

Meeting of:	TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM
Date of Meeting:	29 AUGUST 2023
Report Title:	UNITED KINGDOM SHARED PROSPERITY FUND
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CORPORATE DIRECTOR COMMUNITIES
Responsible Officer:	IEUAN SHERWOOD, GROUP MANAGER ECONOMY, NATURAL RESOURCES AND SUSTAINABILITY
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect upon the Council's policy framework or procedure rules as a result of this report.
Executive Summary:	<p>The purpose of this report is to update the Town and Community Council Forum on the United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund and a series of grant funds available as part of the delivery programme for Bridgend's Local Investment Plan through the United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund.</p> <p>The funds are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bridgend Valley Placemaking Property Improvement Grant • Empty Property Survey Grants • Community Feasibility Fund • The Business Development Grant • Bridgend County Business Future Scoping Programme • Bridgend County Tourism Events Support

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Town and Community Council Forum of the United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and to outline a series of grant funds available as part of the delivery programme for Bridgend's Local Investment Plan.

2. Background

- 2.1 Following the withdrawal of the UK from the European Union on 31 January 2020, the United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund is the UK government's replacement for the European Structural Investment Funds (ESIF).
- 2.2 The UKSPF is a key part of the UK government's Levelling Up agenda, forming part of complementary funding, including the Levelling Up Fund and Community Ownership Fund.
- 2.3 The primary aim of the fund is to build pride in place and increase life chances across the UK. Underpinning this aim are three investment Priorities: communities and place; supporting local business and people and skills.
- The **Communities and Place** investment priority will enable places to invest to restore their community spaces and relationships and create the foundations for economic development at the neighbourhood-level. The intention of this is to strengthen the social fabric of communities, supporting in building pride in place.
 - The **Supporting Local Business** investment priority will enable places to fund interventions that support local businesses to thrive, innovate and grow.
 - The **People and Skills** investment priority will help reduce the barriers some people face to employment and support them to move towards employment and education. Places can also target funding into skills for local areas to support employment and local growth.

As part of the People and Skills priority there is a dedicated and ringfenced element of the UKSPF called Multiply which seeks to improve adult numeracy skills.

- 2.4 Following a series of internal workshops with officers from across all Directorates within the Council a draft set of proposals was developed to access UKSPF. This set of proposals was then discussed with the County Borough's Economic Partnership and the Public Service Board (PSB). In addition, the proposals were shared and discussed with Members of the Senedd and Bridgend County's two Members of Parliament, whose support is required for the proposed activity outlined in the Bridgend County Borough Local Investment Plan information. Following engagement and feedback, proposals were revised before being presented to Cabinet in July 2022. As information and guidance evolves and further detail is provided it may be the case that proposals change again.
- 2.5 In July 2022 Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) Cabinet delegated authority to the Corporate Director Communities to submit the Bridgend County Local Investment Plan to Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council (RCTCBC) for inclusion in the overall submission of the South East Wales Local Investment Plan to the UK Government. As part of the funding process there was, and remains, a need to appoint one local authority to assume the role of the 'Lead Local Authority' for the region for the UKSPF. It was agreed by BCBC Cabinet that RCTCBC performs this role. A copy of the Bridgend Local Investment Plan that was submitted in August 2022 is at **Appendix 1**.
- 2.6 An overview of the Bridgend County Borough Local Investment Plan proposals presented to Cabinet in July 2022 is set out below under a series of regional theme descriptions, which were developed by RCTCBC:

Communities and Place

Regional Theme Description*	Proposed Bridgend County delivery
Development and resilience of communities by improving facilities and access to services and supporting community-based organisations	Bridgend County Local Resilience Planning
Action to support individuals and community-based organisations to deal with the challenges of the current economic environment and cost of living crisis	
Supporting the improvement and redevelopment of town centres and community places to revitalise them.	Bridgend County Thriving Communities
Improving access to and facilities for local people and communities in sport, culture, arts and heritage.	
Supporting action to improve services and facilities for young people.	
Action to support decarbonisation, energy efficiency and green initiatives in communities and places.	Bridgend County Green Spaces Enhancement Scheme
Other activity such as feasibility studies	Bridgend County Community Future Scoping Programme

*Bridgend County Prosperity Co-Production Framework may offer an opportunity to deliver across all.

