

**Report to: Health and Wellbeing Committee, 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2024**

**Report of: Corporate Director, Operations, Homes and Communities**

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**Subject: UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND (UKSPF) FINAL YEAR (2024/25)  
ALLOCATION - COMMUNITY AND PLACE PRIORITY**

**1. Recommendations**

**That the Committee:**

- 1.1 Note the contents of the report, in particular the allocation of £100,000 of UKSPF Funding to the Community and Place Priority; and**
- 1.2 Approve the allocation of this funding as set out in para 4.1 of this report.**

**2. Background**

- 2.1 In September 2022, the Council was awarded £2,945,472 of UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF). The aim of the fund is to:
  - Boost productivity, pay, jobs and living standards by growing the private sector, especially in those places where these are lagging.
  - Spread opportunities and improve public services, especially in those places where they are weakest.
  - Restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where they have been lost.
  - Empower local leaders and communities, especially in those places lacking local agency.
- 2.2 To access the funding the Council was required to submit an investment plan that set out the expenditure and deliverables, including the spend profile for the three years of the fund, as well as outputs and outcomes figures and any already identified specific projects that we intended to fund under each of the investment priorities. A menu of intervention options was provided which linked to local needs and opportunities.
- 2.3 The investment plan was approved by the Policy and Resources Committee on 22nd June 2022 and included the below spend profile:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total (£)</b>
2022/23	357,460
2023/24	714,920
2024/25	1,873,092
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,945,472</b>

2.4 Allocations are split into three key priority areas of delivery:

- Community and Place
- Supporting Local Business
- People and Skills

The People and Skills spend was only eligible in the final year (24/25)

2.5 To support the review of UKSPF allocations, a needs analysis was undertaken to highlight current identified need in relation to the People and Skills, and Community and Place priorities.

2.6 The needs analysis showed that the interventions originally identified remain relevant. However, it also identified additional community interventions that could be considered alongside current allocations, including:

- Support for active travel enhancements
- campaigns to encourage visits and exploring local area
- impactful volunteering
- local sports facilities/tournaments/teams & leagues
- community measures to reduce the cost of living.

2.7 On 6 November 2023, the Place and Economic Development Committee considered the needs analysis and agreed to reallocate £100k of funding from 'People and Skills' to 'Community and Place'.

2.8 Due to the nature of the proposed options surrounding the allocation of this funding intending to be focussed around community measures to reduce the cost of living, this report is being presented to Health & Wellbeing Committee as it has constitutional responsibility for this agenda.

2.9 A number of the **Communities and Place** interventions were contracted to begin delivery in 2023/2024 and will continue for the final year of the programme. The below table provides a breakdown of the proposed interventions, values, and projects, including the additional sum transferred into the priority area

<b>Intervention</b>	<b>Original Value</b>	<b>Proposed Value</b>
Creation and improvements to local green spaces	£35k-Natural Networks Project (contracted)	£35k
Local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities	£30k (currently supports Carnival/Worcester Show/Mela and a number of other events. Includes Cultural and Heritage Consortium support)	£30k
Community engagement and local regeneration	£45k (supports the community grants programme)	£45k
Community capacity building	£85k (currently allocated to ABCD project)	£85k

Community Cost of living	-	£100k
<b>Total</b>	<b>£195,000</b>	<b>£295,000</b>

### 3. Household Support Fund

- 3.1 The DWP Household Support Funding (HSF) has been integral to providing support and mitigating the financial hardship of residents impacted by the cost of living. The current DWP HSF is due to cease in March 2024 with no announcements having been made surrounding its continuation or replacement and therefore will return crisis support provision to levels pre October 2021.
- 3.2 In 2022/23, the Council received **£378,177** and in 2023/24, received an allocation of **£337,086** from an extension to the Fund. The objective of the Fund is to provide support to vulnerable households in most need, to help with significantly rising living costs.
- 3.3 Spend details of DWP HSF for 2023/24 are included in the below table:

Area of spend	Description	2023/24 allocation
Discretionary Welfare Assistance Scheme (DWAS)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Single household offer</li> <li>2. Include low income working UC households.</li> <li>3. Maintain the increased number of food and energy voucher awards.</li> <li>4. Maintain the higher in value of energy voucher awards.</li> <li>5. Include carpets and energy saving features</li> </ol> Other Essential Supplies and energy saving measures.	£95,000
Worcester Food Bank	Provide food, clothing and travel vouchers	£100k
Supermarket Vouchers	To continue to expand the supermarket voucher offer of the County Council free school meals voucher during school holidays to include preschool children and those in college.  Providing £15 per week for each child eligible for the pupil premium scheme during 13 weeks of school holidays	£78,000

Spend To Save	Grants instead of loans for affected residents and deposit for homeless residents. To include over 65s and to cover rent where utility bills put households at risk of homelessness.	£55,000
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3.4 On 25<sup>th</sup> July 2023, Policy and Resources Committee considered options to review grant allocations to third parties which included a review of the base budget allocation to the Discretionary Welfare Assistance Scheme (DWAS). The committee approved a reduction of the base budget allocation of **£29,690** to DWAS, though did express a desire to consider future options to mitigate this reduction in base budget allocation through grant contributions such as HSF if it continues to be provided.

