

East Herts Council Report

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 5 March 2024

Report by: Councillor Vicky Glover-Ward, Executive Member for Planning and Growth,

Councillor Tim Hoskin, Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability,

Councillor Alex Daar, Executive Member for Communities

Report title: Update on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Ward(s) affected: All

Summary

- This report updates Members on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), which is now approaching the final 12 months of delivery, having officially begun 1st April 2022 and needing to conclude by 31st March 2025.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

- (A) That Committee Members review progress to date.
- (B) That Committee Members make any suggestions for the lead Executive Members' consideration regarding investment and allocation of UKSPF resources in 2024/25.

1.0 Proposals

1.1 This paper updates Councillors on progress towards delivering East Herts' share of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural Prosperity Fund. This covers progress towards delivering the:

- East Herts Cultural Strategy
- East Herts Climate Change Strategy
- Town and village centre improvements
- Business support.

2.0 Background

Reminder of the scheme

2.1 The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) was first referenced in 2016/17 as the domestic alternative to EU structural funding which the UK had access to whilst still members. Full details were not released until February 2022 as part of the Levelling Up White Paper (which recently became the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act of 2023). UKSPF has been provided as part of an overall package of £4.8bn Levelling Up funding available to local areas. Funding follows a "delivery geography" which is essentially a district/ borough. Each area gets an individual allocation from the total fund of 2.6bn over three years from 2022/23 to 2024/25. East Herts allocation is £1,773,136. This has been supplemented by a further £472,841 from the Rural Prosperity Fund (RPF), also within the overall Levelling Up pot. The latter can only be directed towards "rural" areas or businesses (ie. Defined as any settlement with a population of less than 30,000). The funding profile is as follows:

UKSPF	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Revenue (£)	193,668	374,424	902,061
Capital (£)	21,518	55,948	225,515
Total allocation (£)	215,186	430,373	1,127,577
RPF			

Capital (£)	0	118,210	354,630
<u>Total</u>	215,186	548,583	1,482,207
<u>Grand total</u>	£2,245,976		

2.2 The national scheme has three overall investment priorities as follows. For each priority there are a specific set of suggested interventions, outputs and outcome measures against which the fund is expected to deliver.

- Community and place
- Local business
- People and skills

2.3 A key point to note is that UKSPF is money for the 'place' as opposed to money for the lead authority. East Herts essentially needs to be facilitating the process of spending rather than using the funds to deliver its core priorities or statutory functions.

2.4 Overall project management and accountability for the UKSPF sits within the Economic Development Team (part of the Communications, Strategy and Policy Service). The sponsor is Ben Wood, Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy and the Project Manager is Hilary Marsh, Economic Development Contract Officer. There are separate project leads for each of the different strand areas including Jonathan Geall (Head of Housing and Health) for the Cultural Strategy and Climate Change Strategy respectively, Andrew Figgis (Joint Economic Development Officer) and Chris Smith (Economic

Development Manager) for town centres and business support strands.

- 2.5 Despite the scheme officially starting on 1 April 2022, the amounts were not confirmed by government until December 2022 with the grant funding agreement being signed in March 2023 (this was the same for all areas nationally). The net result was that all areas have been asked to deliver a three year programme in two years with the majority of the 2022/23 funding being rolled into 2023/24.
- 2.6 East Herts submitted its “investment plan” outlining its proposed projects to central government on August 31st 2022. After this was approved a paper was taken to Executive on 10th January 2023 and [Council on the 18th January](#) 2023, where Council approved priority areas for spending. These were based on:
 - 2.7 **The Cultural Strategy 2021 – 2025**, adopted by Council on 2nd March 2021, following consultation and engagement with the public and many partners in the voluntary sector. There is a multi-agency steering group overseeing delivery of the strategy composed of 12 different organisations. The strategy was developed on the basis that there would be limited resources to deliver so the UKSPF enables the group to accelerate many of the objectives, which fit neatly under the “Communities and Place” investment priority of the UKSPF. Wider details on the Cultural Strategy can be found here: [East Herts Cultural Strategy \(2021 to 2025\) | East Herts District Council](#)
 - 2.8 **The Climate Change Strategy 2022 - 2026**, adopted by Council on 27th July 2022 which sets out a range of objectives working alongside partners and stakeholders to achieve net zero carbon by 2030. This has been developed through partnership working via the East Herts Environmental and

