

STOCKPORT UKSPF COMMUNITIES AND PLACE GRANTS UPDATE

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive

1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Economy, Regeneration and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee have previously considered information about the Communities and Place strand of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), and the proposed approach for the use of Stockport's allocation of these funds.
- 1.2 It was agreed that updates on UKSPF in Stockport would be brought back to the Committee.
- 1.3 This paper provides information on the further progress made with the UKSPF Communities and Place funding allocation for Stockport and the awarding of a second round of grant funding to a range of projects, and the next steps with the scheme.

2. STOCKPORT'S APPROACH TO COMMUNITIES AND PLACE

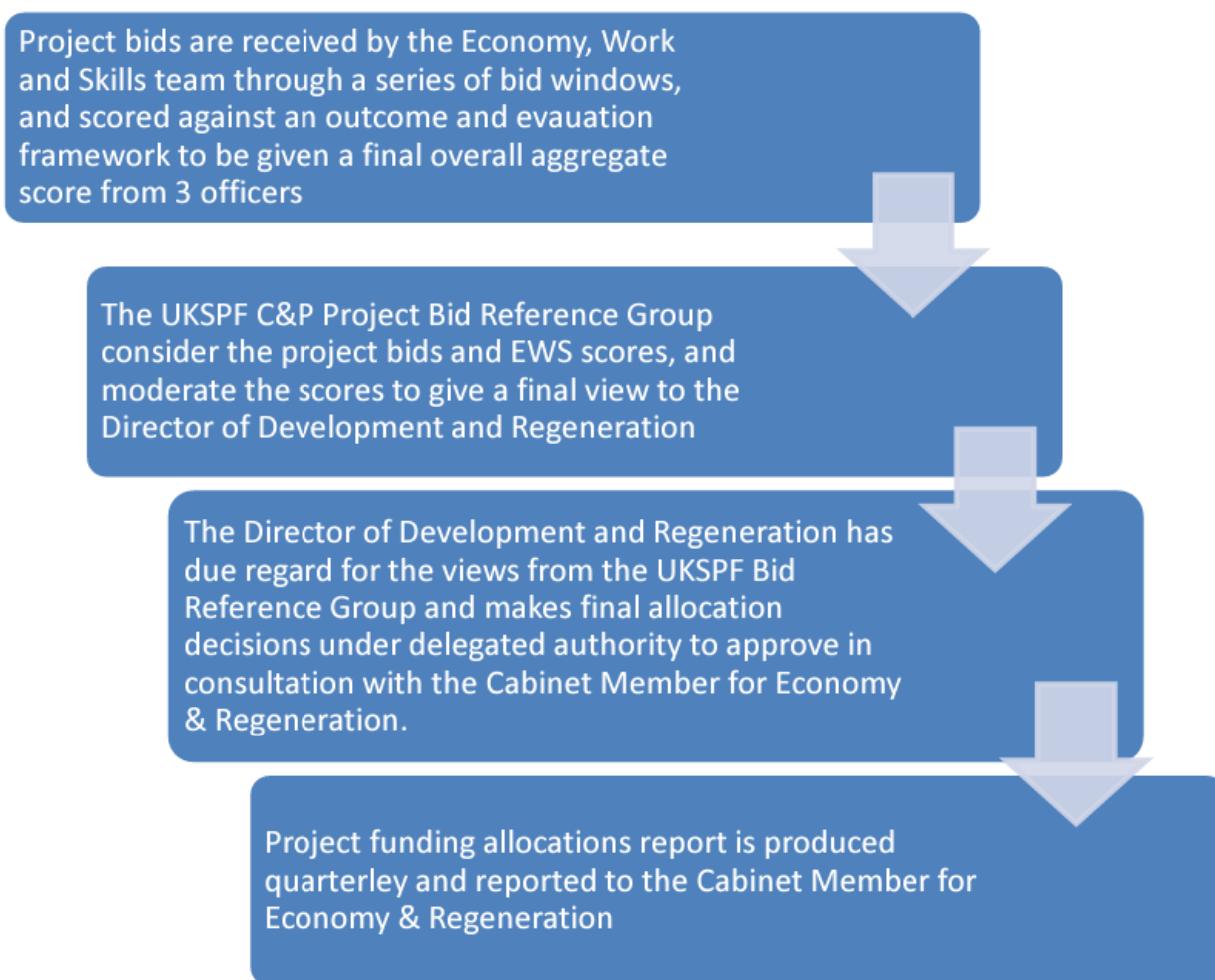
- 2.1 The Council was successful in bidding to GMCA for Communities and Place funding for two programme work streams to deliver projects that align to their approved investment proposition with DLUHC:
 - Healthy and Happy Stockport
 - Climate Friendly Stockport.
- 2.2 The only interventions that are approved under the Stockport GM UKSPF C&P 2022-25 Programme are:
 - E1: Funding for improvements to town centres and high streets, including better accessibility for disabled people, including capital spend and running costs.
 - E3: Creation of and improvements to local green spaces, community gardens, watercourses and embankments, along with incorporating natural features into wider public spaces.
 - E6: Support for local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities.

2.3 Stockport's Communities and Place funding is set out below. Currently, DLUHC have only approved UKSPF funding for the financial year ending March 2024.

Financial Year	Stockport's UKSPF Communities and Place Funding
2022/23	£673,000
2023/24	£907,500
2024/25	£874,000

2.4 As funds for this strand of UKSPF were delayed, Stockport's allocation to use in the 22/23 financial year was rolled into this financial year providing total available funding of £1,580,500 to be used by 31/03/2024.

