projects with target outcomes and outputs

| Project                                   | Description  | Delivery body          | Target Outcomes  | Target Outputs   | Total allocation | Project status |
|---|--|------------------------|--|--|------------------|----------------|
| <b>Youth Provision</b>                    | Maintaining outreach and summer programme work                               | Salus                  | 100 fewer neighbourhood crimes reported                      | 1500 number of people benefiting directly              | £18,000          | Complete       |
| <b>Mobile CCTV</b>                        | Continuation of scheme – funding to move cameras                             | TMBC                   |  |  | £4,000           | Complete       |
| <b>Community Enforcement Team</b>         | Set-up of an Enforcement Team to tackle anti-social behaviour in the borough | Kingdom Services Group |  |  | £45,000          | Complete       |
| <b>Community Development Grant Scheme</b> | A further round of the popular Community Grants Scheme                       | TMBC                   | 40 volunteering opportunities created as a result of support | 54 number of organisations receiving grants            | £76,660          | Complete       |
| <b>Tonbridge Town Centre Review</b>       | Contribution towards Review plans  | Mace                   | 2 projects arising from funded feasibility studies           | 2 feasibility studies developed as a result of support | £30,000          | Complete       |
|   | Riverside Walk lighting scheme plans   | Project Centre Ltd     |  |  | £20,000          | Complete       |

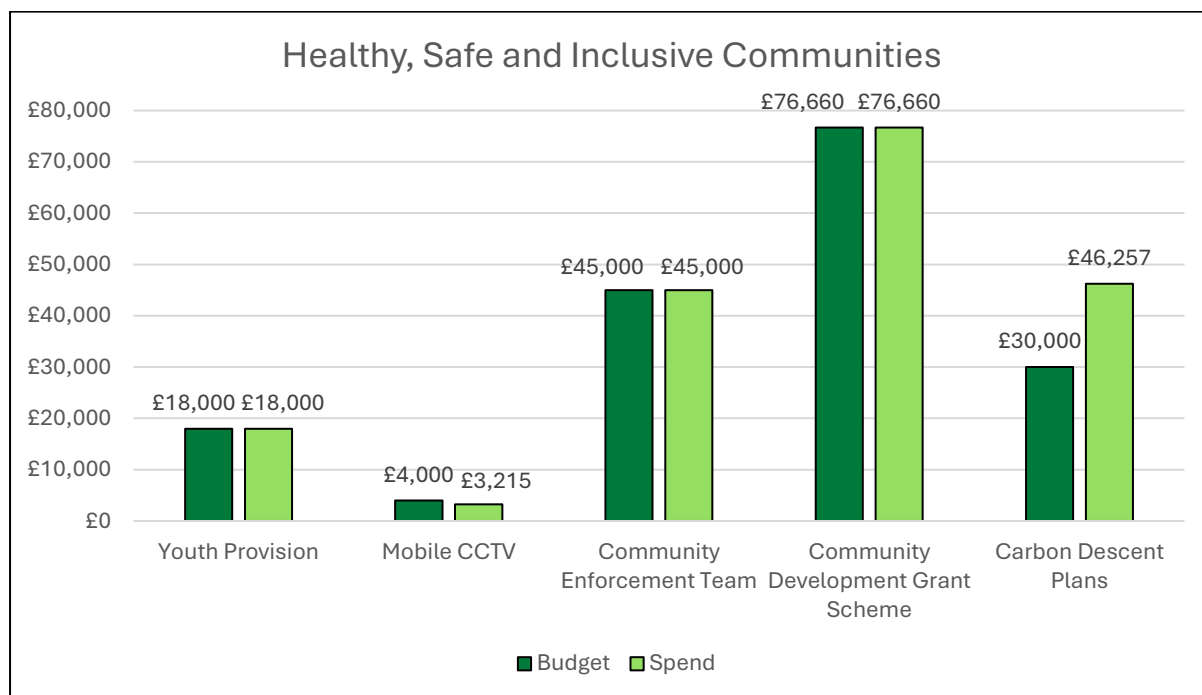
Table 1. Overview of projects with target outcomes and outputs