Supporting Local Business

Regional Theme Description*	Proposed Bridgend County delivery
Business premises development and improvement.	Bridgend County Centres of Enterprise
Small business support and development including finance for growth and resilience.	-Bridgend County Business Prosperity Programme -Bridgend County Local Enterprise Support Programme
Small business support for key growth sectors, research and development and innovation.	
Action to support decarbonisation, energy efficiency and green economy initiatives for businesses and social enterprises.	
Support for the growth and development of the visitor economy including businesses, facilities, and events.	- Bridgend County Tourism Events Support - Bridgend County Local Destination Management and Marketing
Other activity such as feasibility studies	Bridgend County Business Future Scoping Programme

*Bridgend County Prosperity Co-Production Framework may offer an opportunity to deliver across all.

People and Skills

Regional Theme Description*	Proposed Bridgend County delivery
Regional Employability and Skills Framework Package <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People in employment and key sectors 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unemployed and economically inactive people • Young people to enter employment 	-CELT**+ <i>Bridgend Inspire 2 Work / Achieve</i> -CELT + <i>Employability - Bridgend County</i> -CELT+ <i>Regional Joint Commissioning</i>
Regional joint commissioning Jointly commission FE/HE/ training providers / specific organisations to provide the following type of support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrap-around support for those at risk of disengaging from FE • Upskilling at work • Upskilling to meet skill gaps in sectors i.e., green jobs, manufacturing, creative and digital. 	

*Bridgend County Prosperity Co-Production Framework may offer an opportunity to deliver across all.

**Connect Engage Listen Thrive

2.7 **Appendix 1** is set against the challenges and opportunities that have been evidenced through the Bridgend Economic Strategy, the Bridgend Local Development Plan, the Bridgend Net Zero Carbon Strategy and the Bridgend and Cwm Taf Well-being Assessment. Whilst there are clear areas of alignment between these documents and opportunities through UKSPF it is not the case that all areas are aligned, nor is it the case that UKSPF is the only source of funding available to deliver these key strategic documents.

3. Current situation / proposal

3.1 In March 2023 the Corporate Director Communities exercised the authority delegated by BCBC Cabinet in July 2022 to authorise entering into a regional funding agreement regarding the UKSPF with RCTCBC, under decision reference CMM-ED-23-046.

3.2 The UKSPF allows Local Authorities to deliver activity via a range of mechanisms, namely:

- In-House Delivery
- Commissioning
- Procurement
- Grant Funds

3.3 In July 2022 Cabinet were presented with an overview of a suite of projects to be delivered in line with the delivery mechanism.

3.4 The following projects are to be delivered, either in part or wholly, via grant funds:

- Bridgend County Thriving Communities
- Bridgend County Community Future Scoping Programme
- Bridgend County Business Prosperity Programme
- Bridgend County Business Future Scoping Programme
- Bridgend County Tourism Events Support

3.5 The grant funds outlined below, which form part of Bridgend County's delivery of the UKSPF, will be set up and delivered:

Name of Project	Bridgend County Thriving Communities
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Name of fund	Bridgend Valley Placemaking Property Improvement Grant
Purpose of fund	<p>There are two elements to this:</p> <p>1) To enhance building frontages and bring vacant commercial floor space back into beneficial use, by supporting commercial property frontage improvements, along with other external and internal works.</p> <p>2) To convert vacant upper-floor space into new residential accommodation above commercial units, including internal and external works to bring vacant space back into use for residential purposes.</p>
Areas covered	The District Centres & Local Service centres in the valleys of the Llynfi, Garw and Ogmored (excluding Maesteg Town Centre).
Grant Rate	<p>The grant will be a maximum of 80% of reasonable eligible costs, up to a maximum grant award of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o £30,000 for occupied properties o £50,000 for properties that have been vacant for more than 6 months. <p>This will be subject to on-going review</p>
Maximum Grant	As above
Total funds available in grant	Minimum of £270,000

