

Minutes

Meeting name	Scrutiny Committee
Date	Monday, 27 June 2022
Start time	6.30 pm
Venue	Parkside, Station Approach, Burton Street, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. LE13 1GH

Present:

Chair Councillor R. Child (Chair)

Councillors J. Wilkinson (Vice-Chair) S. Atherton
P. Chandler J. Douglas
C. Evans E. Holmes

In Attendance Councillor R. Bindloss

Officers Chief Executive
Director for Housing and Communities (Deputy Chief Executive)
Regeneration Manager (via remote link)
Senior Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer
Democratic Services Officer (CE)

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14	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Glancy, Posnett and Webster.</p>
15	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>Councillor Atherton declared a pecuniary interest in Minute Number 16, the draft UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Investment Plan development, as business manager for the Storehouse, Melton Mowbray. The project could benefit from funding from the UKSPF.</p> <p>Councillor Chandler declared a personal interest in Minute Number 16, the draft UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Investment Plan development, as she is a member of National Farmers Union.</p>
16	<p>DRAFT UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND (UKSPF) INVESTMENT PLAN DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>The Portfolio Holder for Growth and Prosperity introduced the UKSPF draft Investment Plan. Following the introduction, the Chief Executive gave a presentation to the Committee and explained to the Members the context, the allocation, the process, themes, caveats, key issues and proposals.</p> <p>It was explained to Members that the Council had to align the interventions under three themes. The themes were Community and Place, Supporting Local Business and People and Skills. It was noted that the allocation is £1.19m with the Council receiving £145k in 2022/23, £290k in 2023/24 and £758k 2024/25.</p> <p>Members were appraised of the objectives, key issues and proposals for each of the three themes, after which the next steps were outlined.</p> <p>Following a question regarding the financial situation of a strategic partner, it was confirmed that Leicestershire County Council would receive funding for adult literacy and that the funding would be ring fenced.</p> <p>A discussion ensued over the current state of businesses in the Borough and how the UKSPF was going to assist. In response, it was clarified that there are projects which are designed to bring in additional footfall which businesses would benefit from.</p> <p>Concerns were raised regarding the inclusion of the Bell Centre project without the Council knowing whether the current owner is a willing partner. The Committee was reassured that Officers have previously communicated with the current owner and that discussions were ongoing through partners, however these were focussed on short term tactical improvements. In addition, Members were reminded that the Bell Centre occupies a key place within the town centre and that a more substantial,</p>

strategic intervention was required to bring about a sustainable change, as it is currently not fulfilling its potential however, in conclusion, the Committee did not generally support the inclusion of the Bell Centre project within the plan.

Concern was expressed at the language used by Officers within the Investment Plan, in particular the expression 'low wage economy' as it was felt this had the potential to be self-fulfilling. In response, Members were informed that careful consideration is given to the language used but that Officers had a duty to express the challenges faced by the Borough.

Members recognised that whilst funding is £1.19m and there are a number of projects that can be carried out, projects must be prioritised because the value of the projects currently under consideration exceeds the amount of funding the Council is expecting to receive.

A concern was raised that regarding the People and Skills theme, three of the four projects under consideration are being led by Leicester City Council. In response, it was explained that by collaborating with a partner as opposed to running projects without a partner, the Council could see a greater benefit of return and therefore better value for money.

A discussion ensued regarding potential partnerships and that the Council would need to carry out due diligence to ensure the sustainability of the partner. In response the Chief Executive assured the Committee that this would be the case and that the Council already carries out due diligence checks.

A Member commented that more funding should be directed towards the rural economy and that a greater bond needs building with the parish councils, particularly as there is a general feeling amongst the parish councils of being let down by the Council.

The Committee agreed that the Council should use the funding to invest in projects and programmes that are existing, working and sustainable in order to make them bigger, better and more successful.

A Member suggested that the Council should be working more closely with partners. The Portfolio Holder reassured the Committee that he and Officers are liaising regularly and effectively with partners.

The comment was made that other local authorities are more successful at informing their residents what they are doing and that the Council should look to learn lessons from those authorities. The Committee was reassured that funding had been allocated within the draft plan to support this and were reminded about the existing Discover Melton website which is an excellent resource.

The Committee agreed that the Council should direct the UKSPF funding towards a smaller number of projects and work hard in making those projects successful, rather than a larger number of projects not so well. Also, individual Members

expressed support for projects aimed at alleviating the increased cost of living; tourism and the visitor economy; rural isolation/access to services/connectivity and a programme of health checks (physical and mental health) for farmers.

Following a request from a Member, the Portfolio Holder assured the Committee that Members' comments had been taken on board and that he would report them back to the Cabinet when they considered the UKSPF Investment Plan at their next meeting.

(At 7:07pm, during the consideration of this item, Councillor Atherton left meeting.)

(At 7:20pm, during the consideration of this item, Councillor Atherton returned the meeting.)

(At 7:40pm, during the consideration of this item, Councillor Holmes left the meeting and did not return.)

The meeting closed at: 7.49 pm

Chair