|   |  |                     |  |  |          |          |
|---|--|---------------------|--|--|----------|----------|
| <b>Carbon Descent Plans</b>                 | Ongoing capital work at our leisure centres                            | DMA Maintenance Ltd | 3000 increased users of facilities   | 1 facility improved  | £30,000  | Complete |
| <b>Green Business Grant Scheme</b>          | Round 5 of the scheme which supports organisations to reduce emissions | TMBC                | 4 jobs safeguarded as a result of support; 4 new to the firm technologies  | 4 low or zero carbon energy infrastructure installed; 4 enterprises receiving grants | £30,401  | Complete |
| <b>West Kent Business Support Programme</b> | Funding covering mentoring support and events (including Expo '26)     | GLL                 | 20 enterprises with improved productivity  | 10 enterprises receiving grants; 150 enterprises receiving non-financial support     | £25,000  | Complete |
| <b>People and Skills Fund</b>               | Round 2 of scheme to support people closer to employment               | TMBC                | 50 people with basic skills following support; 20 people gaining a qualification; 50 improved interpersonal skills | 150 people reached; 50 people supported to access basic skills courses               | £35,000  | Complete |
|   |  |                     |  | Total UKSPF allocation   | £314,061 |          |

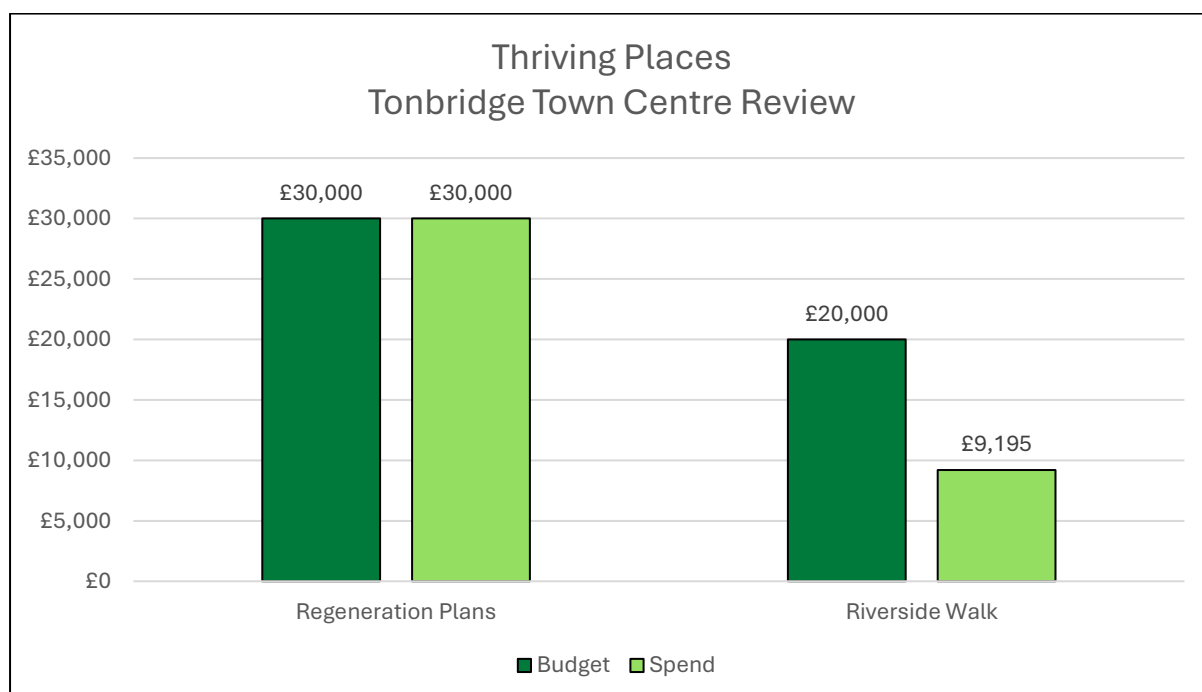
## Budget versus Spend

The series of charts below demonstrates the UKSPF budget allocated per project versus actual UKSPF spend. Data is split between five charts, four are grouped according to their relation to the Government’s investment priorities, and the fifth West Kent Rural Grant is included separately as funding was through the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF), which is treated as an addendum to the UKSPF Programme.

