

To: Cabinet

Date: 13 July 2022

Report/Comments of: Scrutiny Committee

Title: Draft UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Investment Plan Development

SUMMARY OF REPORT CONSIDERED	
Report Title:	Draft UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Investment Plan Development
Purpose/Description of Report:	The report outlined the Council's draft UKSPF investment plan and requested comments from the Scrutiny Committee prior to consideration by the Cabinet.
Key Decision:	Yes
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Cllr R Child, Scrutiny Committee Chairman
Relevant Portfolio Holder:	Cllr R Bindloss, Portfolio Holder for Growth and Prosperity

1. Introduction and Overview

The Scrutiny Committee met on 27 June 2022 to consider a report on the Draft UKSPF Investment Plan Development, whereupon it was explained that the fund isn't a competitive fund but that all areas of the UK receive an allocation based on a funding formula. The amount notionally allocated to Melton is £1.19m.

Members were informed that the funding will be released once an investment plan has been drafted and agreed by Government. The deadline for submission of the plan is 1 August 2022 and the outcome is expected to be announced by October 2022.

2. Summary of Feedback/Recommendations for Cabinet Consideration

- Concerns were raised over the state of businesses in the Borough and how the UKSPF is 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.

- Members raised their concerns over the Bell Centre project being included without the Council knowing whether the current owner is a willing partner. The Committee was reassured that Officers are communicating with the current owner. In addition, Members were reminded that the Bell Centre occupies a key place within the town centre and some action needs taking as it is currently not fulfilling its potential. In conclusion, the Committee did not generally support the inclusion of the Bell Centre project within the plan.
- The Committee was supportive of the inclusion of a programme of health checks (physical and mental health) for farmers based at the cattle market.
- It was 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 oppose to running projects without a partner, the Council could see a greater benefit of return and therefore value for money.
- The comment was made that if the Council does go into partnership, then the Council would need to carry out due diligence to ensure the sustainability of the partner. The Chief Executive assured the Committee that this would be the case.
- A Member commented that more funding should be directed towards the rural economy and that a greater bond needs building with the parish councils.
- 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.
- The Committee also agreed that the Council should direct the 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.
- 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.
- A Member felt that the bid must include support for increased cost of living, tourism and the visitor economy and rural isolation/access to services/connectivity.

Written by: Scrutiny Committee Chairman in consultation with Members of the Scrutiny Committee