

# UKSPF Rochford Partnership Group Meeting Notes

Mill Arts & Events Centre, 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023



Rochford District  
UKSPF Partnership Gr



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UKSPF Partnership Gr



UK Shared Prosperity  
Fund Partnership Boar

## **Agenda**

## **Terms of Reference**

## **Slides**

### **Attendees:**

Cllr Danielle Belton (RDC) - Chair  
Daniel Goodman (RDC)  
Paula Chapman (RDC)  
Mark Aldous (RDC)  
Elizabeth Lake (RDC)  
Cllr Angelina Marriott (Hullbridge Parish Council)  
Karen Hawkes (Hockley Parish Council)

James Edmunds (Design Cabin Community CIC)  
Jeff Stanton (Hockley Chamber of Trade)  
Lee Monk (Active Essex)  
Lisa Bone (Visit Essex)  
Mike Davies (Rayleigh Museum)  
Paul Wilkins (3 Chambers)  
Peter Vadden (Cultural Engine)

### **Apologies:**

Apologies were received before the meeting from RDC Public Health, RDC Licensing, RDC Community Safety, Canewdon Parish Council, Citizens Advice South Essex, Hawkwell Parish Council, Rayleigh Rochford and District Association for Voluntary Services (RRAVS) and Rochford Town Team.

### **Discussion:**

Cllr. Danielle Belton, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Climate and Economy at Rochford District Council opened the meeting and confirmed she will be chairing this group going forward.

Introductions were made.

### Agenda Items 1 and 2 – Introduction and Purpose of Group

Daniel Goodman (DG) presented from the slides (linked at the top of the notes) giving an explanation of UKSPF funding and the journey so far, as summarised below.

Rochford has a UKSPF allocation of £1m over three years. 2022-23 = £75,450; 2023-24 = £150,900; 2024-25 = £773,651

The Council developed an investment plan which it submitted to government in August. This identified 3 interventions informed by a stakeholder workshop held locally in July 2022:

- E1: Improving town centres and high streets
- E4: Enhancing existing cultural, historic and heritage institutions offer
- E23: Strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems

In response to a question whether RDC can carry over underspend from one year to the next, DG confirmed that this was possible provided we could evidence we have clear plans to use the underspend

The Council in administering the fund is governed by strict funding rules, being the accountable body and required to submit monitoring and reporting of all funded projects.

In response to a question, DG confirmed that all parishes were invited along with many partners including from the voluntary sector, but unfortunately many unable to make the meeting. These organisations will continue to be invited. It was confirmed that membership is voluntary and by invitation from the Chair, however suggestions on organisations to invite are welcomed. DG confirmed that the group will meet at least quarterly.

DG confirmed that membership of the group does not preclude organisations from applying to the fund themselves, however moving forward there will be a declaration of interest at the start of each meeting. Clarified that the group itself will not be approving spend but that, to inform decisions, the Council may form a sub-group involving the Council and members of the wider group who are not applying to the fund themselves. RDC will ultimately be responsible for ensuring no conflicts of interest emerge.

Purpose of the partnership includes local insight and expertise to help identify needs and opportunities as well as suggesting ideas for projects and being a local advocate to spread the word about the fund and encourage application for grants.

It was acknowledged that it would be helpful for all members to read the Government's UKSPF prospectus and the Council's submitted Investment Plan for context. These are to be shared after the meeting.

The group will meet regularly until the fund ceases on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 (2 years commitment).

**AGREED ACTION: Invitees to confirm whether their organisation wishes to be a permanent member of this group by email to [business@rochford.gov.uk](mailto:business@rochford.gov.uk) by 15<sup>th</sup> March 2023.**

**AGREED ACTION: Invitees to confirm whether they have any comments on the Terms of Reference (linked above) by email to [business@rochford.gov.uk](mailto:business@rochford.gov.uk) by 15<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

**AGREED ACTION: Links to Investment Plan and government report on Levelling Up will be attached to these notes, it would be appreciated if members of this group could read them as it sets the scene to help you understand the process going forward.**

Post meeting note:

- *Rochford District Council – Investment Plan for UKSPF:* <https://www.rochford.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-01/RochfordUKSPFInvestmentPlanFINAL.pdf>
- *Government UKSPF Prospectus:* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus>

- *The Council have a dedicated UK SPF page on their website where future notes of this partnership group will be published and where the above documents are listed alongside the UK SPF Interventions guidance where the categories for Rochford District were chosen from: <https://www.rochford.gov.uk/uk-shared-prosperity-fund>*

### Agenda Item 3 – Overview of Approach to Date

Unfortunately, the Council did not receive funding for year 1 (2022/23) until this January 2023 with a requirement to spend by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, so had to commission projects without much engagement.