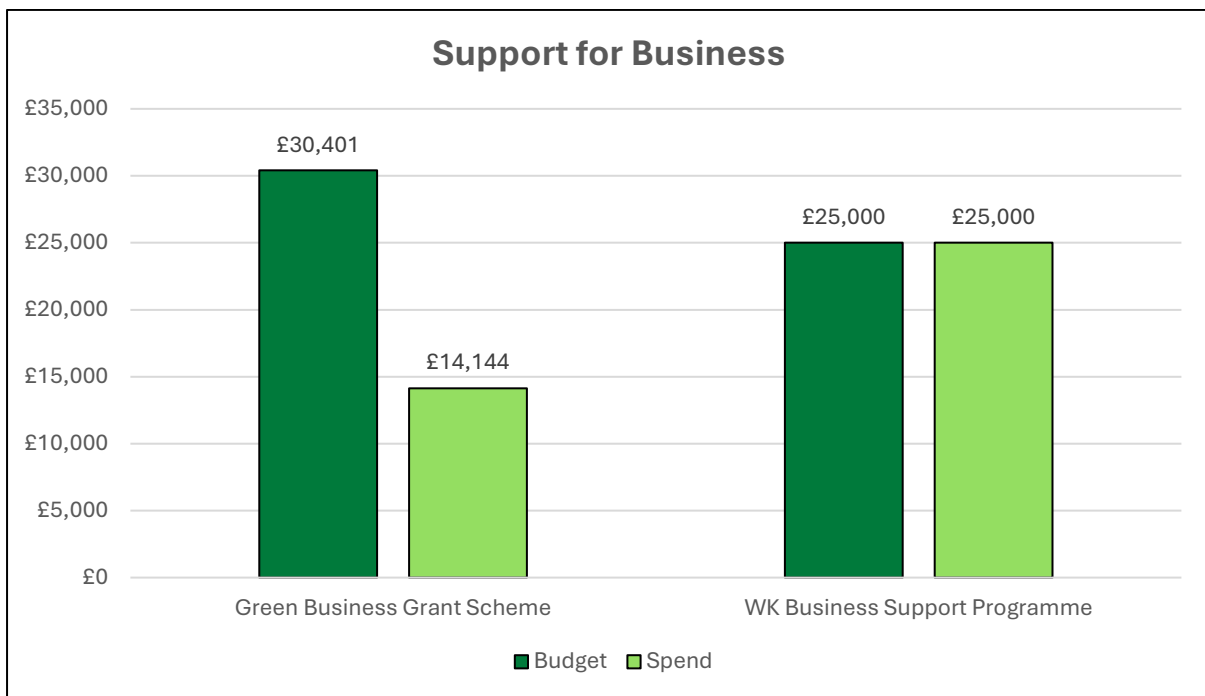
**Chart 1.**



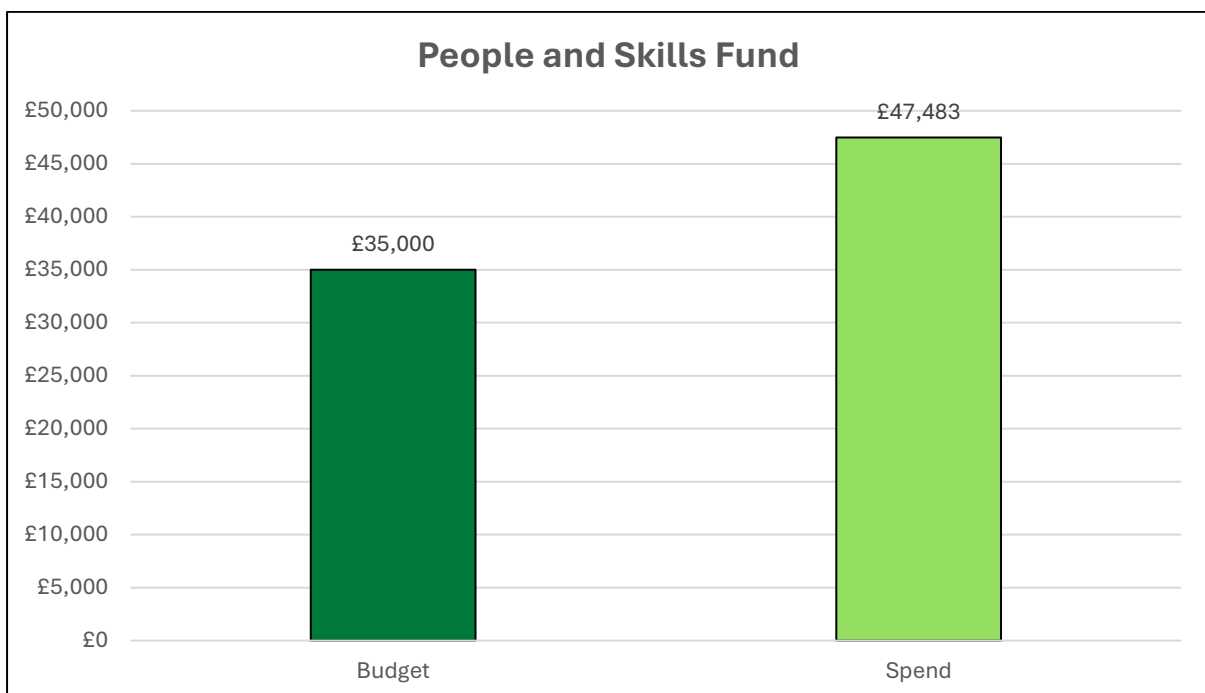
**Chart 2.**



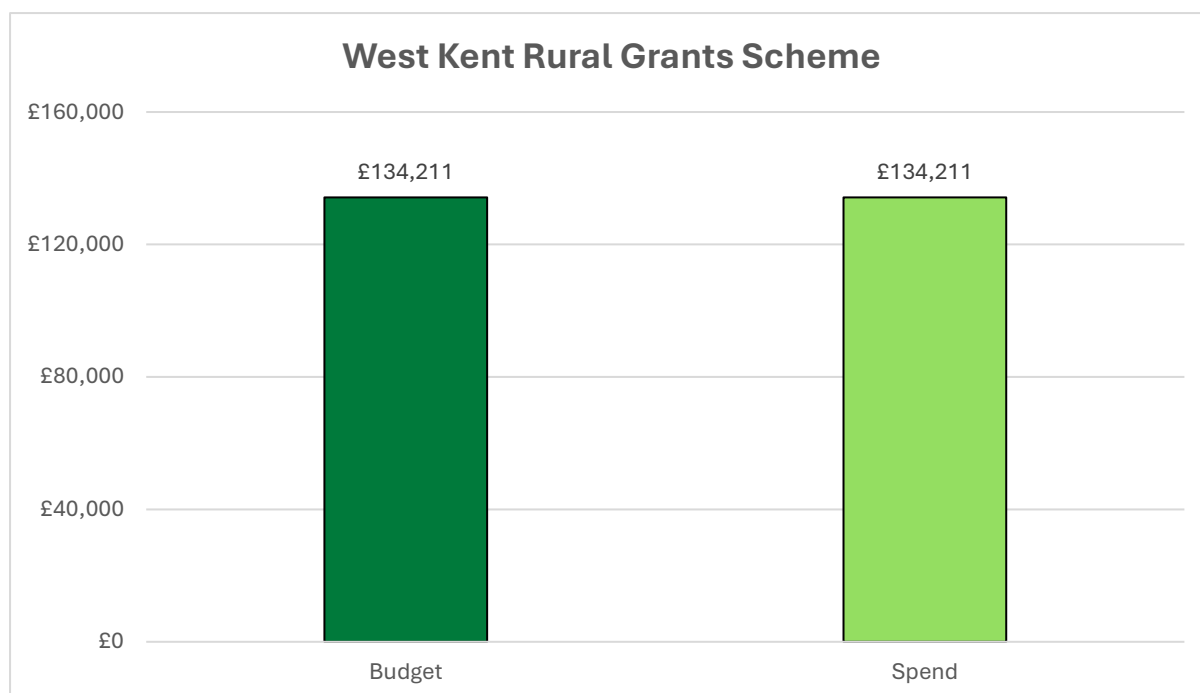
**Chart 3.**



**Chart 4.**



**Chart 5.**



## Chart Analysis

Most projects within the programme were delivered according to the original local investment plan agreed by Cabinet in March 2025. The notable exceptions were:

