

# TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

<b>Report to:</b>	Executive Committee
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	16 November 2022
<b>Subject:</b>	Rural England Prosperity Fund
<b>Report of:</b>	Community and Economic Development Manager
<b>Head of Service/Director:</b>	Head of Development Services
<b>Lead Member:</b>	Lead Member for Economic Development/Promotion Lead Member for Community
<b>Number of Appendices:</b>	None

## **Executive Summary:**

The UK Government has announced the creation of the Rural England Prosperity Fund, in follow up to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), both of which contribute to the Levelling Up agenda. The Fund aims to target funding to support rural businesses and rural community infrastructure.

The Rural Prosperity Fund outlines an allocation of funding for Tewkesbury Borough of £400,000 over a two-year period. To access these funds the Council is required to develop an addendum to the previously submitted UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan. The addendum is to be submitted by 30 November 2022.

This report outlines the Rural England Prosperity Fund process and the relevant delegations to enable the Council to take both the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan and the Rural Prosperity Fund addendum forward.

## **Recommendation:**

- 1. To submit a Rural Prosperity Fund Investment Plan addendum for Tewkesbury Borough by 30 November 2022.**
- 2. To delegate authority to the Head of Development Services, in consultation with the Head of Finance and Asset Management, the Lead Member for Economic Development/Promotion and the Lead Member for Community, to prepare and submit the Investment Plan addendum on behalf of the Council.**
- 3. To delegate authority to the Head of Development Services, in consultation with the Head of Finance and Asset Management, the Lead Member for Economic Development/Promotion and the Lead Member for Community, the decisions needed to develop and implement the action plan arising from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural Prosperity Fund or subsequent funds, or vary it in response to circumstances which may arise as a consequence of the need including authority to enter into agreements, notices and other legal documents as necessary.**

**Financial Implications:**

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund are entirely government grant funding. No new resource requirements are required, apart from officer capacity to manage on behalf of the Council.

The Government has allocated the Council £400,000 from the Rural Prosperity Fund to support local interventions. All funds are capital. This will be delivered with 25% of the funding allocated for year one and 75% for year two.

**Legal Implications:**

The Fund will be governed by detailed government guidance and care must be taken to ensure that all of the requirements of the scheme are complied with and actioned accordingly to reduce and mitigate risks.

Legal advice should be taken when the terms and conditions of the funding become available.

**Environmental and Sustainability Implications:**

Not at this stage, although the climate change agenda is a key component of the Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural Prosperity Fund.

**Resource Implications (including impact on equalities):**

Officers will be required to meet the 30 November 2022 deadline for submission.

**Safeguarding Implications:**

None at this stage.

**Impact on the Customer:**

Rural Prosperity aims to meet key community and economic objectives – impacting on the council's business and residential communities.

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1** The Rural Prosperity Fund builds on, and is complementary to, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). The Council previously submitted a UKSPF investment plan to the UK Government in August 2022 and currently awaits an outcome on this from the Government. The Rural Fund is a top-up to the UKSPF and is available to eligible local authorities in England. It succeeds EU funding from LEADER and the Growth Programme which were part of the Rural Development Programme for England. To access funding under the Rural Fund, the Council is being asked to provide specific additional information as an addendum to the UKSPF Investment Plan.
- 1.2** The Rural Fund supports the aims of the government's Levelling Up White Paper and Future Farming Programme. It funds capital projects for small businesses and community infrastructure, aiming to help to improve productivity and strengthen the rural economy and rural communities.

## **2.0 RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND**

**2.1** The Rural Fund is integrated into the UKSPF which is designed to support productivity and prosperity. For eligible local authorities, the Rural Fund is a rural top-up to UKSPF allocations. It supports activities that specifically address the particular challenges rural areas face. Eligible local authorities qualify for an allocation based on factors developed in line with the scheme objectives, including the size of rural populations. In the case of Tewkesbury Borough, £400,000 has been allocated. All eligible Local Authorities have been asked to develop an addendum to their Investment Plan to deliver on the Rural Prosperity objectives. This Investment Plan addendum is to be submitted by 30 November 2022 and covers a two-year period from 2023-2025.

**2.2** The Rural Fund objectives sit within the UKSPF investment priorities of supporting local business, as well as community and place. Specifically, the Rural Fund provides capital funding to:

- support new and existing rural businesses to develop new products and facilities that will be of wider benefit to the local economy. This includes farm businesses looking to diversify income streams.
- support new and improved community infrastructure, providing essential community services and assets for local people and businesses to benefit the local economy.

**2.3** The Government requires that the development, and subsequent management, of the Investment Plan and addendum receives local input and therefore all Local Authorities are requested to use their Local Partnership Group (which was formed as part of the UKSPF) to incorporate members of the Council, as well as other local agencies and partners, the Voluntary and Community Sector and the business community. This group will perform a pivotal engagement and consultation role in the formation of the addendum and consultation throughout the programme. Representatives from within Tewkesbury Borough have been identified and invited to a consultation meeting.

**2.4** The timetable for the formation of the addendum to the Investment Plan is extremely tight and challenging with a deadline for a submission of 30 November 2022. Therefore, this report recommends delegations to Officers and Lead Members for the formation and submission of the addendum in order to have compliance with the timetable.

**2.5** Government will review all Investment Plans/addendums submitted by local authorities through Autumn and Winter and intend to provide feedback, and hopefully approval, by early 2023. Once the Government has confirmed funding for the Borough for both UK Shared Prosperity and the Rural Prosperity Fund, the Council will need to implement delivery and future governance arrangements, particularly as the allocated Year One funds for the UK Shared Prosperity need to be spent in the current financial year. Therefore, delegations are requested with the relevant Heads of Service and Lead Members to enable both the funds to be delivered.

## **3.0 CONSULTATION**

**3.1** Consultation on the Investment Plan addendum will be directed through the newly created Local Partnership Group, which was initiated for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The Group membership includes representatives from the Business Community, Voluntary and Community Sector, as well as key partners and Lead Members.

## **4.0 ASSOCIATED RISKS**

**4.1** None at this stage.

## **5.0 MONITORING**

**5.1** The progress on the Investment Plan addendum and subsequent Government feedback, will be reported through the Council's Performance Tracker.

## **6.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITIES/COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES**

**6.1** Tewkesbury Borough Council Plan.  
Economic Development and Tourism Strategy.  
UK Shared Prosperity Investment Plan.

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**Background Papers:** UK Shared Prosperity Fund - Executive Committee – 6 July 2022.

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**Appendices:** None.