Climate Forum and has been shared with the public for consultation. Many of the objectives align with the “Communities and Place” investment priority of the UKSPF. More details can be found here: [Climate Change Strategy 2022-2026 | East Herts District Council](#)

- 2.9 **Town and village centres**, looking at projects and interventions to bring more footfall and investment into areas and act as a catalyst for collaboration between businesses and stakeholders. Projects need to align with the “Communities and Place” investment priority of the UKSPF. This is also an opportunity for investment to be directed towards some of the smaller towns and villages in the district.
- 2.10 **Business support** schemes to support start up and ‘second stage’ growth phases of businesses. Some of these schemes would be through the Herts Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and some would be delivered locally, building on our previously successful ERDF and new premises grant schemes. This would align with the “Local Business” theme of the UKSPF.
- 2.11 It was recognised that within these overall proposals, nothing has been allocated for the “people and skills” theme of the UKSPF. Guidance has made it clear that no spending should be allocated to this theme until year three (2024/25) as legacy EU structural funding is still supporting skills based projects in the UK until the end of 2023/24. There was no large appetite from Council in January 2023 to allocate funds to skills projects however a sum of £30,000 has been ‘held back’ pending proposals coming forward for year 3. In addition, there was also a request from the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town to jointly fund a sustainable transport project for which a further £20,000 was held back, again pending further details on delivery. These are currently under review.

2.12 The following table gives an indication of how the amounts have been allocated over the three year programme following the Council decision in January 2023.

Strand	Allocated	Allocated	Allocated	Total
	2022/3	2023/4	2024/5	
Cultural Strategy related activities (up to £290k allocated by Council)	45,000	95,000	150,000	290,000
Climate Change Strategy related activities (up to £566,000 allocated by Council)	15,000	110,000	441,000	566,000
Town centre improvement activities (up to £630,000 from UKSPF and £236,421 from RPF allocated by Council)	101,586	151,383	535,087	788,056
Business Support (up to £287,000 from UKSPF and £236,421 from RPF allocated by Council)	45,000	175,000	261,000	481,000
Skills & transport projects (tbc)	0	0	50,000	50,000
Admin Support	8,600	17,200	45,120	70,920
SUB TOTAL	215,186	548,583	1,482,207	2,245,976
Amount available	215,186	548,583	1,482,207	2,245,976

2.13 Dialogue with the Executive Members of the Joint Administration has indicated that these allocations will remain in place however some of the projects and priorities within the overall themes will be reviewed to reflect a change of priorities since the election in May of last year.

Progress to date – 2022/23 Projects

- 2.14 As per paragraph 2.5 above, Council was asked to agree funding for specific projects for the 2022/23 year in January of 2023. For years 2023/24 and 2024/25 however these decisions were delegated to the relevant Head of Service in consultation with the relevant Executive Member reflecting the fact there would be more time to develop actions and projects. An update on the actions and projects for 2022/23 can be found below:

Project	Brief description of project
<i>Cultural Strategy Related projects</i>	
Asset mapping - £15,000	Maintenance of a digital asset register of cultural opportunities to enable delivery of the cultural strategy. See 2.17
Theatre Listening Project - £15,000	Delivery of the 'Building a Common Framework for Schools' programme (focusing on using drama as a tool for change and mitigating mental health challenges for young people). This project has been supplemented with additional funding from the Arts Council, bringing investment in the project to around £40,000. The project began in the summer of 2023 and is due to conclude in autumn 2024.
Herts Inclusive Theatre Project - £6,862	Herts Inclusive Theatre (HIT) to focus on Power Up (East Herts) project, delivering drama workshops for young people with

Project	Brief description of project
	learning disabilities. Grant awarded to HIT in May 2023 and project being delivered through St. Elizabeth's and Grove Cottage. See (2.20)
East Herts Pride event - £7,688	Grant was awarded to Stort Pride organisers. See (2.18)
Digital Inclusion Project - £8,000	Focused support for older people with accessing the internet safely. Grant awarded to Age UK in March to deliver across the district in workshops and drop in sessions. See (2.21)
<i>Climate Change related projects</i>	
LCWIP - £15,000	Creation of a local cycling and walking infrastructure plan (LCWIP) which is an element of the Climate Change Strategy, the council's emerging Air Quality Action Plan and any transport interventions outlined by the County Council in LTP4/5. Grant awarded to HCC as contribution towards the overall costs (circa £45,000) in May 2023. Delivery is on-going and with completion expected in Spring 2024
<i>Town centre related projects</i>	