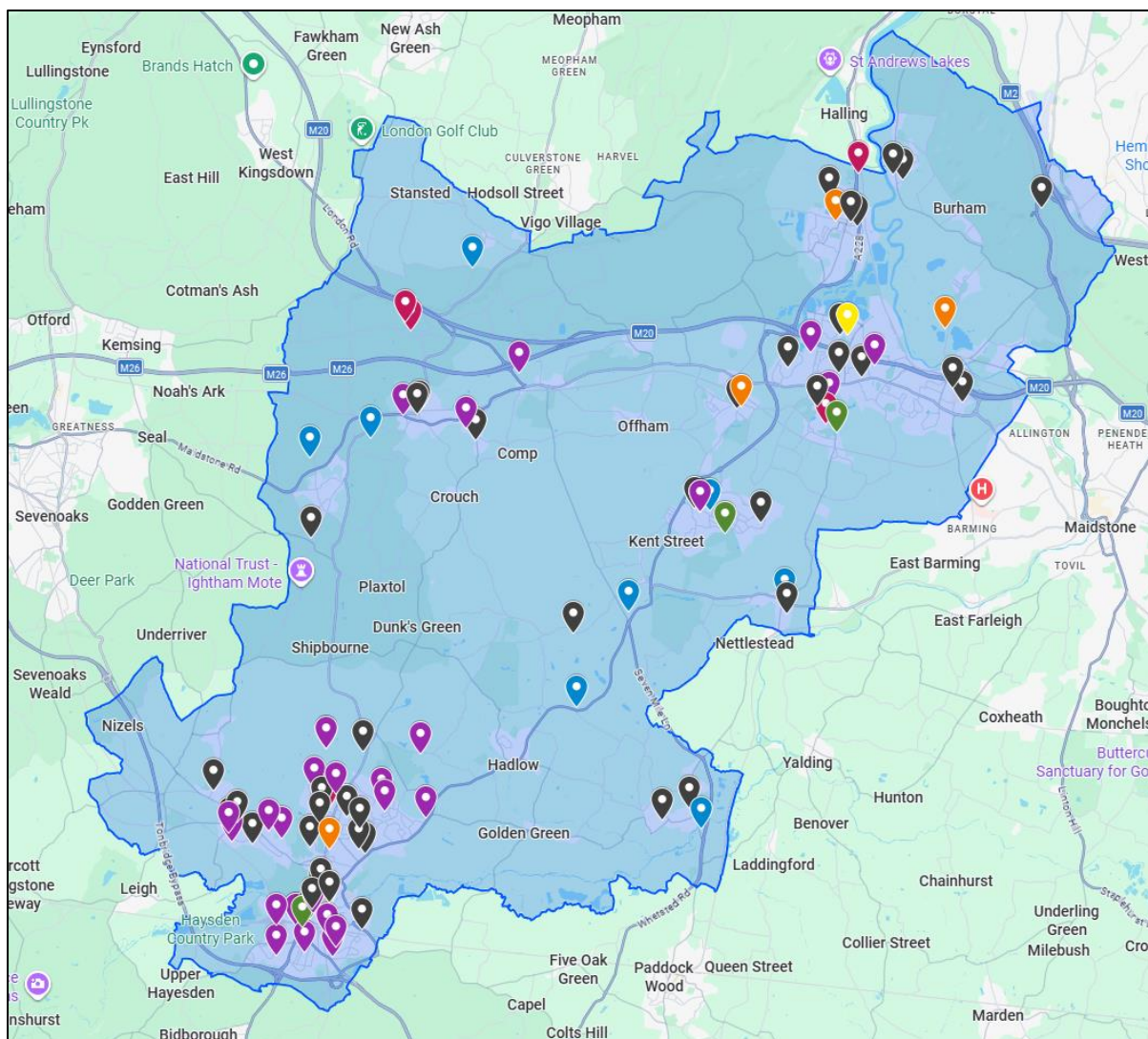
- 1) Green Business Grant Scheme: an underspend of £16,257 capital due to two main factors:
  - i) A low number of applications leading to fewer individual grants being awarded, and
  - ii) The non-delivery of projects that were awarded funding. This was disappointing as previous rounds had been well-subscribed to, but having investigated further it seems the main reason was the availability of other funding streams at the time on preferential terms. As a result, the intervention rate was increased from 40% to 50% for the scheme in 2026/27 and has again been well-subscribed to (see [Lessons Learned](#)).
- 2) Carbon Descent Plans: this project received an additional £16,257 due to the underspend of the Green Business Grant Scheme to ensure the full capital allocation was spent, as detailed above.
- 3) Riverside Walk: this project was funded through both UKSPF and time-limited s.106 funds. To ensure that as much s.106 was spent as possible, this source of funding was prioritised, with the UKSPF allocation having the flexibility to be re-allocated. As a result, there was a UKSPF underspend of £10,805 revenue which was used to support other existing UKSPF projects.
- 4) People and Skills Fund: more UKSPF revenue funding was spent to absorb the underspend of the Riverside Walk project, as detailed above.

