


6th July 2022

Report of	Assistant Director Place and Client Services	Author	Karen Turnbull  282915
Title	Shared Prosperity Fund		
Wards affected	All Wards		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an outline Investment Plan for Colchester's allocation under the Government's Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) programme.
- 1.2 The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is a new three-year domestic fund running from 2022/23 that replaces the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIFs) such as the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF). These funds have supported a range of job creation, innovation and skills programmes for many years.
- 1.3 Colchester's allocation of £1.3m from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund was announced in April with a requirement for an Investment Plan to be submitted to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities by 1 August.
- 1.4 The Investment Plan takes place over three years including the current financial year and the Government has set a spend profile against each year.
- 1.5 The SPF Investment Plan sits alongside other programmes to tackle local inequalities work including the successful £19.2m Towns' Fund bid to boost the borough's economy, create jobs, improve connectivity, develop housing, and improve health outcomes. The health Alliance has invested large sums in work to tackle health inequalities such as with our housing partners to improve the standards in private rented accommodation. And Essex has a Local Delivery Pilot led by Active Essex, to build healthier, more active communities, and the Levelling Up Fund bid which is about to be submitted to Government for consideration.
- 1.6 The criteria for the SPF are theme based, comprising business support, community and place and, from the third year onwards, people and skills and aim to:
 - Boost productivity, pay, jobs and living standards by growing the private sector, especially in those places where they are lagging
 - Spread opportunities and improve public services, especially in those places where they are weakest
 - Restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where they have been lost
 - Empower local leaders and communities, especially in those places lacking local agency

- 1.7 Given the relatively short time window available to prepare the Investment Plan submission, officers have focussed on projects which meet the criteria, complement other levelling up activities such as Town Deal and the Levelling Up Fund bid and include the work of partners.
- 1.8 This report provides an overview of the SPF Investment Plan bid currently being prepared.

2. Recommended Decisions

- 2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:
- a) Endorses the thematic and geographic focus of Colchester's Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan currently in preparation, with reference to the published Shared Prosperity Fund eligibility criteria.
 - b) Agrees to further work on this Investment Plan including engaging with key stakeholders to confirm their support.
 - c) Agrees to delegate the final approval of the bid submission to the Portfolio Holder for Strategy in liaison with the Head of Finance, and thereafter its submission to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on or before 1 August 2022 by officers.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 Approval to proceed and submit an Investment Plan will build upon the strong foundations set by other levelling up activities, potentially attracting further substantial investment into some projects over time.
- 3.2 The draft proposals in the Investment Plan, which are subject to change, outlined in this report best meet the criteria set out at 1.6 above and will further boost Colchester's opportunities to realise its economic and skills development, place-making, inward investment, and regeneration ambitions.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 No alternative options have been presented to Cabinet. As with the UKSPF is not a bid but an allocation of Government funding to Colchester. Some of the interventions included in the SPF Investment Plan see this as the opportunity as funder of last resort as they are unlikely to attract suitable investment from other sources; and cannot be funded within the Council's resources.

5. Background Information

- 5.1 The Government published its [Prospectus for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund](#) on 13 April 2022.

- 5.2 The Shared Prosperity Fund along with the Levelling Up Fund and Town Deal Fund can be seen as a programme of investments in addressing inequality and supporting inclusive economic recovery and growth.
- 5.3 The Town Deal Programme's £19.2m Investment Plan reflects six specific intervention themes prescribed by DLUHC, these being: 1) Local transport, 2) Digital connectivity, 3) Urban regeneration, planning and land use, 4) Arts, culture, and heritage, 5) Skills infrastructure, 6) Enterprise infrastructure.
- 5.4 Colchester's £20m Levelling Up Fund bid reflects three themes to improve the east of the town centre around St Botolph's: 1) Town Centre and High Street regeneration 2) Local Transport Projects, 3) Cultural and Heritage Assets.
- 5.5 The UKSPF outline Investment Plan

SPF Theme	Project
Business support	<p>North Essex Business Support Programme Following the success of the Covid Business Support Discretionary Fund 'top slice' collaboration, which is delivering business support and skills projects across North Essex, North Essex Economic Board (NEEB) members are keen to explore using UKSPF monies to support a refined programme when the current one ends at the end of this year. Likely key SPF outcomes: Increased number of businesses supported, jobs safeguarded, increased business sustainability and increased take up of energy efficiency measures</p> <p>ONE Colchester Apprenticeship Programme This project would bring public sector partners together on a joint apprenticeship scheme to build relevant skills and help recruit and retain talent. Likely key SPF outcomes: Number of people in employment, including self-employment, following support</p> <p>Care Tech Hub This project would allow the innovative Care Tech project to move from the successful initial business case work already completed to the next stage of business planning. Likely key SPF outcomes: Jobs created, increased amount of investment, and number of organisations engaged in new knowledge transfer activity</p>
Communities and place	<p>Third sector volunteering project A third sector partner is preparing a proposal to support community volunteering with the twin goals of supporting communities and building employability. Likely key SPF outcomes: Fewer people facing structural barriers into employment and into skills, Volunteering numbers as a result of support</p> <p>Cultural Strategy enabling An enabling fund for initiatives by smaller arts organisations to support the delivery of Colchester's Cultural strategy. Likely key SPF outcomes: Number of community-led arts, cultural, heritage and creative programmes as a result of support</p> <p>Community Supermarket A partnership project to support the continuing provision of a community supermarket Likely key SPF outcomes: community support and cohesion</p> <p>Wayfinding This potential Community Safety project seeks to improve safety on the route into town from Greenstead. The project will help reduce crime and the fear of crime along with encouraging sustainable travel. Likely key SPF outcomes: Improved perception of safety</p>

