



## **REPORT TO THE MEETING OF CABINET - 20 November 2024**

### **PORTFOLIO: SPECIAL PROJECTS & ASSETS – CLLR TOM GIBSON**

### **REPORT FROM ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, CLIMATE AND GROWTH**

### **SUBJECT: UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND UPDATE**

#### **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide an update on how UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF) has been used to support a variety of projects in Castle Point, and to seek approval for reassignment of some of the funding between interventions to ensure it is spent by the deadline of 31 March 2025. Any unspent funding must be returned to the Government.

#### **2 LINKS TO COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES**

- 2.1 UKSPF is an enabling grant resource that can contribute towards the Council's priorities in relation to the economy, people and the environment.

#### **3 RECOMMENDATION**

##### **3.1 It is proposed that Cabinet **RESOLVES****

- (1) To note the projects that have been delivered to date, as set out in section 5 of this report.
- (2) To approve the reallocation of funds between UKSPF interventions as set out in Table 4 of this report and recommended as option 3, to ensure the full expenditure of the grant by 31 March 2025.

- (3) To approve the use of the remaining funding available for feasibility work under intervention E14 to deliver a Tourism and Culture Strategy.

#### 4 INTRODUCTION

- 4.1 Back in April 2022, the Government launched a £2.6bn UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). At the launch the Government confirmed the allocation for each local authority based on population, with a minimum allocation of £1m. In the case of Castle Point, the Council was allocated £1m, to be paid to the Council over a 3-year period to March 2025.
- 4.2 To access the money, the Government invited each local authority to prepare an Investment Plan setting out how the funding would be used. To assist the preparation of investment plans the Government issued guidance and 41 possible interventions that the funding could be used on. These interventions were intentionally high level to allow for local responses to different issues to be developed.
- 4.3 Officers prepared the Investment Plan following discussions with Cabinet in August 2022. The Investment Plan was submitted to Government on 1 September 2022 and the Council received a confirmation of grant letter on 5 December 2022.
- 4.4 A report setting out the details of the grant award was brought to Cabinet in [January 2023 \(Agenda Item 6\)](#).
- 4.5 The funding was profiled over years by the Government with 8% assigned to 2022/23, 16% to 2023/24 and the remaining 76% to 2024/25. All expenditure on people and skills interventions was limited to 2024/25 only.
- 4.6 The funding is both capital and revenue and can be used against other funding sources. There is a minimum requirement for capital spend, being 10% in 2022/23, 13% in 2023/24 and 20% in 2024/25.
- 4.7 The spend profile agreed by the Government for Castle Point is as set out below:

**Table 1: UKSPF Agreed Spend Profile for Castle Point**

Year	Capital	Revenue	TOTAL
<b>2022/23</b>	<b>£11,707</b>	<b>£67,600</b>	<b>£79,307</b>
<b>2023/24</b>	<b>£46,294</b>	<b>£112,320</b>	<b>£158,614</b>
<b>2024/25</b>	<b>£355,439</b>	<b>£406,640</b>	<b>£762,079</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£413,440</b>	<b>£586,560</b>	<b>£1,000,000</b>

- 4.8 The Investment Plan agreed for Castle Point was as follows:

**Table 2: UKSPF Interventions for Castle Point as set out in the Investment Plan**

<b>Communities and Place</b>	
E1: Improvements to town centres & high streets	£230,400
E3: Creation of and improvements to local green spaces	£104,000
E11: Capacity building & infrastructure support to local groups	£104,000
E12: Community engagement schemes, local regeneration	£72,800
E14: Relevant feasibility studies	£114,400
<i>Communities and Place sub-Total</i>	<b>£625,600</b>
<b>Local Business</b>	
E16: Open markets & town centre retail & service sector	£93,600
E23: Strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems	£104,000
<i>Local Business sub-Total</i>	<b>£197,600</b>
<b>People and Skills</b>	
E33: Employment support for economically inactive people	£72,800
E39: Green skills courses	£104,000
<i>People and Skills sub-Total</i>	<b>£176,800</b>

