



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet

11th September 2024

**Report of the Head of Property and Regeneration
Simon Brennan**

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: Sandfields East, Bryn and Cwmavon, Gwynfi and Croeserw.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Approval of Community Facilities Improvement Fund Projects

Purpose of the Report:

To seek Members approval to award three UK Shared Prosperity Fund grants to organisations where there is Elected Member interest, assuming that the grants were approved at the Funding Panel held on the 29th August 2024.

Executive Summary:

In the interests of openness and transparency, this report seeks Cabinet's approval to award grant funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), via the Community Facilities Improvement

Fund (Round 2), to three projects where an Elected Member has an interest in the organisation, as detailed below.

The projects are:

- 1) Croeserw AFC – Access Road Improvements
- 2) Aberavon Greenstars RFC - Solar panel installation – Phase 2
- 3) Cwmavon Community Engagement Centre – Kitchen upgrades

Background:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is a central pillar of the UK Government's Levelling Up agenda.

The UKSPF regional Investment Plan was approved by Cabinet on the 28th July 2022 and the UKSPF Implementation Plan was approved by Cabinet on the 19th October 2022.

The five Council led strategic 'anchor' projects were approved by Cabinet on the 19th January 2023.

Neath Port Talbot UKSPF Third Party Grant Funds:

The Neath Port Talbot UKSPF Third Party Grant Funds were launched from April 2023 as a rolling programme with a schedule of grants panel dates. The relevant Project Manager / Officer manages the application process, assessment, moderation and grant award process.

The five UKSPF Third Party Grant Funds are:

- Heritage, Culture, Tourism & Events Fund
- Valleys & Villages Prosperity Fund
- Sustainable Communities Growth Fund
- Third Sector Growth Fund (managed by Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Services)
- Business Investment & Start Up Grants

In April 2024, in response to an increasing need identified within the voluntary sector, a new grant fund was launched called the Community Facilities Improvement Fund. The fund was targeted at community and voluntary organisations that lease Council owned buildings and other facilities, including playing fields, pavilions etc. to carry out essential repairs and upgrade works.

A Round 2 targeted call for applications was launched on 1st July 2024, where organisations were invited to submit applications before the closing date of 5th August 2024.

Neath Port Talbot UKSPF Third Party Grant Funds – approval process

Each Neath Port Talbot UKSPF Third Party Grant Fund has an assessment, moderation, and approval process.

All applications are assessed and prioritised in line with the following Fund criteria:

- Ability to meet one or more of the fund priorities
- Can demonstrate a clearly identified and articulated need
- Will deliver against a wide range of outputs and outcomes
- Can deliver within the timeframe (all projects must be completed by 31st December 2024 at the latest)
- Value for money
- All applications will be considered by a Funding Panel

Cabinet agreed at its 28th June 2023 meeting that following grant funding panel assessment and recommendation for approval the following delegated authority approval thresholds were agreed:

Grants of **up to £50,000** can be approved by the Anchor Lead (at accountable manager level).

Grants **between £50,001 and £100,000** to be approved by the relevant Head of Service.

Grants **between £100,001 and £250,000** to be approved by the relevant Head of Service, UKSPF Senior Responsible Owner, Chief Finance Officer, Leader and relevant Cabinet Member.

However, to ensure transparency and probity of decision making, all projects which have Member involvement will seek approval from Cabinet prior to formal approval.

Please note that at the time of writing, the following three projects have not yet been recommended for approval by the Funding Panel. They will be formally assessed at a Panel scheduled for 29th August 2024. Due to very tight timescales for the assessment of applications, as well as project delivery, this report has been put forward to avoid any delay in securing a

formal approval from Cabinet. All projects need to be completed by 31st December 2024.

If any of the three projects below are not recommended for approval on 29th August, then Members will be advised via a verbal update at the Cabinet meeting on 11th September.

Third Party Grant Funds – for decision, assuming approval at Funding Panel on 29th August:

Project 1: Croeserw Athletic Football Club’s application for road upgrade / resurfacing to improve access.

Grant request £21,600

Cllr. Scott Jones holds an interest in this project as a Trustee of Croeserw AFC.

Summary of Project:

This project will re-surface half of the road leading up to the football club that has become hazardous. This road is used by the Council, the Football Club and Welsh Water. However, players, officials and volunteers currently walk up to the field from the changing rooms down the road. Emergency services would also use this road for any incident on the playing field or mountain behind. There is a need to maintain good access for the safety of all users.

UK SPF Output	Target Number
Number of organisations receiving grants	1
Number of facilities supported/created	1

For information, Croeserw AFC were awarded £6,051 during Round 1 of the Community Facilities Improvement Fund for changing room improvements.