People and skills	<p>Training for growth sectors A key education partner is preparing ideas to provide new training opportunities in core and growth sectors such as construction, digital in construction, and health/care. Likely key SPF outcomes: Number of people in education/training, Number of people gaining a qualification or completing a course following support</p> <p>The Colchester Skills Programme We are also preparing a proposal for a skills programme based on the work the Colchester Ambassadors have started. This may include supporting schools and business links as well as sharing training provision. Likely key SPF outcomes: Number of people gaining a qualification or completing a course following support</p>
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- 5.6 Together this suite of interventions meets the key criteria of the three investment priorities, tackle some key issues and open up potential for some economic projects
- 5.7 The SPF presents an opportunity to work in partnership with stakeholders to deliver on joint priorities such as the Care Tech Hub, the Business Support Programme and the Skills agenda. In this way the SPF work programme is endorsed and supported by our partners and stakeholders.

Rationale to project prioritisation above:

- 5.8 This configuration of project elements delivers a strong package of impacts/benefits, responds most strongly against all three DLUHC investment priorities, and builds on recent investment secured and existing project aspirations.

6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 6.1 Consideration will be given to equality and diversity issues in respect of individual project elements that contribute to the delivery of the Shared Prosperity Fund programme through the development of the project application.
- 6.2 Colchester Borough Council and its partners will prepare specific Equality Impact Assessments, and the Council will have due regard to its Public Sector Duty continuing to work to tackle discrimination and inequality and help to create a fairer society, improve housing choice and social mobility (including for protected groups).

7. Strategic Plan References

- 7.1 The following Strategic Plan References are relevant to the proposed bid:

Tackling the climate challenge and leading sustainability:

- Work with partners to implement strategies and develop measures to business environmental impacts

Delivering homes for people who need them:

- Create great places to live through skills development to make Colchester even more attractive as a place to live, work and do business.

Growing a fair economy so everyone benefits:

- Ensure our borough becomes stronger post Covid-19 by supporting businesses to recover, adapt and build resilience.
- Work with our partners to enable Colchester town centre to be more vibrant, resilient, and adaptable to future change.
- Continue to collaborate on other levelling up programmes to regenerate Colchester Town Centre using Council assets, aligned private investment, the Town Deal and Town Investment Plan.

Celebrating our heritage and culture:

- Though enabling and facilitating delivery of aspects of the Cultural Strategy

8. Consultation

- 8.1 The Investment Plan has been developed over recent weeks based on an inception meeting with Council colleagues and their wider networks, such as ONE Colchester.
- 8.2 The projects identified in the Investment Plan have been developed through a mix of pre-existing consultations and identified needs from project pipelines and other programmes such as the Town Deal.

9. Publicity Considerations

- 9.1 None specific to this report.

10. Financial implications

- 10.1 No capacity funding is available from Government as the funding is an allocation from DLUHC.

11. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

- 11.1 There are no specific implications but generally the proposal aims to promote positive health and well-being for our residents, and this policy theme features prominently in several the interventions being developed.

12. Health and Safety Implications

- 12.1 There are no specific concerns at this stage of the development of the LUF round 2 bid. Risk will be identified and assessed at individual project level and addressed at that stage.

13. Risk Management Implications

- 13.1 No implications are identified at this stage. Risk will be assessed at individual project level and addressed at that stage.

14. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

- 14.1 Environmental and sustainability considerations are considered of paramount importance and are a cross-cutting theme within the Town Investment Plan. As specific projects and interventions within this programme are developed further, each will be considered in relation to the Climate Emergency Action Plan to ensure that the Council's climate change, environmental and sustainability ambitions and policies are actively addressed and promoted throughout the development of specific projects and programmes.

15 Head of Finance Comments

- 15.1 The Investment Plan is being prepared under a very tight timetable set by Government, so the final Plan is not available for analysis.
- 15.4 If approved some project activity will be delivered in 2022-23.
- 15.4 The bid will need to be supported by an analysis of the main financial risks and how these will be managed. This will include the management of cost overruns on the project and how these will be shared with any partners.
- 15.4 Any additional revenue or capital requirements for CBC will need to be reflected in the 2023-24 Revenue Budget, Medium Term Financial Forecast and 2023-24 Capital Programme reset. It is not expected any revenue requirements will be at a significant level. Some provision will probably need to be made for potential cost overruns on the capital project given current procurement and inflationary issues.

Appendices: None.

Background Papers: None.