Project	Brief description of project
Sawbridgeworth Jubilee Gardens - £50,000	This is the land adjacent to Bell Street car park owned by East Herts and the project will involve landscaping and change of use to create more community space. A public consultation has been undertaken and design work commissioned by the Town Council who would lead on this project, work expected to start by April, with £50,000 match funded by the Town Council.
Bishop's Stortford VMS - £37,500	Bishop's Stortford town centre parking virtual signage (VMS). This system was jointly funded through UKSPF and the Bishop's Stortford BID and is now operational, having launched just before Christmas in 2023. HCC will maintain the system going forward.
Monitoring of footfall and perception surveys - £14,800	Software and manual surveys to support measurement and collection of data to track improvements against UKSPF measures. The data will be used to measure improvement in several UKSPF projects. We have previously bought into a provider called HUQ along with a consortium of other authorities. It was decided to roll over this contract in May
<i>Business support related projects</i>	

Project	Brief description of project
Business grants (new premises) - £29,000	<p>Match funded grants for new businesses to open new premises or expand existing premises. This follows on from a previous scheme which proved to be very popular. 13 businesses awarded grants. The following businesses opened in 2023 and were awarded £3k each:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highway Cycles Stortford • Hertford Cake Company • Choice Physio (Sawbridgeworth) • Moko SKN (Ware) • Attend to IT (Buntingford) • The Dog House (Sawbridgeworth) • Full of Beans (Sawbridgeworth) • The Phone Surgery Hertford • Upcycle Antics <p>A further 4 are based in the Launchpad and have been awarded £1k each.</p>
Film and creative industry inward investment - £10,000	<p>LEP led initiative to support inward investment around the film industry and related supply chain. Grant award provided to LEP in March. 8 of 10 districts are contributing to this initiative.</p>

Cultural Strategy – update:

2.15 Council allocated up to £290,000 for delivery of this strand. Decisions on awarding specific amounts were delegated to the Head of Housing and Health acting in consultation with the Executive Member for Wellbeing. In some cases these have

followed on from the Council decision to award specific amounts in January 2023.

- 2.16 The Cultural Strategy Steering Group has continued to meet regularly to refine delivery details. The Steering Group itself has no decision-making powers to award funds but are well placed to advise given their central role in developing the Cultural Strategy. The outputs and outcomes this strand are required to deliver are set out in Appendix A. Progress on priorities and projects agreed at Council in January is as follows:
- 2.17 Asset Mapping: As per (2.14) a three year contract is in place with the Community Alliance to deliver this following a tender exercise. This is for £35,000 in total made up of £15,000 for 2022/23 then £10,000 per year thereafter. We are one year into the contract and reviewing progress with the Community Alliance. This was identified by the Cultural Strategy Steering Group as key piece of enabling works to deliver the strategy by keeping a database of all existing cultural assets in the district which can be used as the basis for any promotion. The tool is not yet ready to launch but this is expected to happen in early 2024/25. We are currently in dialogue with the Community Alliance regarding progress to date before agreeing the next phase of investment.
- 2.18 Pride: as per paragraph 2.14, the organisers of the Bishop's Stortford Pride, now set up as a charity, have been awarded a grant to continue the event and expand it across the district. £7,688 was awarded to run the 2023 event (from the 2022/23 allocation) with an expectation of a similar amount for 2024 subject to agreeing deliverables. The event took place over 28th – 29th July 2023, focused on bringing together the LGBTQ+ community, friends and family to celebrate the existence of LGBTQ+ people from Bishop's Stortford and the surrounding areas. Organisations/businesses given space included The

Little Arts Workshop, Mind network, West Essex Maternity Voice Partnership, Bishops Stortford Women's Rugby Club, Dragonfly wellness, Harlow Pride, Ware base Proud Parents group for LGBTQ+ families, Herts Police – LGBTQ+ liaison officers and Herts Fire service. Performing organisations included the Pantasy Steel Pan drum band, Immi Davis (young musical artist), Adam All Drag King, Grace Savage (UK beatbox champion) and Trina Read (local singer/songwriter). When the event started in 2021, 80 people attended. At the 2023 event over 400 people did so and the intention is to continue this growth in 2024.

