

UK Shared Prosperity Funding 2025/26



Report to:	Cabinet
Date:	19 March 2025
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Michael Hardware, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development
Lead Officer:	James Gardner, Managing Director (01279) 446449
Contributing Officer:	Alison Fox, Communities Manager – Economy and Projects (01279) 446407
Key Decision:	Yes
Forward Plan:	Forward Plan number I018015
Call In:	This item is subject to call in procedures
Corporate Mission:	Renew our neighbourhoods Rebuild our town Secure investment for Harlow's future
Wards Affected:	All wards

Executive Summary

A The council's current three-year UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF) programme ends on 31 March 2025 following successful delivery of all projects. The government has extended the UKSPF for a further one-year (year 4 of the programme). This report sets out the proposed programme of expenditure for the 2025/26 (year 4) in line with the council's corporate missions.

Recommended that:

A Cabinet approves the year 4 UKSPF programme as set out in the report.

Reason for decision

- A** To ensure that the council meets the government guidelines associated with the UKSPF funding, including ensuring that all allocated funding is positively utilised within the financial year 2025/26.
- B** To ensure that the funding makes a positive impact for Harlow and helps to support the council's missions.
- C** To support existing projects to continue to contribute positive outcomes to the programme as well as the delivery of new projects.

Other Options

- A** Several other projects were considered for potential inclusion within the UKSPF year 4 programme of activity. These included the continuation of other projects that had been delivered through the previous tranche of UKSPF funding and a range of employability projects. All projects were reviewed for deliverability, value for money, ability to achieve positive outcomes for Harlow, how they supported the council's missions and how they fitted within the government's guidelines for the funding.

Background

1. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), launched in April 2022, was designed to replace European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIFs) and support the government's "levelling up" agenda, focusing on local investment and addressing inequalities across the UK.
2. At the time of the launch, the government announced a three-year UKSPF settlement for Harlow worth £1 million. The council was required to set out a three-year investment programme, running from 2022-25, to deliver the objectives of the UKSPF. This investment programme has been successfully delivered.
3. In October 2024, the new government confirmed that the UKSPF would only be extended for one year (year 4) and that funding would be at a reduced level. Confirmation that Harlow would receive a total of £327,146 of UKSPF funding for 2025/26 was received in December 2024.
4. The funding is split as follows:
 - a) Capital – minimum of £60,401
 - b) Revenue – maximum of £266,745
5. Four percent of the total funding can be allocated to management and administration fees. This equates to £13,086 which must be allocated from the revenue funding.

6. The 2025/26 funding must be entirely spent by the end of March 2026. It cannot be rolled over to the following financial year as the fund is ending.
7. Updated government guidelines were issued for year 4 which set out three priorities linked to suggested interventions and expected outcomes that the funding should be delivered against. These are:
 - a) Communities and place;
 - b) Supporting local businesses;
 - c) People and skills.

Issues/Proposals

8. After carefully reviewing the existing activity being delivered through the previous tranche of UKSPF funding and potential new deliverable projects, the following programme of activity is being recommended for delivery with year 4 of the UKSPF funding.

Project	Corporate mission(s)	Description	Capital or revenue	Funding allocation
Construction Hub	Rebuild our town Secure investment for Harlow's future	Contribution towards the total cost of the relocation of the existing Construction Hub buildings from the UKHSA site to Harlow College campus to enable the reopening of construction training provision for the benefit of Harlow's young people. This will be supported by the Harlow Regeneration Partnership and other construction partners.	Capital	£70,000
Community Hub	Protect our communities	Continuation funding for frontline and outreach provision providing essential support delivered by Rainbow Services and Partners. Note: Over the 2 years that the Community Hub has been funded via	Revenue	£55,000

		UKSPF they have supported over 4,685 Harlow households and see over 200 households per month.		
Town Centre regeneration	Rebuild our town Deliver high-performing council services	Activity to include: a) Signage & Way Finding b) Broadwalk Christmas Event (community event to be planned for November / December 25 as part of the completion of Broadwalk regeneration works)	Revenue	£70,000
Townwide Signage	Renew our neighbourhoods Secure investment for Harlow's future	Activity to include: Improvements and replacements to signage for the town entrances & neighbourhood areas, supporting and promoting inward investment.	Revenue	£50,000
Museum improvements	Deliver high-performing council services	Funding to deliver the next stage of the museum improvements project which will focus on securing funding for the works (which are estimated to cost in the region of £3.6m). This funding will cover the costs of a bid writing for a Heritage Lottery funding application.	Revenue	£40,000
Digital Boost Business Grants	Secure investment for Harlow's future	Round two of small grants of up to £2,500 for digital improvements for locally based businesses. Note: Round 1 has supported 21 local SME businesses to implement	Revenue	£29,060

		digital improvements to their businesses.		
Admin fees	N/A	4% management and Admin fees	Revenue	£13,086
Total funding				£327,146

9. The proposed programme of activity will deliver a range of positive outcomes that will support the delivery of the council's missions.

Implications

Equalities and Diversity

Some of the projects within the programme will have a direct positive impact on inequality and diversity within Harlow. For instance, both the Community Hub aims to tackle issues relating to inequalities. However, each of the projects that form the year 4 UKSPF programme will have an Equality Impact assessment undertaken as appropriate.

Climate Change

None

Finance

Financial implications are set out within the report and the available financing is included within the medium term financial plan.

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Governance

It is a requirement of the UKSPF for authorities to ensure that allocations are being spent to agreed timescales and milestones, including achievement of outputs and outcomes. By approving allocations for expenditure Cabinet are fulfilling this obligation and further data returns against outcomes of projects will be required throughout the funding period.

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Appendices

None

Background Papers

None

Glossary of terms/abbreviations used

UKSPF – UK Shared Prosperity Funding