

Cabinet

5 December 2023

Dorset Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan

For Decision

Portfolio Holder: Cllr S Gibson, Economic Growth and Levelling Up

Local Councillor(s): All

Executive Director: J Sellgren, Executive Director of Place

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Report Status: Public

Brief Summary:

The Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) Investment Plan and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) addendum permit Dorset Council access to the £6.4 million allocated to Dorset by government to improve local productivity and pride in place. The Plan and addendum have been developed in consultation with local stakeholders and in accordance with government guidelines and have been approved by the relevant government departments. Approving and implementing the plans helps support delivery of corporate priorities and specific actions in the Council's Delivery Plan and other supporting strategies.

Recommendation:

That Cabinet:

1. Endorses the Dorset Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan, and its accompanying Rural England Prosperity Fund addendum, attached in appendices to this report.

2. Delegates authority to the Executive Director, Place, to implement the Investment Plan and addendum.

Reason for Recommendation:

1. To support delivery of the Council Plan priorities of:
 - driving economic prosperity
 - protecting our natural environment, climate, and ecology,
 - creating stronger, healthier communities.
2. To allow delivery of the action in Dorset Council's Delivery Plan 2022-2024:
 - By 2023, the Dorset Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan will deliver a new approach to investment in local business support, including business mentoring.
3. To facilitate use of the funding allocated by government to benefit Dorset residents, communities, and businesses.

1. Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan Development

- 1.1 The Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) and the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) are part of UK government Levelling Up policy. Their aims are twofold: To level up economically through improvements to productivity and to increase pride in place. They fulfil a broadly similar function to that covered by EU regional funding in the recent past, the main differences being (i) these funds are to be administered by Local Authorities rather than Local Enterprise Partnerships and (ii) rules governing how the funding can be used are much less prescriptive. Funding is to be used for three Investment Priorities: *Community and Place*, *Local Business*, and *People and Skills*. Funding can be used for any combination of 41 defined Interventions within the three Investment Priorities.
- 1.2 Dorset Council was allocated a notional £4.4 million for SPF provided a satisfactory Investment Plan was produced, and a further £2 million REPF, providing a satisfactory addendum to the Investment Plan was produced.
- 1.3 An additional £1.4 million of SPF funding was ringfenced by government for the national "multiply" adult learning numeracy programme. This is administered and delivered through Skills and Learning, the joint BCP

Council and Dorset Council adult learning service and is outside the scope of this report.

- 1.4 Local stakeholders were consulted on relevant challenges, opportunities, data sources, and proposed Interventions, and a local partnership group was established, as requested in government guidance.

2. **Dorset Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan**

- 2.1 The Investment Plan and summary is attached as an appendix. The key Interventions and budgets are shown below. The allocations within this investment plan have been approved by the Local Partnership Group.

2.2 Communities and Place Investment Priority:

- E2: Improvements to Town Centres and High Streets: £150,000
- E12: Community-led regeneration: £255,000
- E13: Community measures to reduce the cost of living: £537,958.
- E14: Relevant feasibility studies: £70,000.
- E15: Digital connectivity for local community facilities: £75,500

2.3 Local business Investment Priority: Interventions E18 - E28 comprise a commissioned business support service and grants to local businesses.

- E17: Development and promotion of the visitor economy: £78,812
- E18: Made smarter adoption: £237,000.
- E20: Research and development supporting innovation: £366,000.
- E24: Training hubs, business support, incubators etc.: £1,197,542
- E26: Growing the local social economy: £150,000.
- E28: Exports to grow overseas trading: £145,000.
- E29: Supporting Decarbonisation: £395,000.
- E31: Support relevant feasibility studies: £136,000.

2.4 Skills Investment Priority:

- E33: Employment support for economically inactive people: £105,000.

- E34: Courses including basic, life, and career skills: £80,000.
- E37: Tailored support for the employed to access courses: £70,000.
- E39: Green skills courses: £155,000.
- E41: Funding to support local digital skills: £232,000.

2.5 Rural England Prosperity Fund interventions: The addendum is attached as an appendix. The key Interventions, budgets, and delivery routes are shown below:

- Intervention 1.1: (i) SME grants to be used alongside SPF E24: £800,000. (ii) SME grants to be used alongside SPF E29: £300,000.
- Intervention 1.3: trail development and marketing: £65,000.
- Intervention 2.1: Digital improvements for hard-to-reach communities: £580,000.
- Intervention 2.2: Community sustainable energy: £206,918
- Intervention 2.6: Active travel enhancements: £115,000.

3. **Financial Implications**

- 3.1 The Section 31 grant funding is specifically for the Investment Priorities and Interventions detailed in the Investment Plan, so cannot be used for Business-as-Usual activity. However, while much of the funding is allocated to directly benefit Dorset businesses and communities through grant schemes, some interventions will be delivered in-house and help deliver actions in the Dorset Council Plan and Delivery Plan, including delivery by the Digital Place, Sustainable Transport, and Zero Carbon teams.
- 3.2 Up to 4% of the grant can be used for administration and delivery costs, which is sufficient to cover the costs of a fixed-term project manager and project officer. These posts have recently been appointed. Further support is provided from existing Economic Growth and Regeneration Service officers.
- 3.3 In summary, there are no additional costs to the council, and some unfunded ambitions of the council will be funded, match-funded, or gap-funded - and delivered - through SPF.

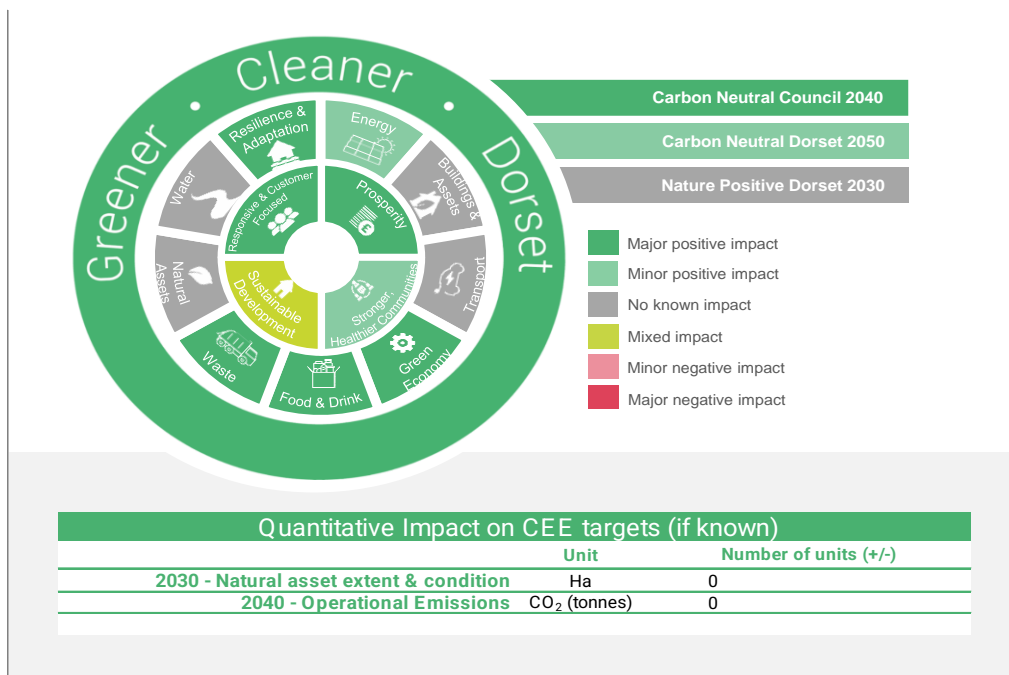
4. Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications

4.1 Interventions included in the SPF Investment Plan include:

- funding for energy efficiency and sustainable energy improvements to homes, community buildings and businesses,
- work to develop and deliver sustainable transport infrastructure.
- green skills training

4.2 In addition to interventions specifically targeted at mitigating and improving the natural environment, climate impact is one of the proposed indicators for evaluating business and community grant applications.

4.3 Climate Wheel:



5. Well-being and Health Implications

5.1 Within the “Communities and Place” Investment Priority there are interventions to improve cold homes and boost digital inclusion, both of which contribute to reducing health and wellbeing inequalities.

5.2 The “Local Business” and “People and Skills” Investment Priorities all help to safeguard and create better quality jobs, improving levels of financial wellbeing. Income and wealth are key wider determinants of health and wellbeing.

6. **Other Implications**

6.1 None.

7. **Risk Assessment**

7.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Medium

Residual Risk: Low

Failure to access and make use of the funding available through the SPF and REPF presents both a reputational risk and a loss of funding.

8. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

8.1 A comprehensive over-arching Equalities Impact Assessment was carried out to support the Economic Growth Strategy, available at [Economic Growth Strategy EqIA - Dorset Council](#) . A more detailed EqIA examining the potential impact of specific SPF Interventions is under development, in consultation with a nominated DC Inclusion Champion

9. **Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan, Rural England Prosperity Fund Addendum summaries and original texts

Appendix 2 - EqIA

Appendix 3 - Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications Accessible Impact Assessment and Table of Recommendations

10. **Background Papers**

None