

<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>

## **EXECUTIVE - NON-KEY DECISION**

### **PEOPLE AND SKILLS FUND - PROPOSAL**

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

Following the successful delivery of two rounds of the People and Skills Fund during 2024-2026 using both UK Shared Prosperity Fund and s.106 funding from the Panattoni Park Aylesford development, this report sets out the next steps for using the remaining s.106 funding to help support local people into training and employment.

#### **Recommendation:**

That the use of the remaining s.106 funding to support local people into training and employment opportunities, as set out in Section 2 of the report, **BE AGREED.**

## **1 Background**

- 1.1 To date, just over £45,000 of the £75,000 s.106 allocation from the Panattoni Park Aylesford development has been spent. Along with funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (which closed in March 2026), this expenditure has helped to fund two rounds of a 'People and Skills Fund' along with providing financial support towards the running of two annual jobs fairs in Aylesford and Tonbridge over the past couple of years.
- 1.2 The most recent round of the 'People and Skills Fund' has supported 415 local people, with 128 accessing basic skills courses and 36 gaining a qualification.
- 1.3 Whilst this fund has proved to be very popular, there are a number of recent employment initiatives happening across Kent – [Skills Bootcamps](#) and [Connect to Work](#) - that present an opportunity to ensure that those that need the support in our borough receive it. However, at present, take up of these opportunities amongst Tonbridge and Malling residents is lower than that in most areas across Kent. It is therefore proposed that some of the remaining funding available is used to deliver taster sessions and mentoring support to help people into employment or training, either directly or through one of the countywide initiatives, with the remaining funding being used to continue to support our two annual jobs fairs.

## **2 Proposal**

- 2.1 The proposal is to work closely with the successful organisation to deliver at least 20 half-day taster sessions (each with on average 10-12 learners), covering the construction sector as a minimum, but with a preference for covering other sectors as well (especially Agri-tech and Social Care, which have a high level of representation in the borough).
- 2.2 These sessions will be:
- In-person with a hybrid model available for accessibility purposes.
  - Promoted widely across the borough
  - Bespoke to Tonbridge and Malling and help to raise the profile of opportunities to Tonbridge and Malling residents.
  - Interactive and engaging, and create an environment which is welcoming and interactive, helping to give people the confidence and tools they need to progress.
  - Where appropriate, used as a referral point into other support, especially Connect to Work and Skills Bootcamps.
- 2.3 These sessions will be supplemented by follow-on support that leads to a positive outcome. The outcome should aim for one or more of the following:
- A clear referral to the Connect to Work or Skills Bootcamp initiatives.
  - Enrolment onto a course
  - A job interview
  - Securing employment/volunteering
- 2.4 Whilst the sessions will be open to all, priority will be given to:
- Geography: supporting people from our areas of great disadvantage – particularly Aylesford, Snodland and East Malling, but also Trench (Tonbridge).
  - Demographic: young people, especially those not in employment, education or training (NEETs).
- 2.5 A maximum budget of £28,000 is set aside for this project, with the remaining circa £2,000 allocated towards the running of the annual jobs fairs.

## **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 There are limited financial and value for money implications directly for the council as the report relates to existing external funding. However, Value for Money considerations will form a key part of assessing the proposals that are submitted.

## **5 Risk Assessment**

5.1 Several measures will be built into the initiative to mitigate against risks, including:

- Close working with specialists at the TMT Procurement Partnership to recruit the best organisation to deliver the project.
- Regular catch-up meetings will be undertaken to ensure monitoring of progress and to provide support where needed.
- Payments will be paid out on achieving key milestones as the project progresses.

## **6 Public Sector Equality Duty**

6.1 In delivering this programme, the Accountable Body will ensure that there is due regard to the need to achieve the objectives set out under Section 149 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 a scrutiny committee before a decision is made.

7.2 It is not a key decision and relates to the use of the remaining funding available on an initiative that has been previously reported to Finance, Regeneration and Property Scrutiny Select Committee and Cabinet (as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund programme). The scheme has also been subject to a Cabinet Member Decision in March 2025 (Decision Notice D250029MEM).

## **8 Communications**

8.1 As the project progresses, there will continue to be a number of opportunities to promote it through our website and social media activity, as well as internally through StaffNet.

## **9 Conclusion**

9.1 The People and Skills Fund scheme was successfully launched in 2024, and has made a huge difference to some of our most disadvantaged local residents. The proposal in this report is to ensure that we maximise the impact of the remaining funding by using it to effectively link in with new opportunities that have occurred since Round 2 of the People and Skills Fund launched.