4.9 The following rules apply to the funding:

- Up to 4% can be used to administer UKSPF
- Monies can be moved around within the sub-group i.e. E1 to E3, or E16 to E23.
- Monies cannot be moved between sub-groups without Government approval.
- Revenue can be moved to Capital, but Capital cannot be moved to Revenue without Government approval.
- All monies must be spent (accrued) by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025. Any unspent monies must be returned.
- Procurement rules must be followed when spending money from UKSPF.

## 5 PROJECT DELIVERY TO DATE

5.1 The report to Cabinet in January 2023 set out, at a high level, how we anticipated the money would be spent against each of the interventions. The following progress has been made in this regard.

5.2 **E1: Improvements to town centres and high streets:** A small scheme has been procured to improve the entrance way to Rectory Road car park in Hadleigh. Work is due to commence shortly.

5.3 **E3: Creation of and improvements to local green spaces** – funding has been used to deliver a significant upgrade to the play space at Thorney Bay Park and to deliver tree planting across the wider site.

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5.4 **E11: Capacity building and infrastructure support to local groups – following four rounds of applications**, 20 community grants have been approved to deliver a range of projects within the community that engage local people and support their wellbeing:

- **Hadleigh Old Fire Station** – Infra-red heating panels
- **Trust Links** – Gunny tree planting workshops
- **Winter Gardens Baptist Church** – acoustic wall panels
- **Canvey Island Methodist Church** – expansion of usable space
- **Art Ministry** – additional capacity for art workshops
- **Volunteer It Yourself** – community-based construction project
- **Salvation Army** – expansion of Canvey Community Hub activities
- **Estuary Festival** – Estuary Anthology – community based creative skills development
- **Benfleet Cricket and Social Club** – Clubhouse refurbishments
- **Hadleigh and Thundersley Community Archive** – digitisation of records
- **Hadleigh Community Group** – Table tennis tables and boules court for John H Burrows
- **Canvey Island Youth Project** – Expansion of Friday night youth club
- **Home Start Essex** – Family support programme
- **SEND The Right Message** – Supporting people with specific educational needs and disabilities
- **Independent Artist** – Engaging with the intertidal zone through a series of community art engagement events
- **DadsConnect** – community social action focused around dads
- **YoHa** – sleeping with the dead project engaging the community in the history of mass graves from Bedlam at Canvey
- **Estuary Festival** – development of a guide of family friendly activities across Castle Point
- **Hadleigh Old Fire Station** – community open day featuring a range of creative activities
- **Winter Gardens Baptist Church** – GROW a community garden project

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- 5.5 **E12: Community engagement schemes** – this funding has been used to part fund the Council’s community engagement system, Citizen Space, which has enabled us to achieve a significant uptick in engagement levels in consultation events. It has also been used to fund Engagement through Art which has seen a broader range of people, including children, young people, those with mental health challenges, local heritage groups and the local Jewish community in place-making.
- 5.6 **E14: Feasibility studies** – this funding has delivered the Canvey Market Revitalisation Study and is being used to deliver the Hadleigh Visioning Study currently underway.
- 5.7 **E16: Markets, town centres, retail and service sector** – funding has been used to improve our Choose Local website and social media, to support local high street businesses. The capital funding assigned to this intervention is being used to improve Canvey Market as per the report to Cabinet of the 16 October 2024.
- 5.8 **E23: Strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems** – the Castle Point Business Accelerator is being delivered under a contract with Deyton Bell and is providing one-to-one support and group sessions to businesses looking to set up and grow in Castle Point.
- 5.9 **E33: Employment support for economically inactive people** – a scheme called Employment Plus is being delivered under contract with the Salvation Army which provides support for those who are economically inactive but wish to re-enter the workforce. This provides additionality to services provided by the DWP, as it focuses on those not in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance and are furthest from the labour market.
- 5.10 **E39: Green Skills Courses** – working in conjunction with Basildon, Essex and Thurrock a contract has been put in place with STC to provide a retrofit training programme for those in or thinking of getting into the construction sector to access training on how to retrofit homes and properties. This project is commencing in November 2024.