#### 4. Preferred Option

4.1 In light of the uncertainty surrounding the future of the DWP HSF, it is recommended that the allocation of £100,000 from the UKSPF is utilised to support households impacted by the cost of living crisis. The proposed allocation of funding is as set out in the table below is in line with the 2023/24 HSF allocation and intended to mitigate the impact in the event of the HSF funding ceasing.

Area of spend	Description	Allocation
Discretionary Welfare Assistance Scheme	To top up the DWAS budget for 24/25 resulting in a full year budget of £120,000. This will offset the reduction in the base DWAS budget approved by P&R Committee in July 2023.	£30,000
Worcester Food Bank	To support the provision of food, clothing and travel vouchers	£50,000
Spend to save	Provision of grants instead of loans to support residents to stay in their accommodation or secure accommodation where they are threatened with homelessness. To include over 65s and to cover rent where utility bills put households at risk of homelessness.	£20,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>£100,000</b>

#### 5. Alternative Options Considered

##### 5.1 Supermarket vouchers for pre-school and college students

Through the 2022/23 and 2023/24 allocations of the District HSF, the Council expanded the supermarket voucher offer of Worcestershire County Council (free school meals voucher) during school holidays to include pre-school children and those in college.

This provided £15 per week for each child eligible for the pupil premium scheme during 13 weeks of school holidays at an approximate cost of £78,000 over the 12-month period.

The provision of free school meals during school holidays by the County Council was funded by the County's allocation of the DWP HSF and therefore in the absence of the continuation of this funding continuing, it is anticipated that the school holiday free school meal provision will also cease.

Due to the cost of the provision for pre-school age and college pupils and in the absence of the eligible cohort of school age children not receiving the provision by County, this option has not been recommended.

It is recognised that this is a valuable provision however the proposed allocation of £50,000 to the Food Bank and uplift in base budget allocation of DWAS is anticipated to mitigate some of the impact of the reduction in this provision. Should there be a continuation of the HSF and subject to any conditions, consideration will be given to funding such provision from that grant, and will be presented to Members for consideration.

## 5.2 **Money Management Worker**

The proposed recommendations for the allocation of the UKSPF funding primarily surrounds crisis support and has been targeted in this way due to uncertainty surrounding any future provision of the DWP HSF and the continued demand and need for crisis support within the community.

Consideration however has been given to how the need and demand for crisis support could be mitigated to reduce the need and reliance on provision such as DWAS and the Food Bank. To do this, the City Council currently work closely with the CAB who deliver money management advice which includes benefit checks, income maximisation and budgeting support. Demand for this service remains high and is oversubscribed resulting in a greater need for crisis support in the intervening time it takes to receive support from a Money Management Worker.

The cost of funding a Full Time Money Management Worker at the CAB is **£45,826**. During the course of 2023, 1x FTE Money Management Worker advised 197 unique clients advising on 935 different advice issues, completed 1,031 activities with/on behalf of clients, obtained £262,788 of financial gains to clients, stabilised/ managed debts of £62,967 and assisted clients to write off/ reschedule debts of £22,930.

It is recognised that this would be a valuable and useful service and provision however would reduce the budget available to provide crisis support to people impacted by the cost of living. If this option were progressed, the remaining budget available for crisis support would be £54,174 which if distributed between DWAS, the Foodbank and Spend to Save would make contributions much lower and have less impact on vulnerable households and therefore this option has not been recommended. Should there be a continuation of the HSF and subject to any conditions, consideration will be given to funding such provision from that grant, and will be presented to Members for consideration.

## 6. **Implications**

### 6.1 Financial and Budgetary Implications

Community and Place has a total allocation of £455,728. As the accountable body for the funding, we are in a position to be able to move funding between interventions and priorities for the final year of delivery.

## 6.2 Legal and Governance Implications

The Memorandum of Understanding that governs the funding allocation, and the accompanying guidance, allows local authorities to reallocate funding between the interventions within each priority without needing to submit a change request to the Department.

The Council can also, to a limited extent, reallocate funds between the three investment priorities, although a change request will need to be agreed if the reprofiling of funding from one investment priority to another involves moving 30% of the total funding allocation over the 3 years, or £5 million, whichever is lower.

We will need to enter into legally binding agreements with delivery partners to ensure outcomes and outputs are met and identify or launch a procurement process to deliver the Green Skills project.

## 6.3 Risk Implications

There are no direct risks arising from the report.

## 6.4 Corporate/Policy Implications

The UKSPF programme and proposals support the full range of themes of the City Plan and have been developed in alignment with the City Plan, the City Centre Masterplan, and the Town Investment Plan.

## 6.5 Equality Implications

No significant Equality implications have been identified at this time.

## 6.6 Human Resources Implications

No significant Human Resources Implications at this stage

## 6.7 Health and Safety Implications

None identified at this stage.

## 6.8 Social, Environmental and Economic Implications

The interventions and projects within the UKSPF package of activity present an opportunity to make a significant positive impact on the social, environmental, and economic well-being of the City.

The proposed projects within the programme:

- generate additional social and economic activity within the City,
- increase the ability to attract increased footfall and visitor numbers, invest in the built environment, including heritage buildings.

**Ward(s):** All

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**Background Papers:** [PED report 6<sup>th</sup> November 2023](#)