

Committee: Scrutiny Committee

Date: 4 December
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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 spent on supporting the recovery of the local economy following the impact of the Pandemic.
2. The plan evolved to include supporting the cost of living crisis that 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 was the third and final year of the recovery plan initiatives. This report updates members on monies carried over into this financial year (2024/25) for projects already committed to in the previous financial year but not fully delivered.
4. As part of the budget setting process for 2024/25 members invested £10,000 in Economic Development, to support one of their Corporate Plan priorities, Encouraging Economic Growth. An update on spend has been included in this report.
5. 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

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

Financial Implications

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

Background Papers

8. None

Impact

9.

Communication/Consultation	CMT and ICB. In addition, a survey was carried out with the local business community and regular meetings with external business support providers
Community Safety	N/A
Equalities	N/A
Health and Safety	N/A
Human Rights/Legal Implications	Any awards of funding provided to individual businesses and organisations are issued in line with the Subsidy Regulations
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

10. 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.
11. The third and final year of the plan was in 2023/24. At the end of the year £299,469 was carried over for initiatives that overran the end of the 2023/24 financial year.
12. The carried over funding relates to activities which span more than one financial year, the total amount carried forward was £299,469 to match to the committed expenditure. These include the following.

- The North Essex Economic Board (NEEB) strategy. The NEEB are a partnership of councils working together on a 4 year action plan to drive forward economic growth in the region.
- Membership of the North Essex Councils (NEC) for 2 years. The NEC partnership aims to identify common issues and develop shared solutions that add value beyond what an individual council could do individually.
- Running costs and marketing of the UK Innovation Core Website for 2024/25 promoting the district as a good place to live and work.
- Resourcing cost to support the final year administration of the UKSPF and REPF government initiatives and the Parking Review action plan.
- Payment of small business grants committed to as part of the business recovery plan initiatives and paid in arrears.

13. No new initiatives have been funded in 2024/25.

Growth bid

14. Members approved a £10,000 service investment in December 2023 for the following initiatives in 2024/25.

- Business Breakfast - £1,500
- Ambitious Women in Essex Forums x 4 - £1,000
- Uttlesford Business Awards - £5,000
- Sponsorship and Attendance at Stansted Business Expo - £2,000
- Business support workshops and initiatives - £500

15. All the above Initiatives are either completed or in progress to be delivered and further details on the progress are detailed below.

- The Uttlesford Business Breakfast took place at Down Hall Hotel and Spa in October 2024. This event was attended by local businesses, charities and support providers.
- To date, 2 x Ambitious Women in Essex events have been held including a very successful panel discussion held in Saffron Walden to support budding entrepreneurs.
- The Business Awards are being launched in November 2024 with the event taking place at Saffron Hall in March 2025.

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

16. 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. Under the terms of the funding agreement any unspent funds will need to be paid back to Government.
17. Uttlesford will receive a total of £1m over three years for UKSPF, this is the third and final year of this scheme under the current agreement. The fund was set up to provide support within the district under three key investment priorities.
 - Community and Place
 - Supporting Local Business
 - People and Skills.
18. The REPF is an addendum of the UKSPF, and the Council has been allocated a further £813,386 over two years, with 2024/25 being the second year. The REPF can only be spent on capital projects and works and must only be used for projects not funded by other DEFRA schemes. 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
19. The majority of the funding we have received for UKSPF has been awarded to local organisations and businesses. A small amount outstanding for projects currently in development, including a potential mobile community supermarket which is currently out for tender.
20. The REPF funding was all allocated in the last financial year, however, several projects were not able to proceed, therefore, a new round of the grant scheme is underway to ensure that all funds are allocated. Attached as Appendix A is a table of the allocations made for this year on both UKSPF and REPF.
21. As part of the budget announcements, the new Government committed to a further funding pot of £900m for UKSPF (or similar scheme) but no details on how this will be allocated, or the scheme criteria has been released yet.

Risk Analysis

22.

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.

Appendix A

Funding Sources		2024-25		
		Allocation Spend to date		Remaining
UKSPF Allocation		£670,575	£565,430	£105,145
REPF Allocation		£610,115	£418,431	£191,684
UKSPF Year 3				
Organisation	Description of award	Amount awarded		
Admin fee	Administration and delivery resources	20,000		
WECAN	Digital Inclusion Programme	35,900		
Anglia Ruskin University	Third Sector training programme	28,302		
Saffron Hall	Volunteering to employment programme	36,000		
DigIt Community Allotmen	Community Grant	4,940		
Buffy Bus	Community Grant	5,190		
Hearing Help	Community Grant	5,700		
Support4Sight	Community Grant	9,360		
Saffron Walden TC	Start up and makers markets	35,000		
Cultural Engine CIC	Culture and heritage support programme	49,600		
NWES	West Essex Business Support Programme	29,330		
Knowledge Academy	Project management courses	20,421		
Harlow College	Skills courses	50,000		
UDC	Skills for work grant scheme	30,000		
ECC	HGV driving courses	25,000		
Little Bardfield Cricket Clu	Sport grant (access pathway)	10,000		
Saffron Walden TC	Sport grant (Crabtrees MUGA lighting)	10,000		
Thaxted Rangers FC	Sports grant	10,000		
Newport Cricket Club	Sports Grant (Nets)	10,000		
Stebbing Cricket Club	Sports Grant (lighting)	7,000		
Thaxted Parish council	Play equipment (outdoor gym)	5,000		
Great Dunmow TC	Play equipment (skate park)	10,000		
Farnham PC	Play equipment (playground)	7,700		
The Sampfords PC	Play equipment (playground)	10,000		
Saffron Walden TC	Play equipment (Little Walden playground)	10,000		
Sewards End PC	Play equipment (playground)	9,725		
Little Easton PC	Play equipment (playground)	1,480		
Great Easton PC	Play equipment (playground)	10,000		
Wimbish PC	Play equipment (playground)	7,169		
Hadstock PC	Play equipment (playground)	5,000		
Great Easton PC	Village Hall (Parish Hall)	6,000		
Great Easton PC	Village Hall (The River Shed)	10,000		
Wendens Ambo PC	Village Hall	3,300		
Flitch Green PC	Village Hall	10,000		
Elsenham Memorial Hall	Village Hall	9,999		
Barnston PC	Village Hall	8,314		
Ashdon Parish Church	Village Hall	10,000		
		565,430		

REPF Year 2		
Organisation	Description of award	Amount awarded
Julian Shoolheifer Ltd, Debden	Extension of commercial premises	50,000
Bailey Hills, Nr Farnham	Creation of winery and visitor centre	150,000
Pepples Farm, Wimbish	Installation of visitor accommodation	74,266
Porters Hall, Stebbing	Conversion of dovecote to visitor accommodation	144,165
		418,431