


<b>Agenda Item No:</b>	7	
<b>Committee:</b>	Cabinet	
<b>Date:</b>	26 February 2024	
<b>Report Title:</b>	Revised grant decision making process for the 2024-25 SPF Investment in Business Project & REPF Business Growth Grants Project	

## 1. Purpose / Summary

1.1 At the Cabinet meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2023 Members considered a report titled “UK Shared Prosperity Fund” and agreed to recommend:

*“The legal, financial and governance arrangements in relation to the administration of Fenland District Council’s SPF allocation as set out in this report”.*

1.2 These arrangements included a grant decision making process within the utilising the Economic Growth Team, North Cambridgeshire Place Development Board (PDB) and the Council’s Prosperity Fund Grants Team.

1.3 From January 2024 the PDB was no longer operational and its role in the grant decision making process needs filling with a suitable replacement organisation.

## 2. Key Issues

2.1 The PDB provided a commercial assessment of the grant applications that was a key component in the grant decision making process. To maintain the robustness of this process for 2024-25 a replacement to the PDB needs to be put in place.

## 3 Recommendations

3.1 Cabinet is requested to consider and agree a replacement to the North Cambridgeshire Place Development Board in the UK Shared Prosperity Fund grant making decision process.

Wards Affected	All
Forward Plan Reference	
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Ian Benney
Report Originator(s)	Anna Goodall, Assistant Director Simon Jackson, Economic Growth Manager
Contact Officer(s)	Simon Jackson, Economic Growth Manager
Background Papers	UK Shared Prosperity Fund: prospectus - GOV.UK ( <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus</a> )

## Report:

### **1 BACKGROUND AND INTENDED OUTCOMES**

- 1.1 At the Cabinet meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2023 Members considered a report titled “UK Shared Prosperity Fund” and agreed to recommend:
- “The legal, financial and governance arrangements in relation to the administration of Fenland District Council’s SPF allocation as set out in this report”.*
- 1.2 These arrangements included grant decision making processes for both the SPF Investment in Business Project and REPF Business Growth Grants Project. Both projects use the same process utilising the Economic Growth Team (EGT), North Cambridgeshire Place Development Board (PDB) and the Council’s Prosperity Fund Grants Team.
- 1.3 From January 2024 the PDB was no longer operational and its role in the grant decision making process needs filling with a suitable replacement organisation.
- 1.4 For 2024-25 it’s expected that more applications than in 2023-24 will be submitted. This expectation is based upon higher levels of funding and an additional business start-up/early-stage business grant scheme being available.
- 1.5 To provide a replacement to the role previously undertaken by the PDB and new role within the business start-up/early-stage business grant scheme the following organisations are recommended:
- Investment in Business Project – Cambridgeshire Chamber of Commerce
  - Rural England Business Growth Grants Project – Cambridgeshire ACRE
  - Business start-up/early-stage business Project – Growth Hub (Combined Authority Service)

- 1.6 Each organisation provides relevant commercial expertise in each of the markets the grants are targeted at and having three will enable the higher numbers of applications to be managed effectively.
- 1.7 The EGT will continue to provide each of the organisations with each application and supporting evidence/documentation and its recommendation as to whether to support or otherwise the application. Each organisation will provide their feedback on each application to the EGT. The decision on whether to support an application will then be made by the Council's PF Grants Team consisting of Officers from Finance, Audit and the Economic Growth Team.

## **2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 The reason for the recommendation is to gain Cabinet approval for the replacement of the PDB in the SPF and REPF grant making decision process.

## **3 CONSULTATION**

- 3.1 Engagement with partners and evaluation on projects such as Growth Works and Growth HUB Start & Grow pilot.

## **4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 An alternative option would be not to replace the PDB in the process. The PDB brought expertise and experience in evaluating private sector business investments and helped to ensure the most effective use of the 2023-24 SPF and REPF grant funding. This breadth of experience and expertise is not available within the Council. Each of the recommended replacements for the PDB bring relevant expertise and experience in each of the three grant schemes.

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 Legal Implications**

- 5.1.1 Authority has been given for Fenland District Council to enter into a Grant Funding Agreement with the CPCA who are passporting central government funding from DLUHC. In order now for the Council to distribute the funding to the intended recipients and in accordance with its bid, further governance is required.
- 5.1.2 In relation to the allocation of funding connected with Investment in Business, Start-up/Early-stage and Rural England it is important for the Council to ensure that a fair and proportionate process is in place to assist with the determination of applications. Recommendations are made by the EGT and new organisations before a final decision is taken by the PF Grants Team which will be comprised of officers who have had no prior involvement in the process, An

appeal mechanism will continue to exist where again, decisions will be taken by officers who have had no prior involvement and are of greater seniority than the original decision maker(s) seeking input from members where necessary. This is consistent with ordinary and fair decision-making processes and will be supplemented and supported with detailed information for applicants about the scheme; what the criteria are, how the decision will be made and by whom and how their data will be processed, shared and stored. Information sharing, conflict of interest and confidentiality agreements/policies will be drawn up with each organisation and each successful applicant will be required to enter into a grant funding agreement in order to receive the monies. This will ensure that the applicant understand what is expected of them upon receipt of the funding, for officers to be able to undertake periodic reviews and ultimately for the Council to clawback the monies in the very unlikely event the need to do so arises. Decisions relating to this scheme will be published in accordance with the Council's statutory obligations and having regard to any exemptions which may exist. Subsidy control will be assessed and documented on each occasion to safeguard the Council's interests and in compliance with its obligations under the CPCA GFA.

## **5.2 Financial Implications**

- 5.2.1 The SPF and REPF budgets are being managed by the EGT and the PF funded officer.

## **5.3 Equality Implications**

- 5.3.1 All individual projects and services have been assessed to ensure equality of access, etc.