

URN : 24-022
Report Title : Re-profiling UKSPF and REPF delegated Grant Schemes
Report to: Cabinet
Date of meeting : 8 April 2024
Responsible Cabinet Member: Cllr Daniel Candon
Responsible Director / Officer : Executive Director of Place, Natasha Hayes
Is this a Key decision ? Yes
Forward Plan of Key Decisions: 27 February 2024

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY / INTRODUCTION FROM CABINET MEMBER

This report sets out proposed adjustments to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) delegated grant schemes set out and approved by Cabinet on 9 October 2023. These proposals relate solely to aligning the grant values and intervention rates to applicants' expectations, rather than the overall value of the grant pots or the grant processes.

RECOMMENDATIONS :

That Cabinet :

1. Notes and considers the proposed changes to the grant scheme and instructs officers to implement changes to meet the proposed timeline.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) Investment Plans include delegated grant schemes, as set out in Paragraph 2.1.
- 1.2. Potential applicants to those schemes have reported that the current maximum grant award value and the match funding contribution don't align with their needs or the 'tipping point' required to bring about the investments.
- 1.3. To maximise potential applicants' interest in – and uptake of – UKSPF and REPF ringfenced for delegated grants and deliver the outputs/outcomes, adjustments are proposed.
- 1.4. The adjustments relate solely to grant values, match funding expectations and grants panel composition; the individual schemes, the various checks and the processes for REPF approved by Cabinet on 9 October 2023 would remain unchanged.
- 1.5. These adjustments also reflect UKSPF and REPF delegated grant programmes being delivered elsewhere, including in neighbouring districts.

2. Work to Date / Proposal

- 2.1. The UKSPF Investment Plan includes discretionary grants schemes under three interventions. The current and proposed schemes are as follows:

(a) E4: Culture Support Package (institutions and infrastructure support)

- Current (2023/24) capital grant scheme – £10,000 maximum grant with a 50% applicant contribution
- Proposed (2024/25) capital grant scheme – £20,000 maximum grant with a 20% applicant contribution

(b) E6: Culture Support Package (seed-funding arts, heritage, and culture programmes)

- Current (2023/24) capital grant scheme – £10,000 maximum grant with a 50% applicant contribution
- Proposed (2024/25) capital grant scheme – £20,000 maximum grant with a 20% applicant contribution

(c) E10: Sports & Wellbeing Package (seed-funding infrastructure and activity)

- Current (2023/24) capital grant scheme – £4,732 maximum grant with a 20% applicant contribution
- Proposed (2024/25) capital grant scheme – £20,000 maximum grant with a 20% applicant contribution
- Up to five £3,000 grants with a 0% applicant contribution – i.e. fully-funded support for smaller, high-impact projects
- It is proposed that the total revenue grant funding allocation of £32,000 and associated outputs and outcomes for local sports facilities, tournaments, teams, leagues, and grassroots sport be delegated to Active Norfolk to administer on behalf of the Council as a formal delivery partner.

2.2. There are two REPF Investment Priorities, with several subsidiary interventions:

Investment Priority 1: Supporting Rural Business

- Current (2023/24) capital grant scheme – £20,000 maximum grant with a 50% applicant contribution
- Proposed (2024/25) capital grant scheme – £100,000 maximum grant with a 20% applicant contribution

Investment Priority 2: Supporting Rural Communities

- Current (2023/24) capital grant scheme – £20,000 maximum grant with a 50% applicant contribution
- Proposed (2024/25) capital grant scheme – £60,000 maximum grant with a 10% applicant contribution

3. Impact / Next Steps

3.1. Further engagement and collaborative activities will be held in partnership with business support organisations such as Arts Culture and VCSE organisations, Norfolk Chamber of Commerce, Local business networks, The Broads Authority, Visit Great Yarmouth, National

Farmers Union, Country Landowners Association, land agents, the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group, The Royal Norfolk Agricultural Association.

- 3.2. There will also be a formal communications plan to coordinate promotion of the schemes through parish councils, press releases, social media and local communication channels, including the Business Update Newsletter, circulated to around 1,600 local businesses every 4-6 weeks.
- 3.3. It is recommended that all UKSPF and REPF funded delegated grants continue to be administered by the Inward Investment Team, using the same processes agreed by Cabinet in October 2023.
- 3.4. Rather than publish regular calls and application windows for each scheme, it is proposed to operate an open, rolling call for expressions of interest between 10 April 2024 and 31 November 2024 to maximise access to and uptake of the scheme, mirroring the format adopted by other local authorities.
- 3.5. The deadline for applications – those expressions of interest invited to proceed – would be 31 December 2024, with a final grant claim deadline of 28 February.
- 3.6. It is recommended that on the basis of the higher grant values set out in Section 2, awards are determined by a grants panel comprising cross-party membership – 3 members nominated by Cabinet and 2 members nominated by the opposition group, with officers acting in an advisory capacity only, this is a change from the previous delegation to officers, as set out in the October 2023 Cabinet report.
- 3.7. That grants panel would receive and consider all grant applications. It would award funding and apply any additional conditions on a best-value basis to one or more applicants on the basis of the information in applications, investment due diligence and other commentary from Inward Investment and any additional commentary from Finance.
- 3.8. The grants panel would convene monthly, as agreed, unless there are no applications to consider.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1. All UKSPF and REPF grant funding has been secured and confirmed, Internal resources to administer these schemes will be undertaken by officers already place within the Inward Investment service; there is no new capacity funding to administer/deliver.

5. Risk Implications

- 5.1. The distribution of delegated discretionary grants must be carried out in a manner that assures a) a competitive and transparent allocation process, and b) adherence to subsidy assessment and control requirements. The associated officers are experienced in every aspect the design and delivery of grant schemes, including COVID grants and other major publicly funded business grants. These systems are in place.
- 5.2. Unless the delegated grant schemes are optimised as proposed, there is a risk that they will be under-subscribed at the conclusion of the UKSPF programme on 31 March 2025.

6. Legal Implications

The proposals meet the requirements of Article 43 – Grant Procedures – of the Council's constitution.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. To ensure that the UKSPF and REPF funded grant schemes meet the needs and expectations of potential applicants, a number of adjustments are proposed. These adjustments will reduce the risk of the schemes being under-subscribed at the conclusion of the UKSPF programme on 31 March 2025.

8. Background Papers

Reference made to Report presented to Cabinet 9 Oct 2023; 23-247 Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) Grant Scheme

Areas of consideration: e.g. does this report raise any of the following issues and if how have these been considered/mitigated against?

Consultations	Comment
Monitoring Officer Consultation:	As part of ELT review
Section 151 Officer Consultation:	As part of ELT review
Existing Council Policies:	In line with Article 43 of the constitutions
Equality Issues/EQIA assessment:	Not applicable; grant applicants and awardees will be determined on a competitive, transparent basis by factors other than protected characteristics – e.g. eligibility conferred by Government-defined geographies.