



Report To:	Deputy Leader of the Council
Date:	17/04/2025
Subject:	Rural England Prosperity Fund – Approval of investment plan 2025/26
Purpose:	To agree the principles underpinning the council’s investment strategy for Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF), following the allocation of funding from the Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority.
Key Decision:	Yes
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Paul Redgate – Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance
Report Of:	Matthew Hogan, Assistant Director – Strategic Growth and Development
Report Author:	Saul Farrell – Senior Programme Manager (Local Growth and Grant Funding)
Ward(s) Affected:	All
Exempt Report:	No

Summary

This report seeks to agree the principles underpinning the council’s investment strategy for Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF), following the allocation of funding from the Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority. The paper sets out a strategy based around investment of the funds in two themes; capital investment in community facilities in rural areas, and capital investment in supporting rural businesses.

A decision is required in order to enable the council’s investment strategy to be submitted to the Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority against a short deadline, in order to secure the funds for local spend.

Recommendations

1. To agree the investment principles for the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) programme 2025/26 as articulated within this report, enabling an addendum to the council's approved UKSPF investment plan 2025/26 to be submitted to the Greater Lincolnshire Combined Mayoral Authority.

Reasons for Recommendations

To secure agreement concerning the council's Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) investment plan for 2025/26

Other Options Considered

Do Nothing. This would result in the authority not submitting an investment plan for how it wishes to invest available REPF funding. The council would therefore not be able to access the funds.

1. Report

- 1.1 In February 2025, formal approval was obtained for South Holland's UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan for the 2025-26, which following submission was approved by the Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority in early April.
- 1.2 Subsequent to the approval of the council's UKSPF investment plan for 2025/26, the Council has subsequently received confirmation from the GLCCA that, in addition to the approved allocation of £1,054,110 in UKSPF, the authority will also receive £209,919 in Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF).
- 1.3 REPF is a capital funding stream made available to local authorities to support with capital investment in both a) community facilities in rural areas, and b) capital investment in supporting rural businesses. The council's 22/23 – 24/25 UKSPF programme was underpinned by an element of REPF funding, and therefore the 25/26 allocation represents a continuation of funding for the authority.
- 1.4 For 2025/26 the authority has been allocated **£209,919**. Like UKSPF for 2025/26, this REPF fund is being 'passported' to the council from the GLCCA (who will retain accountable body status for REPF for 2025/26).
- 1.5 In order to secure the allocation, the GLCCA require the council to set out and agree a broad investment plan for the funding. This paper seeks agreement for a investment plan based around the following principles;
 - A 50/50 split in funding allocations between the two key themes of the fund:
 - Capital investment in community facilities in rural areas

- Capital investment in supporting rural businesses
- For those funds to be administered through the council's two existing, leading programmes in those two themes, those being;
 - £104,959 (50%) of the funds to be earmarked for the Lincolnshire Community Foundation Grassroots scheme, which provides community groups and parish councils with capital grants for community investment up to a value of £25,000.
 - £104,960 earmarked for the Grants4Growth programme, which provides businesses with up to a 30% contribution towards capital investment in activity that directly unlocks business growth e.g. equipment

1.6 The approach set out above would form an addendum to the UKSPF investment plan for 2025/26 that was submitted to the GLCCA in February. Both allocations would serve to bolster both schemes in the context of the main UKSPF programme 2025/26.

1.7 It is anticipated that, subject to MCCA approval, the REPF funded elements of the programme will launch in May 2024, in order to enable investment decisions to commence and funds to be defrayed in advance of the March 2026 spend deadline.

1.8 The recommendation is to agree the investment principles for the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) programme 2025/26 as articulated within this report, enabling an addendum to the council's approved UKSPF investment plan 2025/26 to be submitted to the Greater Lincolnshire Combined Mayoral Authority.

Implications

South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership

The proposal is that the Programme continues to be administered as a 'one Partnership' programme, served by a single Programme Team, hosted at South Holland District Council but shared across the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership area.

Corporate Priorities

None Arising

Staffing

None Arising

Workforce Capacity Implications

There will be workforce capacity implications associated with the delivery of the additional contracts for grant funding and the operational oversight of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Programme. It is proposed that these are entirely met through the current staffing resource within the Local Growth and Grant Funding team and that the administration budget is applied to that Service budget to support this.

Constitutional and Legal Implications

None Arising

Data Protection

None Arising

Financial

These are set out within the report

Risk Management

None Arising.

Stakeholder / Consultation / Timescales

The deadline for submission of the council's updated UKSPF investment plan, accounting for the additional Rural England Prosperity Funds, is April 18th 2025

Reputation

None arising

Contracts

The adoption of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan for 2025-6 will lead to the Council entering into a series of grant funding contracts to support the distribution of these funds to the local community and local businesses. It is anticipated that there will be between 16 and 20 individual grant funding contracts let under the aegis of this Investment Plan, centrally managed by the Local Growth and Grant Funding Team

Crime and Disorder

None Arising.

Equality and Diversity / Human Rights / Safeguarding

None Arising.

Health and Wellbeing

None Arising.

Climate Change and Environmental Implications

None Arising.

Acronyms

UKSPF – UK Shared Prosperity Fund
REPF – Rural England Properoty Fund
MCCA – Mayoral County Combined Authority

Appendices

None

Background Papers

No background papers as defined in Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the production of this report.

Chronological History of this Report

A report on this item has not been previously considered by a Council body.

Report Approval

Report author: Saul Farrell – Senior Programme Manager (Local Growth and Grant Funding)

Signed off by: Matthew Hogan – Assistant Director – Strategic Growth and Development)

Approved for publication: Paul Redgate – Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance