



ECONOMY REGENERATION & HOUSING COMMITTEE

Wednesday 12th March 2025

REPORT TITLE:	UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND PLACE

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides an update in respect of the Liverpool City Region UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) programme, the Council's 2025/26 allocation of £2,029,068 and seeks approval of the Wirral Programme 2025/26.

The report also seeks approval for the 12-month extension of the Worklessness Support Service contract delivered by Involve Northwest funded from UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Public Health Grant of a contract value of £993,291.

The report supports the delivery of the Council Plan 2023-2027: Wirral Working Together and the People-Focused Regeneration Theme.

This report is a key decision due to the monetary value of grant funding proposed.

This report affects all wards in the Borough.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the Wirral allocation of UKSPF Funding from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority of £2,029,068 and approve the Wirral Programme as set out in section 3.9 of this report.
2. Authorise the Director of Regeneration and Place to negotiate final outputs and outcomes associated with the Wirral UKSPF Programme and commence delivery of the grant funding agreement outcomes and change control process.
3. Approve the 12-month extension of the Worklessness Support Service contract delivered by Involve Northwest funded from UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Public Health Grant of a contract value of £993,291.
4. Approve that the above recommendations be deemed urgent and therefore not subject to the procedure for re-consideration.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 The recommendation/s are being sought regarding approval of the Council's UKSPF Programme for 2025/26.
- 1.2 In respect of the recommendation in relation to the contract extension of the Worklessness Support Service, Wirral is an area which has levels of worklessness exceeding regional and national averages and this service is helping to address worklessness in Wirral.
- 1.3 The recommendations are considered to be urgent as there is a need to mobilised delivery of the worklessness support contract from 1 April 2025

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Do nothing: The Council could decide not to accept the 2025/26 allocation. This would lead to the Council having no UKSPF Programme in 2025/26.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 In April 2022 the UK Government released the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Prospectus. UKSPF provided £2.6 billion of new funding for local investment by March 2025, with all areas of the UK receiving an allocation from the Fund via a funding formula rather than a competitive process.
- 3.2 The UKSPF was based on 3 investment priorities:
 - Communities and Place: foster local pride and belonging and building safe and resilience neighbourhoods.
 - Local Business: creating jobs, promoting collaboration and increase private sector investment.
 - People and Skills: improving skills and qualifications and reducing economic inactivity.
- 3.3 The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) was allocated £52.8m (which included £8.4m ringfenced for Adult Numeracy) for delivery of the programme across the Liverpool City Region. This included a mix of activity delivered by the LCRCA, constituent Councils and other external providers.
- 3.4 The Council's 2022-25 allocation was £3,968,311.18 and delivered interventions across the Communities and Place, Supporting Local Business and People and Skills investment priorities.

National UKSPF Allocations

- 3.5 On 30th October 2024, as part of the Autumn Budget, the Government announced that UKSPF was to be extended for a further 12 months for a 'transition' year. It was anticipated to be at 60% of the previous year 3 allocation.

3.6 The Autumn Budget allocated £902 million to UKSPF nationally for 2025/26 with the LCR anticipating an allocation of £17.5m. The actual LCR allocation for 2025/26 is £25.7m, which while larger than the anticipated £17.5m, is still less than the current 2024/25 allocation of £29.2m. The higher than anticipated funding is due to two key factors:

- Uplift of £4.6m in capital funding to support delivery of Local Growth Plans; and
- Updated allocation methodology using Index of Multiple Deprivation.

3.7 The breakdown of LCRCA of funds for 2025/26 is as follows:

Table 1: LCRCA Allocation for 2025/26

Area	Capital	Revenue	Total
Liverpool City Region Combined Authority	£7,313,190	£18,348,379	£25,661,569

3.8 On 24 January 2025, the LCRCA considered a report regarding the UKSF programme for 25/26, and resolved to:

- Approve the extension of the LCR UKSPF programme for 2025/25 and accept funding.
- Note the transitional nature of 2025/26 and to use the 2022/25 investment plan as a basis for 2025/26 delivery; and
- Approve the shift in the balance of funding towards People and Skills and Supporting Local Business

Implications for Wirral

3.9 The £4.6m of capital funds referred to in section 3.5 of this report has been set aside in a central LCRCA pot to support the delivery of Local Growth Plans. This results in an overall 29% reduction of available funds for all UKSPF delivery partners compared to 2024/25 allocations. Following discussions with Growth Directors and the LCR UKSPF Programme Board, agreement has been reached to offer allocations to all delivery partners on this reduction basis resulting in indicative local authority allocations as follows:

Table 2: Indicative Local Authority Allocations

Local Authority	Revenue	Capital	Total
Halton	£703,613	£101,264	£804,877
Knowsley	£906,562	£130,472	£1,037,034
Liverpool	£2,965,547	£426,800	£3,392,348
Sefton	£1,501,102	£216,038	£1,717,139
St Helens	£1,089,841	£156,849	£1,246,690
Wirral	£1,773,785	£255,282	£2,029,068
Total	£8,940,450	£1,286,706	£10,227,156

3.10 Working in line with the LCRCA's shift in balance of funding towards People and Skills and Supporting Local Business indicative allocations are as follows:

Table 3: Proposed UKSPF Wirral Programme 2025/26

Theme	Intervention	Capital	Revenue	Total
Communities & Place	Public realm community safety interventions	£155,000		
	One Front Door Volunteering Programme		£135,000	
	Town Centre Infrastructure Support	£100,282		
Local Business	Place Based Business Support		£350,000	
	Youth Markets		£15,000	
People & Skills	Employment Support Services		£622,552	
	Recruitment & Redundancy Support		£284,959	
	ILM Employer Wage Incentive Programme (Capped)		£269,947	
Management & Admin			£96,327	
Total		£255,282	£1,773,785	£2,029,068

NB: Final figures may adjust slightly on finalisation of individual project budgets. Figures are subject to rounding.

Worklessness Support Service Contract

- 3.11 The Worklessness Support Service supports eligible workless young people and adults into employment via a suite of flexible, tailored employment support services. This supports a more inclusive Wirral economy and improves the health and wellbeing and life chances of individuals and their families through increased household income, improved mental and physical health, personal confidence and social networks.
- 3.12 In September 2022, the Director of Regeneration and Place authorised, via an Officer Decision Notice, the award of a contract to Involve Northwest for delivery of the Worklessness Support Service for the period of 17 months from 1 November 2022 to 31 March 2024 to the value of £1,358,720. This included provision to extend for up to 31 months subject to future relevant funding being secured.
- 3.13 From 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 UKSPF funds were available for employment and skills activity, however this was restricted to participants who were economically inactive in the labour market and therefore excluded unemployed people who also often have multiple barriers to gaining employment and who have previously been supported via this service. Utilising UKSPF and Public Health funds, the Director of Regeneration approved a contract extension for the Worklessness Support Service for a period of 12 months from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 to the value of £1,108,749. The Public Health Grant secured also included £115,000 for continuation of the Help Out service to provide specialist health/wellbeing support that a proportion of clients participating in the Worklessness Support Service need to

remove well-being barriers to work, and the two services were integrated into a single contracted and performance managed service from April 2024.

- 3.14 From 1 April 2024 to 31 January 2025, Involve Northwest has delivered to the following outputs with a further 2 months remaining in delivery of the programme.

Table 4: Involve Northwest Contract Performance from 1 April 2024 to 31 January 2025

	Engaged		Into Employment		Into Training	
	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved
UKSPF	600	552	220	308	39	16
Public Health	150	322	75	138	0	0
Total	750	1216	295	432	39	0

- 3.15 The value of the contract extension for the Worklessness Support Services for a period of 12 months from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 is £993,291 and Table 5 shows the funding sources of the contract total:

Table 5: Worklessness Support Service Funding from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

Budget Heading	Amount
UKSPF	£729,515
Public Health Grant	£263,776
TOTAL	£993,291

- 3.16 From 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 the Worklessness Support Service will be contracted to engage a total of 681 participants of which 267 will be supported into employment and 28 into training.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Council will receive £255k of capital costs and £1,773,785 of revenue costs for the financial period of 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. This allocation represents a total 29% reduction compared to the Council's 2024/25 allocation.
- 4.2 The UKSPF Programme identified in section 3.9 8 of this report has no mandatory requirement for match funding through Council resources.
- 4.3 The UKSPF Programme as detailed in section 3.10 of this report fully incorporates the £180,000 income target proposal for Economic Growth Service as agreed by Policy & Resources Committee on 19 February 2025.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 At the time of writing no grant funding agreement has been received from the LCRCA due to the restrictive timescales for finalisation of full programme details following Government announcements. To progress with the necessary delivery

planning and to ensure continuity of services from 1 April 2025, the LCRCA has issued the Council an 'Offer Letter' to the Council which is subject to legal agreement.

- 5.2 The Director of Finance has delegated authority to accept grant funding on behalf of the Council, subject to the intended spend being reported to the next available Committee.
- 5.3 It is anticipated that the grant funding agreement will be in line with the previous programme and in such circumstances the Director of Law and Corporate Services will arrange for it to be executed and finalised.
- 5.4 Paragraph 6 of the Council's Reconsideration and Scrutiny Procedure Rules (part 4 section 4 of the constitution) provides that
 - a. A decision-making Committee, Sub-Committee or officer may determine that a decision being taken by them is not to be subject to removal of delegation and reconsideration in the circumstances where:
 - (i) in the opinion of the decision-maker, any delay likely to be caused by the process for removal of delegation and reconsideration would seriously prejudice the Council's or the public's interest;
 - (ii) the Chief Executive (or in his or her absence their nominee) agrees both that the decision proposed is reasonable in all the circumstances and that it should be treated in this manner; and
 - (iii) the decision maker causes a record to be made and notice published that the decision is not to be subject to removal of delegation and reconsideration and of the reasons for that determination.
- 5.5 The Chief Executive has been consulted and agrees that the criteria referred to in paragraph 5.4 of this report applies and that re consideration should not apply to the recommendations within this report (if approved by members).