The possibility that these amendments to the investment plan may be required had been pre-empted earlier in the financial year in a Cabinet Member report (Decision – D250118MEM) which set out a number of contingency arrangements.

## Geographic Spread of Projects

A map detailing the individual projects and their location within the borough is shown below.

Click on the map to open in a web browser.



| Map key         | Project   |
|-----------------|---|
| <b>Black</b>    | Community Development Grant Scheme – Place-Specific |
| <b>Blue</b>     | West Kent Rural Grant Scheme                        |
| <b>Dark Red</b> | Mobile CCTV Cameras                                 |
| <b>Green</b>    | Green Business Grant Scheme                         |
| <b>Grey</b>     | Tonbridge Town Centre Review                        |
| <b>Orange</b>   | Youth Provision                                     |
| <b>Purple</b>   | West Kent Business Support Programme                |
| <b>Yellow</b>   | Carbon Descent Plans                                |

Both the Community Enforcement Team and the People and Skills Fund projects were delivered borough-wide and therefore do not feature on the map. Similarly, not all of the Community

Development Grant Scheme projects are included on the map as approximately 20% of these projects were delivered borough-wide.

## Project Achievements

Below are tables which outline the outcomes and outputs achieved for both UKSPF and REPF projects. They also detail the levels of match-funding provided by each project.

Table 2.1 UKSPF outcomes, outputs and match-funding

| Project                                     | Outcomes   | Outputs  | Match-funding     |
|---|--|--|-------------------|
| <b>Youth Provision</b>                      | An increase of 423 neighbourhood crimes reported compared to the previous year. This is due to the CET encouraging people to report incidents of anti-social behaviour | 1475 people benefiting directly  | £0                |
| <b>Mobile CCTV</b>                          |  |  | £0                |
| <b>Community Enforcement Team (CET)</b>     |  |  | £55,000           |
| <b>Community Development Grant Scheme</b>   | 300 volunteering opportunities created   | 57 organisations receiving grants  | £741,488          |
| <b>Tonbridge Town Centre Review</b>         | 2 projects arising from funded feasibility studies   | 2 feasibility studies developed as a result of support                               | £40,600           |
| <b>Carbon Descent Plans</b>                 | 23,036 increased users of facilities   | 1 facility improved  | £200,000          |
| <b>Green Business Grant Scheme</b>          | 2 new to the firm technologies   | 3 low or zero carbon energy infrastructure installed; 3 enterprises receiving grants | £29,905           |
| <b>West Kent Business Support Programme</b> | 20 enterprises with improved productivity  | 10 enterprises receiving grants; 138 enterprises receiving non-financial support     | £3,000            |
| <b>People and Skills Fund</b>               | 276 people gained basic skills following support; 36 people gaining a qualification  | 415 people reached; 128 people supported to access basic skills courses              | £39,476           |
| <b>Total match-funding:</b>                 |  |  | <b>£1,109,469</b> |

## REPF Programme

Further rounds of the West Kent Rural Grant Scheme took place between July and September of 2025 with a deadline for completion by December 2025. One hundred percent of the £134,211 budget was allocated to 8 projects by early September 2025 and had been fully spent by early March 2026.