DG will circulate a list of 'quick wins' that have been commissioned in year 1. Going forward for Years 2 and 3, partnership engagement through this group will happen before allocation of funds, as we will have more time.

### Agenda Item 4 – Future Grant Programme and Priorities

The funding outlook for 2023/24 was explained. Three elements; Grant Programme, Business Support and Directly Commissioned Projects.

#### *Grant Programme*

The Council would like to distribute a proportion of Year 2 funds through an open and competitive grant process. Looking to launch in April/May 2023 and run for 4 weeks. Paper going to Council Executive on 7<sup>th</sup> March to approve this broad approach and seek authority to spend.

General principles of grant programme were outlined in slides. Must meet E1 and E4 interventions. Grants from £5,000-£15,000. Must commit to delivering at one listed output and one listed outcome. To obtain the maximum grant you need to demonstrate value for money and several outputs and outcomes.

In response to a question, it was acknowledged that this was a quick turnaround and some may not have time to develop proposals in this time. It was agreed that members need to start getting the word out soon so that organisations can make preparations. Furthermore, the Council would be holding a workshop for prospective applicants and could look to hold this at least a few weeks before the grant window opens. Lastly, it was agreed that any underspend could be utilised in a subsequent 'mop up' round later in the year for those who may need more time to gather details or seek permissions. Also acknowledged that there was a significant allocation in 2024/25.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that the minimum value of £5,000 was set due to monitoring and evaluating requirements and the intensive resource it takes meaning it would not be viable to have lots of £500 applications.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that due diligence would need to be carried out and embedded into the grant process. Clawing back money on poor performance is difficult unless a recipient has simply not done what they said, but written safeguards will need to be agreed with the grant recipient before awarding. For example, an agreed payment plan which provides a 50% award at inception and then 25% and 25% after performance indicators have been met. All agreed due diligence will be key.

Potential criteria for grant programme listed on slide for members to consider and agree. In response to a question, it was confirmed legacy and long-term sustainability are one of them.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that the Council would be looking to be as flexible as possible with the types of proposal it might fund, provided these fit the overall wording of one of the interventions. For example, it was acknowledged that some leisure and health related projects could be seen as enhancement of culture.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that accessibility will be integrated into the online application form, with opportunity for applicants to request help to complete and a hard copy, if necessary, but keen to avoid paper versions where possible.

It was asked whether location of organisation and delivery have been considered to ensure local projects only, as some may apply from outside the district. It was confirmed that organisations do not have to be based in the District to receive a grant, but will need to demonstrate what they will deliver in the District. It was also confirmed that geographical split of delivery was seen as key and confirmed at previous Council meeting. For example, 'high streets' taken to include locations in Hullbridge, Great Wakering and Canewdon. However, it may not be possible to explicitly embed this into the grant criteria.

It was suggested that the Council make it clear that projects in year 2 could be scaled up in year 3, as organisations not prevented from applying more than once. This could also enable pilot projects, which was agreed.

The Council agreed to hold a waiting list and invite those unsuccessful initially to the next round. The group should also offer feedback as to why an application was not successful to encourage them to improve and enhance it to try again in a future round.

#### *Business support*

£100,000 is allocated to pure business support. Not enough funding to operate a grants programme as amount per recipient would be too small. A slide suggested specific topics where free business support could be offered to businesses.

It was discussed whether a survey is a good way to find out what business support would be most relevant to our local business community or a free business event where a survey is undertaken.

**AGREED ACTION: The group to consider how best to focus business support and provide ideas at or before the next meeting.**

#### *Directly commissioned projects*

Any spend not used for grants or business support can be used to directly commission projects. This might be capital spend, as difficult for capital projects in a grants programme, which is majority revenue based.

**AGREED ACTION: Proposed that the Partnership Group receive direct project ideas from the Council on or at the next meeting**

The funding outlook for 2024/25 was detailed on a slide – acknowledged that decisions on how to focus this funding would be a role for the group at future meetings.

Agreed that the Partnership Group will continue to monitor opportunities for 2024/25 spend at and between future meetings and make suggestions.

#### Agenda Item 5 and 6 – Next Steps and AOB

Recap of discussion and next steps stated on slide.

Agreed - Agenda for next meeting will include business support and directly commissioned projects as items for discussion.

Agreed - Establish a firm list of attendees following receipt of email confirmation and include a list of all future dates for this group to enable members to block out their diaries.

**AGREED ACTION: DG to circulate future meeting dates for a whole year.**

Attendees were thanked for attending and the meeting closed at 12.25 pm.