- 2.19 Young Curators project. This is a continuation of a previous project delivered by South Mill Arts which encourages young people with an interest in history to develop skill in curation, working with artefacts and museum professionals to deliver exhibits. Deliverables are currently being negotiated with South Mill Arts and the cost will be around £,7500 for 2024/25.
- 2.20 Inclusive Theatre: as per paragraph 2.14, Herts Inclusive Theatre are delivering the Power Up project and have been awarded £6,862 from the 2022/23 fund to deliver the project. To date, 20 people have been engaged with (not including their support workers/ carers) across 4 venues in the district.
- 2.21 Digital Inclusion Project: as per paragraph 2.14, a grant has been awarded to deliver this project from the 2022/23 allocation. This may be renewed for 2024/25 subject to a review of outcomes with Age UK Hertfordshire. The aim is to ensure older residents have the necessary digital skills to benefit from the local arts and cultural offer which is typically publicised, and sometimes accessed, online. Since April last year 37 people have been directly supported over 118 sessions with 12 devices being distributed.

- 2.22 Arts Showcase: this project will see a month long programme of arts and cultural activities in the district; the exact dates are yet to be determined although it is anticipated that it'll take place in September/October this year.
- 2.23 The overall goals of the Arts Showcase project are to provide and promote engagement opportunities for residents and further growth the district's arts and cultural sector. Showcasing the East Herts arts offering will combine exhibitions, performances, workshops and the like across the district. Organisations across the district will host both professional and non-professional art works and events which explore themes of health, wellbeing and environmental sustainability.
- 2.24 The budget assigned to the Arts Showcase is a maximum of £100,000. Work is already underway on the key elements of this project, this being:
- a cross-party member reference group to consider and provide suggestions to the Executive Member for Communities on the overall scope and direction of the project
 - an invitation to arts and cultural organisation to (a) provide / promote their activities as part of the Arts Showcase and (b) apply for small grants, this being a route via which smaller, new entrants to the cultural scene can participate in and benefit from the project
 - the use of UKSPF resources to support the establishment of an Arts Showcase group or board and, more specifically, building capacity within the group/board to cover, among other things, fund-raising, marketing and the like so as to put the Arts Showcase of a firmer footing that can enable it run on an annual basis with the minimum of financial support from the council.

- 2.25 Cultural Activities Small grants; a pot of £20,000 in 2023/24 and same again for 2024/25. It is worth noting that the Cultural Strategy has strong alignment with the council's existing community grants programme. Over the past few years, the total grant pot available has been reduced in order to meet budget pressures. The funds allocated to the Cultural Strategy – particularly those elements where community groups can bid for funds – can act to supplement some of these reductions and offer community groups further opportunities for obtaining support.
- 2.26 A refreshed community grants programme, aligned with the UKPSF, was approved by Council on the [18th October 2023](#) and was launched on 1st November. This also streamlines the application process for community groups, meaning the same application form is used regardless of whether you are applying for a community grant or a cultural activities or environmental sustainability grant funded by the UKSPF. The grant application deadline was 22nd January 2024 and was well subscribed. Assessment of bids is due to conclude at the end of February.

Climate change – update

- 2.27 Council allocated up to £566,000 for this strand. Delegated authority for spending individual amounts rests with the Head of Housing and Health acting in consultation with the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability. The outputs and outcomes which the funds are designed to deliver can be found at Appendix A.
- 2.28 An update on progress and amounts allocated can be found below:
- 2.29 Climate Change and Sustainability Project Officers: Two officers have been appointed on fixed term contracts until 31st

March 2025. The total cost, including employer oncosts and some use of funds for temporary support prior to them starting, is £140,000.

- 2.30 The environmental sustainability grant scheme launched on 1st November 2023 alongside community grant scheme. The focus was on carbon reduction matters in line with the UKSPF outputs and outcomes. In total, £20,000 is available for 2023/24 with the same for 2024/25. The application window closed on 22nd January 2024; applications are being assessed.
- 2.31 Community buildings retrofit. The council is working with, town and parish councils and the East Herts Village Hall Network which is support by Community Development Action (CDA). An allocation of £100,000 is being made available for (a) decarbonisation plans for community buildings and (b) contributions to works identified in the plans.
- 2.32 Retrofit show homes. This is project is based on initial ideas to fund Passivhaus/energy efficient new build as it is recognised that improving existing homes in the district is a major priority. Officers have engaged a local housing association to add UKSPF to the association's existing energy efficiency upgrade programme to deliver (a) a fully retrofitted home, including replacement of the heating system with a renewable system, bringing the home up to an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of A and (b) an 'initial steps' show home that will bring the property up from an EPC D or E rating to an EPC C. A total of £200,000 has been allocated to this project.
- 2.33 Allied to the above, a further £40,000 has been allocated to working with town and parish councils and local climate change groups to develop a network of 'energy hubs' across the district. This project will see the different councils and groups becoming centres of local advice and expertise. The funding will support physical hubs, mobile hubs and materials