Project 2: Aberavon Green Stars RFC's application for solar panels (Phase 2)

Grant Request: £18,244

Cllr. Matthew Crowley holds an interest in this project as a Director of Aberavon Greenstars RFC.

Summary of Project:

The project includes the installation of solar panels to the clubhouse, in effort to reduce energy bills and make the club more financially sustainable, as well as reducing carbon emissions. This is a Phase 2 Project, with Phase 1 being funded during Round 1.

Applicants are permitted to request a maximum of £25,000 per funding round.

UK SPF Output & Outcomes	Target Number
Number of organisations receiving grants	1
Number of facilities supported/created	1
Low or zero carbon energy infrastructure installed	1
Low or zero carbon energy infrastructure installed (m2)	130
Low or zero carbon energy infrastructure installed (%increase)	100

For information, Aberavon Green Stars RFC were awarded £25,000 during Round 1 of the Community Facilities Improvement Fund for Phase 1 of the solar panels project.

Project 3: Cwmavon Community Engagement Centre's application for kitchen upgrades

Grant request: £8,270.98

Cllr. David Whitelock holds an interest in this project as husband of the applicant, Mrs Christine Whitelock, of Cwmavon Community Engagement Centre.

Summary of Project:

The existing kitchen will be upgraded as it is no longer fit for purpose. The free-standing oven is very old and not energy efficient, taking a very long time to heat up. The hob rings are dangerous as they stay hot for a long time after use. Cupboard doors are continually being repaired. The upgrade is needed to ensure continuity of service.

UK SPF Output & Outcomes	Target Number
Number of organisations receiving grants	1
Number of facilities supported/created	1
Low or zero carbon energy infrastructure installed	1

For information, Cwmavon CEC were awarded £8,313 during Round 1 of the Community Facilities Improvement Fund for heating upgrades and flooring refurbishment.

Next steps

Following approval being granted, the Project Manager will issue Third Party Grant Agreements to successful applicants. The Project Manager will arrange project inception meetings and project monitoring meetings to ensure all projects deliver in line with approved application forms.

Financial Impacts:

Funding for the UKSPF programmes is via the overall grant provided to the Council.

Integrated Impact Assessment:

A first stage impact assessment has been undertaken for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund programme (included in 19th January 2023 Cabinet papers) to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act 2010, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The first stage assessment has indicated that a more in-depth assessment is not required.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

The nature of the UKSPF Investment Plan will have a positive impact on the valley communities and is aligned to the Neath Port Talbot Corporate Plan, Neath Port Talbot Economic Recovery Plan and the Wellbeing Assessments.

Workforce Impacts:

Project Manager and Officers have been recruited and appointed to manage the UKSPF Third Party Grant Funds at the local level.

Legal Impacts:

Grant awards will be assessed to ensure compliance with the Subsidy Control Act 2022.

Any procurement activities will be carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Public Contract Regulations 2015.

Swansea Council, as Lead Local Authority (LLA) for the South West Wales region has entered in to a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with UK government regarding the administration and delivery of the UKSPF including the release of annual funding allocations for the region. Each partner local authority has entered into a Service

Level Agreement with Swansea Council to ensure compliance with the MoU and to receive their annual funding allocation.

Standard Third Party Grant Agreements have been developed to be issued to successful organisations.

Risk Management Impacts:

There are no risk management issues associated with this report.

The UKSPF application form requires applicants to develop a risk register which will be managed as part of the project plan.

Due diligence checks including Subsidy Control assessments will be carried out prior to formal approval.

The Project Managers and Officer will ensure compliant and effective delivery.

Consultation:

This item has not been subject to external consultation.

A UKSPF engagement plan is in development to ensure regular engagement with local, regional and national stakeholders.

Recommendations:

Having had due regard to the first stage of the Integrated Impact Assessment and following approval at the Funding Panel held on 29th August, it is recommended that:

- Members agree the recommendation to approve the following projects, which have Member involvement submitted under the Neath Port Talbot UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) via the

Community Facilities Improvement Fund, assuming that they were approved at the Funding Panel held on the 29th August:

- 1) Croeserw AFC – Road improvements/re-surfacing
- 2) Aberavon Greenstars RFC – Solar panel installation, phase 2
- 3) Cwmavon Community Engagement Centre – Kitchen upgrades

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To enable Neath Port Talbot Council to implement the UKSPF Implementation Plan and advise applicants of the funding decision.

Implementation of Decision:

The decisions will be implemented after the three-day call-in process.

Appendices:

None

List of Background Papers:

None.

Officer Contact:

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