## 6 SPEND COMMITTED

- 6.1 The table that follows sets out how the funding allocated has been committed to date. The table excludes the 4% of the funding that the Council can retain to administer the grant:

**Table 3: Spend committed against original UKSPF interventions as at October 2024**

Intervention	Capital / Revenue	Amount allocated (exc. 4% admin)	Amount committed	Uncommitted
E1	Capital	£220,000	£10,000	£210,000
E3	Capital	£100,000	£24,654	£75,346
E11	Capital	£26,000	£12,000	£14,000
E11	Revenue	£74,000	£83,243	<b>-£9,243</b>
E12	Revenue	£70,000	£70,000	-
E14	Revenue	£110,000	£64,960	£45,040
E16	Capital	£50,000	£50,000	-
E16	Revenue	£40,000	£39,870	£130
E23	Revenue	£100,000	£97,480	£2,520
E33	Revenue	£70,000	£70,000	-
E39	Revenue	£100,000	£40,000	£25,000

## 7 FURTHER PROJECTS

7.1 A significant amount of funding against intervention E1 remains unspent. This is all capital and we have explored various options around intervention. However, the following challenges have presented themselves:

- Our financial rules on capital expenditure mean that spends must be £10,000 or more. This has excluded us from offering a shopfront improvement scheme as these normally offer grants of £1,000 to £5,000.
- Some of the small-scale projects we initially identified might be capable of being adopted as part of any Long Term Plan for Towns funding awarded to Canvey Island.
- Larger schemes typically involved ECC land or utilities and would have exceeded the funding available.

7.2 However, we have been able to identify several un-funded open spaces schemes that could be delivered by March 2025 if the funding for E1 was reallocated to intervention E3. These are:

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- The delivery of a sensory garden in the Benfleet area
  - Open space and flood alleviation improvements at Woodside Park
  - Open space footpath improvements including solar lighting through Richmond Park and South Benfleet Playing Fields
  - Children’s playground improvements at South Benfleet Playing Fields in the first instance. If funding allows improvements will also be delivered at Woodside Park also.
- 7.3 To secure the delivery of these projects it is recommended that the remaining monies assigned to E1 (£210,000) are reallocated to E3 and spent alongside the remaining allocation for E3.
- 7.4 The monies assigned to intervention E11 have largely been spent following four rounds of seeking grant proposals. However, there has been an overspend on revenue and an underspend on capital. It is recommended that the underspend on Capital is reallocated to intervention E3, to support the delivery of those projects listed in 7.2. It is recommended that the overspend on revenue is covered by the current underspend on intervention E14.
- 7.5 Once the overspend on intervention E11 is addressed, there remains £35,000 unspent against intervention E14. It is proposed that this remaining revenue resource is used to prepare a Tourism and Cultural Strategy, falling out the work being undertaken by the Tourism Task and Finish Group (reporting to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee). This links into the planned Estuary Festival 2025 and increased interest in cultural development within the Borough more generally. Once a draft strategy has been developed, it is proposed that it will be reported to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for review. This new proposal replaces the proposal contained in the January 2023 report on UKSPF to spend this on developing town centre proposals. This change in direction reflects the challenges referred to above.
- 7.6 A small sum of money amounting to £2,500 remains against intervention E23. This is because the business support contract came in slightly below budget. It is recommended that this is reassigned to intervention E16 to deliver further enhancements to the Choose Local provision, promoting local high street businesses.
- 7.7 Regarding intervention E39, a contract is in place for part of the funding allocated to this intervention as set out at paragraph 5.10. Work is ongoing to secure a contract with partners at Essex County Council and Thurrock Council to deliver training in relation to Electric Vehicle charging and green technology skills.
- 7.8 However, in discussion with those working with young people it became clear that some of the young people we were looking to target do not have the basic skills re: English, Maths, basic construction (CSCS) to be able to take up green skill courses. It is therefore proposed that £35,000 unspent against

intervention E39 is moved to a new intervention E34. This would enable us to provide training in functional skills in English, maths and basic construction, with young people walking away with CSCS cards so they can work safely in construction and move onto green skills training in construction.