and virtual web-based information. Work is well underway and is being promoted and monitored through the East Herts Environmental and Climate Forum.

- 2.34 Tree planting/ greening. This project will be delivered during the 2024 planting season. The proposal is to 'stretch' the funding with match-funding from partners, including housing associations and town and parish councils. Discussions are underway with partners.

Town and village centre improvements - progress and next steps

- 2.35 Council allocated up to £866,421 from the UKSPF and RPF to be directed towards town and village centre improvements. The decision to award the individual grants is delegated to the Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Growth. This constitutes the largest share of the fund and was done on so on the basis that physical projects would have the most impact in terms of outcomes and outputs in the communities and place theme. These can be found in Appendix A.
- 2.36 It was also recognised that this amount is not enough to undertake any large-scale capital projects, however would be enough to support smaller, lower profile projects around the district. For this reason, projects from all towns and villages were invited to submit expressions of interest.
- 2.37 Throughout February – June 2023, the economic development team contacted all thirty-seven parish councils as well as the five town councils to discuss potential projects. This process included:
- Initial emails to all parish clerks and Council Leaders

- Follow up phone conversations for those parishes expressing an interest
- Face to face meetings on site to discuss potential projects and test feasibility of using UKSPF/ RPF to support
- Invitation of expressions of interest from parishes/ towns setting out how projects will deliver stated outputs/ outcomes and delivery mechanisms
- Follow up emails and phone calls to any parishes who did not respond
- Follow up meetings and discussions to refine expressions of interest

2.38 The economic development team had responses from fourteen parishes over this period along with all five towns. From this process, a “long list” of projects was produced. This list was shared with all District Council members on July 24th 2023.

2.39 Projects have only been taken forward for consideration if:

- It will deliver key outputs/ outcomes required from the UKSPF (i.e.
- There is a clear need for the project/ there is evidence of local support (eg. This could come from local consultation exercises or parish council minutes in which it was supported)
- There is some form of match funding available (ie. The UKSPF is leveraging additional investment from other sources). For small parishes this might not need to be cash but can be ‘in kind’ support (such as free materials and labour)
- The project has been properly scoped (eg. Quotes for works or services have been obtained)
- The likelihood of delivery is strong (i.e. We think the funds will be spent by 31 March 2025)

- 2.40 There is also a desire by the Executive Member for Planning and Growth to ensure a fair allocation across towns and villages. A guideline figure of up to £50,000 for our larger towns (Hertford and Bishop's Stortford), up to £100,000 for our smaller towns (Ware, Buntingford and Sawbridgeworth) and the remaining £450,000 across the villages has been in place. This has not necessarily been a hard limit but has been useful in terms of ensuring fairness and transparency in decision making to date. It is also a recognition that many of the smaller settlements in East Herts can be overlooked in terms of investment and that grants should be directed towards projects in these areas if possible.
- 2.41 A total of 49 expressions of interest were submitted over this period (collectively from 8 parishes and the 5 towns). To date, 11 of these have been approved, as follows:
- 2.42 Improvement to Albury Parish Council village hall. This includes replacing the patio area (along with awnings and security lights) which increase the hall's usability for events, improve the public realm and increase footfall. The total cost of the project is £25,000 with £19,997 of that coming from the UKSPF/ RPF. This project is now complete.
- 2.43 Improvement to facilities and security at Albury Football Club, enabling more use (including by the local primary school). Total cost of the project was £18,717 with £10,717 of that coming from the UKSPF/ RPF. This project is now complete.
- 2.44 Improvements to Hertford Heath village green. This includes installation of mains power to support more events, dropped kerb and a new mesh path. This will improve the public realm, increase footfall and allow safe access to the green for wheelchairs, pushchairs and the like. The total cost of the project will be £25,000 with £18,000 of this coming from the UKSPF/ RPF. This project is in progress.