Name of Project	Bridgend County Thriving Communities
Name of fund	Empty Property Survey Grants
Purpose of fund	To offer applicants the opportunity to undertake building condition surveys/architectural assessments and concept designs in order to progress the redevelopment of empty commercial properties.
Areas covered	The District Centres & Local Service centres in the valleys of the Llynfi, Garw and Ogmored (excluding Maesteg Town Centre).
Grant Rate	100% of reasonable eligible costs
Maximum Grant	<p>Up to £2,000 for Condition Surveys (depending on size of property)</p> <p>Up to £3,000 for Architectural Assessments and Concept Designs</p> <p>This will be subject to on-going review</p>
Total funds available in grant	Minimum of £20,000

Name of Project	Bridgend County Community Future Scoping Programme
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Name of fund	Community Feasibility Fund
Purpose of fund	The fund has been set up to test the feasibility of longer-term community-led ideas. It will provide communities in the Borough the opportunity to gather evidence to support locally led community project ideas. Focusing on Health, Climate and Economy they will provide the required data, knowledge and understanding with the ambition to lead to future funding bids and continue community resilience planning.
Areas covered	Whole County
Grant Rate	Up to 100%
Maximum Grant	Up to £35,316
Total funds available in grant	£282,531

Name of Project	Bridgend County Business Prosperity Programme
Name of fund	The Business Development Grant
Purpose of fund	The Business Development Grant will support Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Bridgend County Borough to diversify, decarbonise and grow which will contribute to creating a vibrant and strong local economy.
Areas covered	Whole County
Grant Rate	Provides 50% of eligible capital projects costs. The minimum grant is £5,000 and the maximum grant available is £25,000 (excluding VAT).
Maximum Grant	Up to £25,000 (excluding VAT).
Total funds available in grant	£392,377

Name of Project	Bridgend County Business Future Scoping Programme
Name of fund	The Business Feasibility Grant
Purpose of fund	The Business Feasibility Grant is to support businesses to explore feasibility of longer-term options to diversify, decarbonise and grow including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preparation of plans and studies, e.g. Business Plans/Feasibility Studies - Before purchasing a piece of machinery, the study could determine the market for increased production or new product is financially viable. - Explore using space in retail, hospitality to introduce new service / product e.g. new hotel spa - Cost benefit analysis to introduce Green procurement

Areas covered	Whole County
Grant Rate	Provides 100% of eligible revenue projects costs. The minimum grant is £5,000 and the maximum grant available is £25,000 (excluding VAT).
Maximum Grant	Up to £25,000 (excluding VAT).
Total funds available in grant	£255,000

Name of Project	Bridgend County Tourism Events Support
Name of fund	Bridgend County Tourism Events Support
Purpose of fund	To support tourism events which <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - have strong potential to attract visitors from outside the local area, whether that is from other regions or other countries. - have a positive impact on the local economy, such as by generating revenue for local businesses, creating jobs, or promoting the region as a tourist destination. - have cultural significance or highlight a unique aspect of the local area's history, culture, or identity. - have the potential to raise the profile of the county borough in a positive way
Areas covered	Whole County
Grant Rate	Tier 1 - Up to 50% of eligible revenue costs Tier 2 - Up to 20% of eligible revenue costs
Maximum Grant	Tier 1 - Up to £2,500 Tier 2 - Up to £10,000
Total funds available in grant	Up to £100,000

- 3.6 A grant panel will be set up to oversee and make recommendations for approval for the grants outlined in 3.5. The panel will include relevant BCBC departments, e.g. finance, regeneration and enterprise.
- 3.7 Decisions relating to award of grants will be made in line with the Scheme of Delegation.
- 3.8 Any required statutory consents (e.g. planning permission, SuDS Approving Body) remain the responsibility of any grant applicant for any of the grant funds in 3.5.
- 3.9 Each scheme will have its own assessment criteria which will be robust but proportionate, depending on the different level of financial assistance available. Assessment criteria will be agreed by the grant panel.
- 3.10 The allocations of funding available through each grant fund and their associated criteria and processes will be kept under review and, should changes be required, these will be considered in line with BCBC policies and procedures.

