

RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION TAKEN BY AN EXECUTIVE MEMBER

This form **MUST** be used to record any decision taken by the Elected Mayor or an individual Executive Member (Portfolio Holder).

The form must be completed and passed to the Chief Officer Legal and Democratic Services no later than NOON on the second working day after the day on which the decision is taken. No action may be taken to implement the decision(s) recorded on this form until 7 days have passed and the Chief Officer Legal and Democratic Services has confirmed the decision has not been called in.

1. Description of decision

To accept a grant of **up to £552,352** from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) to deliver the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). The Fund covers the period April 2023 to March 2025. The funding is capital only.

The REPF is an addendum to the main UK Shared Prosperity Fund received in December 2022 and will focus on support for:

- Small & Micro Businesses
- The Visitor Economy
- Active Travel

2. Date of decision

20 June 2023

3. Reasons for decision

To allow delivery of priorities for the Rural England Priority Fund

4. Alternatives considered and rejected

The alternative is to reject the funding and not deliver the Rural Economic Prosperity Fund

5. How decision is to be funded

External Funding from DLUHC

6. Conflicts of interest

Name of all Executive members who were consulted AND declared a conflict of interest.	Nature of interest	Did Standards Committee give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and date of dispensation)	Did the Chief Executive give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and the date of the dispensation).

The Mayor has been consulted on this decision

Not Applicable

Signed Tom Wootton

Date: 20 June 2023

Name of Decision Taker:

Mayor Tom Wootton

This is a public document. A copy of it must be given to the Chief Officer Legal and Democratic Services as soon as it is completed.

Date decision published:20June2023.....

Date decision can be implemented if not called in:30June2023.....

(Decision to be made exempt from call in.....NO.....)

Bedford Borough Council – Report for the Portfolio Holder for Town Centres and Planning

Date: 20 June 2023

Report by: Manager for Economic Growth & Development

Subject: Acceptance of Grant Funding for the Rural England Prosperity Fund from Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

1. Executive Summary

Bedford Borough Council has been awarded a grant of **up to £552,352** from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) to deliver the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). The Investment Plan covers the period April 2023 to March 2025. The funding is capital only.

The REPF is an addendum to the main UK Shared Prosperity Fund received in December 2022 and will focus on support for:

- Small & Micro Businesses
- Visitor Economy
- Active Travel

2. Recommendations

The Council accepts a grant of up to £552,532 to deliver the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

Acceptance of the grant will enable the delivery of the Rural England Prosperity Plan over two years.

4. Key Implications

(a) Policy

The Council's Corporate Plan 2022-27 and the Economic Prosperity Plan 2023-28 outline key priorities areas which match the three priority areas of the UKSPF, focusing around place, business and people.

(b) **Legal Issues**

The Council will need to comply with DLUHC grant agreement and will be required to monitor and report on progress and performance.

(c) **Resource Implications**

The REPF will be delivered by the dedicated UKSPF Lead Officer and is funded from the main UKSPF allowance. Additional support will be provided by the Manager for Economic Growth & Development as part of their normal duties.

The Council will receive grant payments at start of each year. Payments will be conditional of a report submitted ahead of each financial year.

(d) **Risk Implications**

Acceptance of the grant will commit the Council to undertaking the work forming the REPF.

If the acceptance of the grant is not approved, the Council will have to reject the offer of grant funding from DLUHC and not proceed.

Refusal to accept the grant could have a reputational impact with government and make it more difficult to proceed with other government grants still under consideration (e.g. the Levelling-Up Fund).

(e) **Environmental Implications**

The specific projects for the REPF have yet to be finalised but they will all consider the impact they will have on the environment and ensure there are no negative impacts.

(f) **Equalities Impact**

An Equalities Impact Assessment has not been undertaken for this report. Each project within the Investment Plan will be subject to an individual equalities impact assessment.

5. **Details**

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) forms part of the government's Levelling Up agenda. It provides £2.6 billion nationally of new funding for local investment by March 2025.

In Autumn 2022, Bedford was invited to develop an Investment Plan addendum for REPF. Bedford had been allocated £552,352. The funding is capital only and will be delivered with 25% in Year 1 (£135k) and 75% (£415k) in Year 2.

The Economic Growth team undertook a series of analysis and consultation with key stakeholders to develop the addendum. Based on the outcome, the allocation has been split between three areas:

- Supporting Small and Micro Businesses (£200,000: Year 1 - £80,000/ Year 2 - £120,000)
- Development and promotion (trade and consumer) of the visitor economy (£153,000: Year 1 - £58,000/ Year 2 - £95,000)
- Active Travel (£199,352: Year 2 Only)

The criteria for accessing the REPF funding is currently being developed by the Economic Growth & Development team.

The REPF is accountable to a Local Partnership Group, which is the Town Deal Board for Bedford.

6. Outcome & Consultation Summary

The following Council Departments or Officers and/or other organisations have been consulted in preparing this report:

- Director for Environment
- Chief Officer for Finance
- Chief Officer for Legal and Democratic Services
- Energy Team

No adverse comments have been received.

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