

BROMSGROVE PARTNERSHIP UKSPF UPDATE

23 May 2024

Background

In 2022, the Government published the prospectus for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund providing details of each area's allocation, how the fund would be administered, and what the funding could be spent on.

Bromsgrove has received a total of £2,805,712 made up of 3 annual allocations - £340k in 2022/23, £680k in 2023/24 and £1.78m in 2024/25.

The Council was required to produce an investment plan detailing how they intended to spend the money and what they would achieve in terms of pre-defined outputs and outcomes. The investment plan was centred around 3 investment priorities – Community & Place, Supporting Local Business, and People & Skills. Funding for People & Skills projects was initially not available until 2024/25.

The Bromsgrove Partnership was a consultee in the development of the investment plan and agreed to take on the role of Local Partnership Board which includes assessing project proposals for strategic fit and deliverability and making recommendations to the Council as to which project to support. To carry out this work the board established a small task & finish group to look at the projects and then report to the board their recommendations.

The Investment Plan was not approved by Government until December 2022 which meant that there was very little UKSPF funded activity in 2022/23. We were able to carry forward the underspend of the 2022/23 allocation to fund activity in 2023/24.

2023/24 Expenditure & Performance

Most projects started delivery in Q2 of 2023/24.

There was an underspend of £115,957 at the end of the year which has been carried forward to 2024/25. The majority of this funding is committed to projects. As we had spent more than 80% of our funding to date we will receive all of our 2024/25 allocation at the beginning of the year. We have received confirmation from DLUHC that our end of year report has been approved, there are no queries on the report so we will be included in the first tranche of payments for 2024/25 which are expected by mid-June.

The summary report includes details of outputs and outcomes delivered to date. We are in the process of reviewing the performance to date of all of the active projects

but are not aware of any issues. There are a couple of projects that are performing particularly well. Supporting Local Business outputs and outcomes appear a little low as they have some of the longest lead times from initial engagement to achievement of deliverables. There is a strong pipeline of businesses on programme and grant approvals. People & Skills outputs & outcomes are very low as the majority of these projects didn't start delivery until April. The first performance reports will be received in July.

2024/25 Projects

As the largest annual allocation will be received in 2024/25, this is when the majority of UKSPF funded activity will be delivered. We have committed 91% of our funding but £169,902 is, as yet, unallocated. Proposals for the remaining funding are being developed; however, we need to be mindful of the very tight timescales regarding the funding end date. All expenditure must be defrayed and projects completed by 31 March 2025.

To this end, we are seeking a truncated decision-making process. We are asking the board to delegate authority to make recommendations on its behalf to the Task & Finish group. The group will be able to meet outside of the Board Meeting schedule and this will minimise the delay between the Task & Finish group meeting and the recommendations being presented to the Council. A report of the Task & Finish group meeting will be provided to the full board but for it to note rather than endorse.

Agreement of this process will allow us to procure and/or contract by the summer and provide project deliverers a potential 8 months to deliver.