3.11 A two-tier governance structure has been implemented as the result of the 2022 Economic Strategy, resulting in the establishment of the Bridgend Economic Partnership, which reports to the BCBC Economic Programme Board. Given that the majority of the UKSPF funded programmes address economic development challenges, it was agreed by Cabinet that the Economic Partnership and Economic Programme Board be involved in the governance and oversight of the UKSPF programmes within Bridgend County Borough. Close liaison and interaction will be required for oversight of the programmes that align more closely to the Public Services Board (PSB) agenda.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

4.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, on socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh Language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

5.1 BCBC is committed to promoting sustainable development and to discharge its duties under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. A summary relating to the five ways of working and how they connect to the Corporate Well-being Objectives is below:

Long-term: The grant funds outlined in 3.5 that are included within the Bridgend Local Investment Plan have been identified following discussion with key stakeholders and in relation to current understanding of the potential long-term challenges on the County Borough. Building on the process of developing and creating the Economic Strategy, the Local Development Plan (LDP) and the Wellbeing Plan for the County Borough it has been possible to set out a long-term response.

Prevention: BCBC has for many years worked closely with stakeholders and the local business community to support the local economy in a wide variety of proactive ways. As well as a continuation of BCBC's ability to react to local situations, the development of the UKSPF Local Investment Plan and the grant funds contained within it builds on strengths to plan for the future, take proactive action and support local businesses and local communities.

Integration: The work to develop the UKSPF Local Investment Plan is closely aligned with the BCBC Corporate Plan, the Local Development Plan and the Public Service Board's Well-being Plan and the Bridgend County Economic Strategy.

Collaboration: The development of the UKSPF Local Investment Plan has been steered by a BCBC officer group and will be delivered in partnership with key stakeholders.

Involvement: For the UKSPF Local Investment Plan to successfully operate it will require the involvement of senior members of local public sectors organisations,

community leaders, business leaders, representatives of business sectors and trade bodies and other key stakeholders.

6. Climate Change Implications

6.1 The grant funds outlined in 3.5 will contain within the criteria detail relating to the expectations of applicants to support BCBC Climate Change and Decarbonisation ambitions. Assessment of applications will consider the relevance of proposals to the criteria and decisions made as a result.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

7.1 There are no safeguarding or corporate parent implications arising from this report.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 The UKSPF provides £2.6 billion of new funding for local investment by March 2025, with all areas of the UK receiving an allocation from the Fund via a funding formula rather than a competition.

8.2 All places in the UK received a conditional allocation from the UKSPF to cover the period up to March 2025. Table 1 below details the allocation per Authority for the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR).

Table 1: UKSPF allocation in CCR

Individual authorities	Core UKSPF £	Multiply £	Total £	% of regional allocation
Blaenau Gwent	23,301,572	4,863,920	28,165,492	10.11
Bridgend	19,116,296	3,990,295	23,106,591	8.30
Caerphilly	28,272,298	5,901,499	34,173,797	12.27
Cardiff	34,587,594	7,219,740	41,807,334	15.01
Merthyr Tydfil	22,698,977	4,738,136	27,437,113	9.85
Monmouthshire	5,919,533	1,235,631	7,155,164	2.57
Newport	27,177,563	5,672,986	32,850,549	11.79
Rhondda Cynon Taf	37,320,994	7,790,305	45,111,299	16.20
Torfaen	20,431,241	4,264,774	24,696,015	8.86
Vale of Glamorgan	11,606,505	2,422,717	14,029,222	5.04
Total for the region	230,432,573	48,100,003	278,532,576	100.00

8.3 Bridgend's allocation is 8.3% of the total allocation for the region.

8.4 In September 2022 officers submitted a growth pressure proposal as part of the 2023-2027 Medium Term Financial Strategy process for an increase in funding of £2,523,289 to 'top-up' the budget to match the ambition of the proposals developed by project leads and ensure full delivery of the proposed activities outlined in Appendix 1. This growth pressure was not funded in the final MTFs proposal. As a result, all projects had to re-align their budgets and delivery to ensure delivery within the total UKSPF allocation of £23,106,591.

- 8.5 The amounts available through the grant funds outlined within 3.5 are contained within the overall programme budget which is set out in the funding agreement which is in place with RCTCBC and its ancillary documents.
- 8.6 Regular monitoring, reporting and claims will ensure that commitments and expenditure are in line with the funding agreement and its associated annual profiles.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Town and Community Council Forum notes the report.

Background documents

None