

Committee: Scrutiny Committee

Date:

Title: Economic Recovery Delivery Plan - Year 3
Progress Report

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Summary

1. A three year Economic Recovery Plan was approved by members on 8 December 2020, providing funds of £1m to be spend on supporting the recovery of the local economy following the impact of the Pandemic.
2. The plan has evolved to include supporting the cost of living crisis that has affected local businesses and organisations, with direct impacts such as high inflation, high utility costs and the indirect impact of households with less available income to spend on non-essential.
3. 2023/24 is the third and final year of the recovery plan initiatives.
4. This report also provides members with an update on the Government schemes set up as part of the Levelling up agenda which are administered by the Economic Development Team
 - UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF)
 - Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF)

Recommendations

5. The Scrutiny Committee is requested to note the contents of this report.

Financial Implications

6. These are included in the body of this report and the associated appendix.

Background Papers

7. None

Impact

- 8.

Communication/Consultation	Corporate Management Team and Informal Cabinet Board
Community Safety	N/A
Equalities	N/A
Health and Safety	N/A
Human Rights/Legal Implications	All grants are issued in line with specific grant policies, available on our website
Sustainability	This is a time limited plan, supporting one off projects or initiatives over a period of 3 years with the final year of funding in 2023/24
Ward-specific impacts	N/A
Workforce/Workplace	N/A

Situation

9. The local economy was significantly impacted following the Pandemic and members allocated a £1m dedicated fund to support the recovery of the Local Economy. The fund was to be spent over a period of three financial years, 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2024.
10. The Government also initiated a number of schemes over this time period, which the Economic Development were required to administer.
11. The Government schemes were resource intensive and as these were externally funded these were prioritised over the council scheme to ensure that we were able to maximise the funding available for our local businesses and organisations.
12. All Government schemes have either expired or have an established process allowing the Economic Development Team to focus on delivering district specific initiatives as set out in the council's recovery plan.
13. This is the third and final year of the plan and there were £669,000 remaining funds at the start of this financial year.
14. The initial plan presented to the committee in March 2023 set out a spending plan of £650,000 over 5 priority areas. The recovery plan was reviewed in May and where previously it included business as usual activities it now solely focuses on additional initiatives being delivered with 3 key priority areas. The detail recovery plan is attached as Appendix A and a summary table is provided below.

Priority	Allocated spend (£)
Priority 1 Business Engagement and Support	
Objective 1.1 - Support businesses already located in Uttlesford district	32,099
Objective 1.2 - Support businesses hardest hit by the pandemic	12,178
Objective 1.3 - Foster the development of existing town centres as vibrant locations for business and leisure	70,323
Objective 1.4 – Support business start-ups and pre-starts.	67,272
Objective 1.5 - Digital Connectivity	45,420
Priority 2 - Creating Jobs / Inward investment	
Objective 4.1 Support the sustainable growth of existing businesses	76,610
Objective 4.2 Increase inward investment	8,944
Priority 3 – Creating a “greener” local economy	
Objective 5.1 Support local businesses to address Climate Change issues	41,176
Resources (Temporary) to support delivery of the plan	120,670
TOTAL SPEND	474,692

15. The plan supports some activities which span over more than one year, the total amount being carried forward is £194,300 to match to the committed expenditure. These include the following.

- North Essex Economic Board (NEEB) four year strategy
- UK Innovation Core Website for two years
- Resourcing cost to support the final year administration of the UKSPF and REPF government initiatives and the Parking review action plan.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF)

16. As mentioned earlier in the report the Government set up a number of funded schemes as part of their levelling up agenda. The Council received funds to deliver two schemes UKSPF and REPF. The funds are ring fenced and subject to specific criteria and we are required to report back to Government regularly.

17. The UKSPF was set up to provide support the district under three key investment priorities, Community and Place, Supporting Local Business and People and Skills. Uttlesford will receive a total of £1m over three years, this is the second year of this scheme, and we have an allocation of £219,617 for 2023/24.

18. The REPF is an addendum of the UKSPF, and the Council has been allocated a further £813,386 over two years, with 2023/24 being year one. The REPF can only be spent on capital projects and works.

19. The initiatives for the REPF are to support Rural Businesses and Communities

- Investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas

- The development and promotion (both trade and consumer) of the visitor economy
- Investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups

20. The allocation for UKSPF has all been awarded and the REPF is partially awarded but there are pending applications, and we expect to award this in full by the end of the year. Attached as Appendix B is a table of the allocations made for this year on both UKSPF and REPF.

Risk Analysis

21.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Recovery Plan funds are not spent in full or in accordance with members requests	1 – schemes and initiatives have been identified	1 – minimal as any funds not used will be reallocated to other initiatives	The spending plan is monitored and shared with the lead member and presented to Scrutiny on twice a year. Advertising and promotion of initiatives
UKSPF and REPF funds not awarded and reclaimed by Government	1 – this is an application process to local businesses, charities and voluntary organisations and receive high volume of applications	2 – minimal financial impact to the council directly, but our district would miss out on funding	High engagement with local businesses and organisations, advertising and promotion of schemes

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.