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 In order to deliver the programme in section 3.8 of this report the following staff are required. This includes existing core and fixed term contract staff as follows:

Table 6: Staffing for UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Programme Management (capped)	1 x staff member 100% 1x staff member 51%
Economic Growth Team	4 x staff members 100% 1 x staff member at 60%
Children & Young People 14-19 Team	2 x staff members at 100%

- 6.2 The staffing implications for those staff on fixed term contracts will be considered in line with the council's people & organisational culture policies as appropriate.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 The Council does not accept the funds and/or the proposed UKSPF Programme for 2025/26 therefore resulting in no UKSPF Programme for 2025/26.

- 7.2 The Council has not as yet received a grant funding agreement from the LCRCA, however based on previous agreement this is likely to include terms that the LCRCA may withdraw or reduce, or require the Council to repay all, or any proportion of the Grant on grounds listed in the grant funding agreement if the Council does not adhere to the purpose or terms and conditions of the grant. The Council will mitigate this risk through regular monitoring and performance management of all relevant contract activity. Additionally, if all available grant funding is not spent by the end of the UKSPF funding period, the council risks not drawing down the full allocation. This will be mitigated by appropriate commissioning and ongoing risk and financial management throughout the period to ensure spend and delivery meets the required profile.
- 7.3 In accepting UKSPF Funds and approving the proposed UKSPF Programme, two externally delivered contracts associated with the UKSPF Programme require immediate contract extensions to ensure continuity of service delivery from 1 April 2025. Currently one of these contracts has 14 people at risk of redundancy with their last working day being 31 March 2025. To mitigate this risk, authority is sought to waive the re-consideration of this report to allow mobilisation of these contracts from 1 April 2025. Negotiations will also commence with the incumbent supplier to enable delivery of the Place Based Business Support element of UKSPF.
- 7.4 There is no confirmed UKSPF funding beyond 31 March 2026. As part of the English Devolution White Paper published on 16 December 2024, a new devolution framework was set out which proposes to place the LCRCA in the top tier of Strategic Authorities with more devolved powers and an Integrated Settlement from 2026. The Integrated Settlement is a single systemised approach to spending controls and a single, streamlined, overarching assurance and accountability framework. The White Paper confirms that the Integrated Settlement will include housing, regeneration, local growth, transport, skills, retrofit and employment support.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The UKSPF Programme proposed delivery plan has been developed in conjunction with Senior Leadership Team via a prioritisation process of continuing services delivered in 2024/25.
- 8.2 The LCRCA has undertaken extensive stakeholder engagement and consultation on the original UKSPF Investment Plan, via MPs, local partnership groups and the Voluntary and Community Sector. As outlined in section 3.6 of this report the 2025/26 allocation for UKSPF is transition funding with the original 2022-25 Investment Plan the basis for continued delivery.
- 8.3 As per Part 6a (ii) of the Council's Constitution the Chief Executive has been consulted and agrees it is reasonable for the recommendations in this report be deemed urgent and therefore not subject to the procedure for re consideration.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision, or activity.
- 9.2 Equality and Diversity Implications have been considered during the development of the LCRCA Investment Plan, including engagement with representative groups for underrepresented communities and groups. There are several activities proposed which will provide targeted support for people with protected characteristics. There will be a requirement for all activities commissioned and delivered utilising this funding to demonstrate how they are complying with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010: this will include a summary of the positive action being undertaken to engage with, support and narrow the gaps for those with protected characteristics.
- 9.3 The potential impact of the USKSPF has been reviewed with regard to equality and links to the existing EIA conducted for Wirral's Economic Strategy, which can be found here: <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments>. No material changes to the EIA are required because of this report. There may be a future requirement for any individual project or scheme to have their own EIA conducted.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The Wirral Plan 2026 includes a set of goals and objectives to create a sustainable environment which urgently tackles the environment emergency.
- 10.2 The UKSPF Programme for 2025/26 will continue to support the transition to a low carbon economy.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Community Wealth Building is a people-centred approach to economic growth which reorganises local economies to be fairer and stops wealth flowing out of communities, towns, and cities, and instead places control of this wealth into the hands of local people, communities, businesses, and organisations. A proportion of the funding will be utilised to support safe and resilient communities, community volunteering, and town centre support all of which will have a positive impact on community wealth building.

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APPENDICES

Not applicable

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Report: [Update to UKSPF Investment and Delivery Plan.pdf](#)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by the Economy, Regeneration & Housing Committee in accordance with Section 4.2 (d) of its Terms of Reference: Economic development, including but not limited to infrastructure, enterprise, skills and seeking, securing, and managing external funds to achieve that, directly or in partnership with joint ventures and external companies or bodies as well as with the Combined Authority and government bodies.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
UK Shared Prosperity Fund.pdf	7th December 2022
UK Shared Prosperity Fund Place Based Business Support Delivery.pdf	18th September 2023
UK Shared Prosperity Fund - Worklessness Support Service Contract Extension Report.pdf	7th February 2024