- 2.45 Creation of a picnic area (including buddy benches, additional furniture and clearing) in the Stanstead Abbotts Meadow area, enabling more use by families and visitors. Total cost of the project was £14,810 with £9,810 coming from the UKSPF/ RPF. This project is complete.
- 2.46 Installation of power sources to street furniture in Bishop's Stortford to support the market and other events. Total cost of the project is just over £27,000 with a £13,564 from the UKPSF and joint match funding from the BID and Town Council covering the remaining 50%. This project is awaiting approval from HCC who own the street furniture.
- 2.47 Various improvements to Hunsdon including 'greening' of street furniture. Total cost estimated at £30,000 with £23,000 being provided through the UKSPF. Remaining amount is in kind support (labour and materials) from Hunsdon Parish Council. This project is in progress.
- 2.48 Little Berkhamstead village hall energy efficiency improvements including insulation, replacement windows and redecoration. This will make the facility usable during colder months for more community events. The Parish Council have secured grant funding nationally for this works with £9,157 being provided from the UKSPF. This project is complete.
- 2.49 Various small scale works including refurbishment and renewal of village landmarks, footpaths and map signboards to link the 8 hamlets in Little Hadham. £13,200 coming from the UKSPF. This project is in progress.
- 2.50 Datchworth village centre improvements – agreed in principle however details currently being negotiated with the parish council following a change of membership in May. £15,000

- 2.51 A contribution of £100,000 to Ware Town Council as part of their plans to convert the public WCs at the Priory into a community led café (total cost estimated at £250,000). This will create new commercial space with Ware Town Centre. Details are currently being finalised with Ware Town Council.
- 2.52 A contribution of £45,000 towards the completion of the Sawbridgeworth Memorial Hall. The total project is £425,000 with the remainder of the funds already raised. The planned extension of the Hall is now able to proceed.
- 2.53 It is important to note that all parishes requesting support have received funding for at least one of their projects. Please note the above is in addition to the VMS for Bishop's Stortford (£37,500) and Jubilee Gardens project in Sawbridgeworth (£50,000) which was agreed as part of the 2022/23 allocation.
- 2.54 Several other projects have been agreed in principle including Hertford (a contribution towards the installation of VMS) and Buntingford (improvements to the high street). At the time of writing however delivery details and final amounts had not been agreed.
- 2.55 When projects for these two towns have been agreed, all villages and towns who have asked for UKSPF funding will have received part of the district's UKSPF and RPF allocation, ensuring a degree of fairness in the decision making process. It is also estimated that there will be circa £250,000 available in 2024/25 for one larger capital project to be undertaken. Options are currently being discussed with the Executive Member for Planning and Growth.

Business Support programmes and grants:

- 2.56 Council allocated up to £523,421 from the UKSPF and RPF to be directed towards business support. The decision to award

the individual grants is delegated to the Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Growth. The outcomes and outputs can be found at **Appendix A**.

- 2.57 The delivery approach in this theme is a mix of externally commissioned projects through the Herts LEP and 'in house' grant delivery. The LEP projects are based on previous schemes with a good track record of delivery in the county. A menu of options was provided to district councils at the outset of the UKSPF and districts opted to invest more into projects they deemed of relevance for their local area. The projects and spending amounts that East Herts Council agreed to in January 2023 can be found below:
- 2.58 £30,000 to Herts Growth Hub for 2023/24 with a further £30,000 for 2024/25. A contract has been signed with the Herts LEP to deliver additional support to East Herts businesses, focusing on second stage growth and expansion. This is part of a wider contract that all districts have signed up to. Details can be found [here](#). Since the extra investment was provided 2,301 businesses from the district have contacted the hub so far. Of these, 91 were provided with over 6 hours worth of support. In addition the Growth Hub exhibited at the Bishop's Stortford Means Business event last year and regularly run events and support sessions from the Council's Launchpad.
- 2.59 £30,000 to Start up and Get Enterprising for 2023/24 and a further £30,000 for 2024/25. A contract has been signed with the Herts LEP to deliver additional support to East Herts businesses at the start up stage. This is part of a wider contract that eight districts have signed up to. More details can be found [here](#). 139 residents from the district have been in touch since this additional service started, 4 of whom have

started up businesses resulting in 9 additional jobs being created.

