

Meeting of:	CABINET
Date of Meeting:	21 NOVEMBER 2023
Report Title:	SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT WITH TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
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:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nine Local Authorities in Cardiff Capital Region, led by Torfaen County Borough Council, will work together to develop a regional approach to skills using the UK Government Shared Prosperity Funds. • A Service Level Agreement has been developed to facilitate the working arrangements which all nine Local Authorities will sign.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek permission for Bridgend County Borough Council to enter into a Regional People and Skills Service Level Agreement with Torfaen County Borough Council. The agreement seeks to develop a consistent approach across nine local authorities within Cardiff Capital Region to develop skills projects under the People and Skills theme of the United Kingdom Government's Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). It is proposed that this will be led by Torfaen County Borough Council and that the following local authorities are involved along with Bridgend County Borough Council: Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, Caerphilly County Borough Council, Cardiff Council, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Newport City Council, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, the Vale of Glamorgan Council and Torfaen County Borough Council.

2. Background

- 2.1 Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) Cabinet approved the recommendations in The United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund Cabinet report on the 19 July 2022. The report set out the future funding arrangements put in place by the UK Government in light of the UK leaving the European Union on 31 January 2020. The report explained the UKSPF is the UK government's replacement for the European

Structural Investment Funds (ESIF) and sought approval for Rhondda Cynon Taff Borough Council (RCTCBC) to become Lead Local Authority for the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR).

- 2.2 The report also gave the Corporate Director Communities delegation to submit to RCTCBC the Bridgend County Borough Local Investment Plan information for delivering the Bridgend County UKSPF funding allocation to feed into the development of the CCR Local Investment Plan submission to UK Government.
- 2.3 The Corporate Director Communities, in consultation with the Chief Officer - Legal, and Regulatory Services, HR and Corporate Policy, Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change and the Corporate Director – Education and Family Support was delegated authority to negotiate and enter into a CCR regional funding agreement with RCTCBC acting as lead authority and to enter into any further deeds and documents which are ancillary to the agreement or that are necessary to deliver the UKSPF.
- 2.4 The South East Wales Regional Directors Group, of which the Corporate Director Communities is a member, have proposed the need for a regional approach to developing skills across the CCR under the UKSPF People and Skills Theme. It was proposed that Torfaen County Borough Council would lead and develop a Service Level Agreement (SLA) for consideration by each participating Local Authority. This is a separate agreement to that which has established Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council as lead authority for all ten local authorities in CCR for the UKSPF and will involve activity not undertaken by RCTCBC in their role within UKSPF.
- 2.5 The UKSPF Bridgend County Borough Local Investment Plan outlines the Regional Procurement Opportunities project as part of the Bridgend County plan, agreed by Cabinet in July 2022.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 The proposed UKSPF People and Skills SLA (**Appendix 1**) involves each of the nine participating local authorities in the CCR region agreeing to work together, led by Torfaen County Borough Council, to develop a regional approach to a skills project which will benefit residents in Bridgend County Borough.
- 3.2 It is proposed that a People and Skills Regional Support Team funded by a contribution from each local authority will be established who will manage:
 - Regional Commissioning
 - A single point of contact for key strategic partners
 - Administration support for regional meetings that improve employability and skills provision in South East Wales including the establishment of a Strategic Management Board which will oversee the work of the Regional Support Team.
- 3.3 Through the agreement the parties will establish a People & Skills Strategic Management Board comprising of one representative from each Local Authority. It is proposed that the Enterprise and Employability Manager will represent Bridgend County Borough Council on the Regional People and Skills Strategic Management Board and report back to the Bridgend Economic Partnership which reports to the BCBC Economic Programme Board.

3.4 If agreed by Cabinet, it is anticipated that following entering into the SLA, work will begin to identify the skills areas supported by partners that can benefit Bridgend residents.

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 The proposed Regional UKSPF People and Skills SLA demonstrates the sustainable development principle by ensuring that by meeting the needs of the present they do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This is evidenced through the 5 ways of working as follows:

Long-term: The elements that make up the proposed regional SLA have been identified following discussion with all other eight local authorities across the region. This SLA will provide the framework for areas to work together on a regional approach to skills development meeting the need improved for local employers to recruit skilled staff to grow their enterprises and ensuring that Bridgend's residents can have opportunities to gain new skills and qualifications which can prepare them for future work.

Prevention: BCBC has for many years worked closely with local residents to support them to increase their employability through training and support. The SLA is necessary for regional partners to work together on identifying regional growth sectors to ensure that the investment in the correct skills and training are being offered across the region to residents so that new skills can be learnt, preventing people from being left behind in the pursuit of jobs and careers. This SLA will enable the region to build upon existing strengths by planning skills for the future, take proactive action to support local people, businesses and local communities to benefit from increased access to developing skills for new industries.

Integration: The work to develop the Regional UKSPF People and Skills SLA sits under the wider approach to UKSPF in Bridgend and is therefore connected to 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 wider UKSPF Local Investment Plan, in which the SPF People and SLA sits, has been steered by a BCBC officer group and is being delivered in partnership with key stakeholders. In particular the local authorities under CCR have discussed this approach to a People and Skills related regional project and invited Torfaen County Borough Council to lead.

Involvement: For the People and Skills regional project to successfully operate it will require the involvement of senior members of both regional and local public sector

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

6. Climate Change Implications

6.1 There are no Climate Change implications arising from this report.

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 Each of the nine local authorities in the CCR, who are part of the People and Skills Regional Project, are proposing to make a financial contribution to support the Regional Support Team.

8.2 The proposed funding contribution from BCBC over the period 2023-24 to 2024-25 is £29,372. This is already allocated within the BCBC UKSPF Local Investment Plan. Therefore, no additional funding is required from BCBC.

9. Recommendations

9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:

- Agree that Torfaen County Borough Council assume the role of 'Lead Local Authority' for the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund Regional People and Skills Service Level Agreement (**Appendix 1**).
- Delegate authority to the Corporate Director Communities, in consultation with the Chief Officer – Legal and Regulatory Services, HR and Corporate Policy and Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change to enter into the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund Regional People and Skills Service Level Agreement, and any subsequent amendments or extensions to it as agreed by the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund Regional People and Skills Strategic Management Board and to enter into any further deeds and documents which are ancillary to the agreement.
- Agree the appointment of the Employability and Enterprise Manager to represent BCBC on the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund Regional People and Skills Strategic Management Board.

Background documents

Cabinet Report, The United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund, July 2022.