Table 2.2 REPF outcomes, outputs and match-funding

| Project                     | Number of projects supported | Outcomes   | Outputs   | Match-funding   |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|--|---|-----------------|
| <b>Thriving Places</b>      | 1                            | 500 increased users of facilities / amenities  | 1 amenity / facility created or improved; 1 tourism, culture or heritage asset created or improved; 1 organisation receiving grants                 | £21,753         |
| <b>Support for Business</b> | 7                            | 1 job created as a result of support; 7 jobs safeguarded as a result of support; 5 of enterprises adopting new to the firm technologies or processes | 3 amenities / facilities created or improved; 7 enterprises receiving grants; 1 farm diversification project supported; 5 microbusinesses supported | £118,777        |
| <b>Total match-funding:</b> |                              |  |   | <b>£140,530</b> |

## Programme Summary

After four years, the UKSPF programme has now come to an end. Overall, 20 individual initiatives were supported with match-funding across both UKSPF and REPF programmes totalling £4,259,082.

Some key headlines of the programme were:

- Total UKSPF match-funding came to £3,118,502
- REPF match-funding totalled £1,140,580
- 248 enterprises and organisations received grants (207 UKSPF and 41 REPF)
- 464 volunteering opportunities created
- 14 jobs created (4 UKSPF and 10 REPF)
- 55 jobs safeguarded (12 UKSPF and 43 REPF)
- 54 people gained a qualification
- 372 enterprises received business support

## Lessons Learned for 2025-26

The Economic Development Team have the following lessons learned/recommendations that relate to this additional year of funding:

- Regular catch-up meetings involving Project Leads provided a helpful and supportive environment in which to communicate successes and challenges and as such gave early insight into any issues that needed to be addressed.
- The relatively low number of Green Business Grant applications received led to several improvements and changes designed to help the success of future rounds of the scheme. Firstly, the grant intervention rate was increased from 40% to 50% to increase its attractiveness. Secondly, the need for successful applicants to secure all relevant permissions (e.g., planning, business rates, food hygiene etc) prior to commencing works was reinforced. Further details of such permissions were relayed to the beneficiaries ensuring they had all the necessary information when they were sent their Grant Offer Letters. This helped minimise any potential time delays.
- The claims process for the People and Skills Fund proved to be more time-consuming than anticipated. This was partly due to the scheme being more concerned with small revenue expenditure (e.g., wages, rent, utilities) rather than typically more straightforward capital expenditure, as per our other grant schemes (such as the Green Business Grant Scheme). Therefore, this made it a lengthier process for the beneficiary to evidence. If future rounds of this fund were to occur, then we would ensure the process was more adapted to the nature of the projects, making it easier for both the beneficiary to evidence and for the staff member to verify.
- For many of our grant schemes, the deadline for claiming was in January 2026 which meant that sufficient time was given for any delays to projects to occur before the end of the financial year. On a number of occasions small extensions were given, which helped to ensure projects were delivered.
- The increase in reports of neighbourhood crime as set out in the outcome for our 'Healthy, Safe and Inclusive Communities' projects is not necessarily a negative outcome. There is much evidence to suggest that it was the encouragement by the Community Enforcement Team to report incidents of anti-social behaviour, which in turn enabled more action to be taken to remedy them. It could also be argued that this level of engagement and subsequent action may lead to greater public trust and more community cohesion.
- The West Kent Business Support Programme was successful despite taking some time to get started as a new service provider was used for 2025-26. The main issue came from the low attendance of the in-person workshops (average attendees numbered between 4 and 7). Therefore, these sessions were streamlined and moved online in the latter half of the project.
- Challenges were experienced with projects such as Carbon Descent Plans and the Tonbridge Town Centre Review due to the more complicated nature of the works within limited timeframes.

## Conclusion

The overall conclusion is that whilst some minor amendments had to be made that tweaked the programme slightly, a huge amount has been achieved by the programme in 2025/26 (as set out in this evaluation report). It is clear that there will not be a further extension to this programme, but by producing this evaluation, useful information and learning has been gathered that will help to inform the delivery of any future programme funding that is received in the years ahead.