- 2.60 £10,000 to the Herts film office for 2023/24 with a further £10,000 for 2024/25. A contract has been signed with the Herts LEP to support inward investment connected to film and media in East Herts. This is part of a wider contract that eight districts have signed up to. To date, the office has made eight referrals to private premises in the district as possible filming locations.
- 2.61 With regards to the in-house grant schemes; we currently have two in operation.
- 2.62 The new premises grant scheme replicates the former scheme of the same name, encouraging new businesses to open premises or existing businesses to expand their premises in the district. This proved to be highly successful in the past, helping to provide business owners with an incentive to take on vacant premises. Grant amounts are up to £5,000 and must be match funded by the business. This scheme [launched in February 2023](#) with an invitation for individuals to get in touch if they think they are eligible. The grant is given on a first come, first serve basis and demand is always high given the strong business startup rates in the district.
- 2.63 As per (2.14), 13 grants were given out as part of the 2022/23 allocation. A further £25,000 has been earmarked until the end of 2023/24 and this will be allocated in March. A similar amount will be available in 2024/25.
- 2.64 The new products and services grant was also launched in February 2023 and closed at the end of October. Businesses can apply for support to develop new products or services (eg. purchasing new equipment, developing new products or

expanding their infrastructure) or entering new markets (post Brexit). These grants will be larger in size with expected values of between £10,000 - £50,000, much of which is likely to be capital. All applicants will be required to provide match funding (50%).

2.65 Although it may seem counter-intuitive, allocating the larger grant can be challenging. As with previous schemes businesses have strong interest in “free” money but are often not able to demonstrate a direct link to an outcome (eg. An increase in the number of jobs/ increased commercial floorspace brought back into use). With higher grant amounts we also require additional checks and re-assurances (eg. That new equipment won’t be purchased using the grant and then re-sold some months later and that companies are financially viable). As a consequence, this grant programme is “facilitated” meaning we provide hands on support through the economic development service to work with businesses on managing their expectations. Put another way, we will not allow a business to make an application if it does not meet our criteria. Moreover, business that have only recently set up or in their startup phase will not be eligible. For that reason, only a light touch ‘expression of interest’ form was available on our website when the scheme launched last year. All contacts were followed up through a further conversation between the business and the Economic and Business Development Manager, specifically testing out what key outcomes and outputs the proposal could deliver, based on the following scoring matrix:

Outcomes (70% overall)	% weighting
Number of commercial buildings developed or improved (numerical value)	15

Amount of commercial buildings developed or improved (m ²)	55
Number of rehabilitated premises (numerical value)	15
Number of businesses engaged in new markets (numerical value)	15

Outputs (30% overall)	% weighting
Jobs created (numerical value)	40
Jobs safeguarded (numerical value)	10
Increased amount of investment (£)	20
Number of businesses introducing new products to the firm (numerical value)	5
Number of businesses adopting new to the firm technologies or processes (numerical value)	5
Number of new to market products (numerical value)	10
Number of businesses engaged in new markets (numerical value)	5
Number of businesses increasing their export capability (numerical value)	5

2.66 Expressions of interest geared towards creation of jobs and/ or creation of commercial space score the most highly as they are deemed to generate the most return to the East Herts economy of the grant investment.

- 2.67 At the closing date we had well over 100 expressions of interest. Many of these scored zero/ very low or were at the startup phase and were discounted immediately. Any expressions of interest scoring less than 35% were also discounted leaving 8 current grants which will be further explored by inviting the businesses to submit a full application.
- 2.68 This year's available fund of £84,000 could support the majority of these subject to application assessment and the usual financial checks on the business. The Executive Member for Planning and Growth will be provided with an assessed shortlist of successful applications in March of this year.
- 2.69 Following approval of this initial round of grants, further communication on publicising the scheme will be undertaken. Expressions of interest will open again in April for the 2024/25 year, where £203,000 of grant support is available. The webpage advertising this scheme can be found [here](#).
- 2.70 Priorities for 2024/25**
- 2.71 As we move into the final 12 months of the UKSPF and RPF schemes, our priorities will be to ensure that the grants and contracts given out deliver the outcomes and outputs specified. All recipients of funding are required to sign a grant funding agreement (or equivalent for a contract) which includes submission of evaluation data. This data will be publicised to promote the various projects taking place across the district. A further report detailing the outcomes and legacy of the UKSPF and RPF will be provided to Committee Members when it closes.

Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

Appendix A – Outputs and outcomes

Paper to Council January 2023: [Agenda item - East Herts UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural Prosperity Fund - East Herts District Council](#)

Contact Members: Councillor Vicky Glover-Ward, Executive Member for Planning and Growth,

Councillor Tim Hoskin, Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability,

Councillor Alex Daar, Executive Member for Communities

Report Author: Benjamin Wood, Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy, Tel: 07519 293733.
benjamin.wood@eastherts.gov.uk

Appendix A – Outcomes and Outputs

The UKSPF has a wide suite of outputs and outcomes which can be used to measure progress towards meeting Levelling Up objectives: [UK Shared Prosperity Fund: outputs and outcomes definitions \(2\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-outputs-and-outcomes-definitions-2)

The following outcomes and outputs are the measures which were selected by East Herts as part of its Investment Plan submission to DLUHC in August 2022, and subsequently approved by Council in January 2023.

There is no expectation that individual projects have to impact all indicators or that some are given more weight than others. When grant funding agreements or contracts are signed, each organisation undertaking delivery will be required to set out which outcomes and outputs they will be focused on and their projected targets.

We are required to submit a six monthly return to DLUHC on outcomes and outputs to check progress.

Cultural Strategy

Outputs
Number of neighbourhood improvements undertaken (numerical value)
Number of facilities supported/created (numerical value)
Number of local events or activities supported (numerical value)
Number of Tourism, Culture or heritage assets created or improved (numerical value)
Number of events/participatory programmes (numerical value)
Number of volunteering opportunities supported (numerical value)

Levels of participation in sports and recreational activities at facilities that have benefitted from funding (based on registered players/teams) (% increase)

Outcomes
Increased footfall (% increase)
Increased visitor numbers (% increase)
Improved perception of facilities/amenities (% increase)
Increased users of facilities/amenities (% increase)
Improved engagement numbers (% increase)
Number of community-led arts, cultural, heritage and creative programmes as a result of support (numerical value)
Volunteering numbers as a result of support (numerical value)
Number of new or improved community facilities as a result of support (numerical value)

Climate change strategy

Outputs
Number of low or zero carbon energy infrastructure installed (numerical value)
Amount of low or zero carbon energy infrastructure installed (m2)
Number of decarbonisation plans developed (numerical value)
Number of trees planted (numerical value)
Number of low or zero carbon energy infrastructure installed (numerical value)
Amount of low or zero carbon energy infrastructure installed (m2)
Number of decarbonisation plans developed (numerical value)

Outcomes
Increased amount of low or zero carbon energy infrastructure installed (% increase)
Greenhouse gas reductions (% decrease in Tonnes of Co2e)
Increased take up of energy efficiency measures (% increase)

Town and Village Centre Improvements

Outputs
Number of rehabilitated premises (numerical value)
Amount of rehabilitated land (m2)
Amount of public realm created or improved (m2)
Number of local events or activities supported (numerical value)
Amount of new or improved cycleways or paths (m2)
Number of Tourism, Culture or heritage assets created or improved (numerical value)
Levels of participation in sports and recreational activities at facilities that have benefitted from funding (based on registered players/teams) (% increase)

Outcomes
Increased footfall (% increase)
Increased visitor numbers (% increase)
Improved perception of facilities/amenities (% increase)
Increased users of facilities/amenities (% increase)
Improved perception of facility/infrastructure project (% increase)
Increased use of cycleways or paths (% increase)
Number of new or improved community facilities as a result of support (numerical value)

Local Business

Outcomes
Number of commercial buildings developed or improved (numerical value)
Amount of commercial buildings developed or improved (m2)
Number of businesses engaged in new markets (numerical value)

Outputs
Jobs created (numerical value)
Jobs safeguarded (numerical value)
Number of new businesses created (numerical value)
Reduced vacancy rates (% decrease)
Increase in visitor spending (% increase)
Increased amount of investment (£)
Number of businesses introducing new products to the firm (numerical value)
Number of businesses adopting new to the firm technologies or processes (numerical value)
Number of new to market products (numerical value)
Number of businesses adopting new or improved products or services (numerical value)
Number of businesses engaged in new markets (numerical value)
Number of early stage firms which increase their revenue following support (numerical value)
Number of businesses increasing their export capability (numerical value)