2.5 In March 2023, the Committee endorsed the Council's proposed arrangements for calling for project bids for using the funding, and the proposed methodology for assessing and awarding funding to successful bids, plus associated governance arrangements for the funding, summarised in the diagram below:



2.6 By March 2024, the Council had used £1,464,986 of the funding to support a variety of project bids. This left a balance of £989,148 of funding to be used to support further project bids before the funding spend deadline of 31/03/2025.

2.7 The Council has now completed the process for a second round of bids for the available funding.

3. PROCESS AND OUTCOMES

3.1 For the first round of funding bids, project delivery has gone well, and the following outputs have been achieved and evidence provided, so far:

- Amount of commercial space completed or improved = 1,295 m²
- Amount of public realm created or improved = 1,750 m²
- Amount of green or blue space created or improved = 1,217 m²
- Number of local events or activities supported = 84
- Jobs created as a result of support = 3.5 FTE
- Number of community-led arts, cultural, heritage and creative programmes as a result of support = 72
- Increased footfall = 36,297
- Estimated Carbon dioxide equivalent reductions as a result of support = 26.4 tonnes

3.2 Projects from the first round of funding are still completing their delivery, due to the delayed start, and collating the evidence needed to demonstrate achievement of deliverables so there will be more data to add to the figures in 3.1, above. So far, there has been significant additional activity in Stockport as a result of UKSPF funded projects with a large increase in footfall.

3.3 A second call for bids for this funding, for qualifying projects, from external and internal partners was made by the Council for a period of four weeks between 20/02/2024 and 17/03/2024. 61 bids were received by the deadline.

3.4 Those bidding for the funding were originally advised that decisions on funding applications would be communicated by the end of May following the local elections being held. Communication of the decisions on funding did not go ahead due to the general election being called, and the need to seek guidance and approval that it would be appropriate to do this during a period of pre-election sensitivity.

3.5 The initial total call on funding from the 61 bids came to £2,475,356 which exceeded the available funds by £1,486,208. Bidders were approached and asked to reduce their funding ask to a minimum needed to run their project and this reduced the total funding ask to £1,681,881. This reduced funding ask was still £692,733 more than the funding available but would allow for a greater number of bids to be funded.

3.4 All of the bids were evaluated and scored separately by 3 officers in the Council, and the scores awarded were then moderated by an independent bid scoring moderation panel of four members. The moderation panel reviewed a sample of the scores where the difference between the scores awarded by the Council officers varied by more than one mark and agreed a moderated score. The moderation panel agreed that there was a high level of confidence that the officer scoring of the bids was fair and consistent.

2.8 To a degree, the scoring reflected the bid writing skills and capacity of the bidding organisation, and so the scores were used as a reference guide in conjunction with additional context from the bids regarding the suitability, alignment to core purpose of

the funding and value for the level of funding requested, to determine which bids should be supported.

- 2.9 Of the 61 bids, 39 are proposed to be funded with a total funding value of £989,148. The remaining bids are on a reserve list for funding should any recycled underspend become available from GMCA, or from local projects that are not able to proceed after their funding allocation has been notified.
- 3.7 The analysis of the geographical reach and coverage of the successful and reserve project bids is shown below, and a summary of the successful project bids is provided in appendix 1 of this report:

	Bids proposed to be funded				Reserve List			
	Total £	% of funding allocated	Total number of bids	% of bids funded	Total £	% of funding ask	Total number of bids	% of bids received
Town Centre Only	£49,950	5.0%	1	2.6%	£17,533	2.4%	3	4.9%
Based in Town Centre but attracting wider reach	£519,915	52.6%	18	46.2%	£441,108	60.7%	11	18.0%
Based in district and local centres	£419,283	42.4%	20	51.3%	£268,025	36.9%	8	13.1%

This shows a good reach and spread of project delivery across the borough.

- 3.8 All UKSPF funding must be spent, and projects fully delivered by 31/03/2025. Officers from the Economy, Work and Skills team are monitoring the progress with project delivery and a review point in September 2024 will be used to identify the risk of underspend to recycle funding to ensure Stockport's allocation is fully used.
- 3.9 To continue assisting with the successful Action Plan approach for creating strong and healthy District Centres, a further £40,000 has been allocated via the Communities and Place strand of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), to be split equally between the eight District Centres.
- 3.10 Following the change of government in July, there has been some speculation as to whether there will be further UKSPF funding beyond July 2025. Nothing has been formally confirmed regarding further funding and this Committee will receive further update reports on UKSPF which will include information about future funding rounds, should they be confirmed.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Stockport has created a rigorous and successful approach to making the best use of the UKSPF Communities and Place funding. This funding has provided extra support for the delivery of our ambitions for a great year as Town of Culture and its legacy, as well as supporting the further development of the good work being done in our district centres.
- 4.2 The first round of projects bidding for funding are being delivered. There are an exciting and diverse range of project ideas and activities that are benefitting Stockport. There have been improvements to green space, commercial space, public realm and many events and activities to benefit the residents and businesses in Stockport. An increase in footfall will have provided a boost for our local economy.
- 4.3 The second round of bids will continue to build on the success of the Town of Culture and the good work being done to support and develop the district centres.

- 4.4 Council officers will continue to provide close support and monitoring of project delivery to ensure compliance with the funding requirements and to support GMCA with developing further initiatives for using UKSPF funding, should it become available.
- 4.5 A further report on UKSPF in Stockport will be presented to the Committee in 2025 following the completion and close out of all activity after March, next year.
- 4.4 Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are none

Anyone wishing to inspect the above background papers or requiring further information should contact Richard Mortimer on telephone number Tel: 0161 474 3864 or alternatively email richard.mortimer@stockport.gov.uk