7.9 The following table sets out a summary of the reallocations proposed:

**Table 4: Summary of UKSPF reallocations proposed**

From	To	Amount	Type
E1	E3	£210,000	Capital
E11	E3	£14,000	Capital
E14	E11	£9,200	Revenue
E23	E16	£2,500	Revenue
E39	E34	£35,000	Revenue

## 8 OPTIONS

- 8.1 Option 1: **Do Nothing**. If the monies are left assigned against the original interventions set out in the report of January 2023, it is unlikely we will be able to spend them. Anything unspent by 31 March 2025 must be returned to Government.
- 8.2 Option 2: **Alternative reallocations to those suggested**. It is considered that those reallocations suggested can be delivered by the 31 March 2025. Any alternatives would need to be deliverable, as anything unspent by 31 March 2025 must be returned to Government.
- 8.3 Option 3: **Reallocate funding as suggested**. It is considered that those reallocations suggested in section 7 of this report can be delivered by 31 March 2025, and align with the Council's aspirations for the Borough, and the needs of the local community and local businesses.
- 8.4 Preferred Option: **Option 3** as set out above.

## 9 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The financial implications are set out in the relevant section below. The other key implication associated with this report is one of reputation. It is important that the Council makes full and effective use of resources it has at its disposal and risks reputational harm if it was to fail to deliver projects from UKSPF and have to return unspent monies.



- 9.2 Should any of the projects overrun then only the element of the scheme delivered on or by 31 March can be grant funded. There is a risk that unforeseen circumstances or unfavourable weather conditions could result in the Council having to fund the remaining delivery from its own resources. The Council's Financial Regulations will be adhered to for dealing with any overspend arising.

## **10 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 It is important that the Council maximises the use of external funding to ensure benefits are obtained for the Borough and no funding needs to be returned to the grant funding body (in this case, Government).
- 10.2 The reallocations proposed are allowed for within the terms and conditions of the grant funding and do not conflict in any way with the Council's Financial Regulations.

## **11 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 There are none arising from this report.

## **12 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1 An equality impact assessment has been undertaken to support this report. It indicates that the proposed use of the remaining UKSPF to fund open space improvements and function skills training for local young people will deliver against the aims of the equality act by improving equality of opportunity, and by reducing the risks of discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- 12.2 The proposal has potentially positive impacts across the characteristics of age, disability and gender. This is because investment in open spaces will improve the range of activities available for young people in the Borough. The recent open space assessment indicated a need for this investment. Furthermore, the delivery of open space facilities to current standards provides the opportunity for more provision for people with disabilities. The proposal extends to lighting of routes of across Benfleet Playing Fields which improves the perceived safety of this route for women and girls, as well as those from other minority groups. Lighting is a key feature of open spaces identified in Making Space for Girls guidance.
- 12.3 Additionally, the proposal to invest in intervention E34 means that those young people lacking functional skills can gain those skills and gain skills in the construction sector. Youth workers had reported that young people, particularly young men were being exploited in this sector . They were being offered below minimum wage day rates for labouring on construction sites without the necessary health and safety training or equipment. This intervention should empower these young people to know their rights, and access proper employment in construction.
- 12.4 The Tourism and Culture Strategy will be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment as part of its development to ensure it supports the equality aims.



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**Background Papers:-**

[UKSPF Cabinet Report 18 January 2023 \(Agenda Item 6\)](#)

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