



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet

14th February 2024

**Report of the Head of Education Development
Chris Millis**

Matter for Decision

**Wards Affected: Gwaun Cae Gurwen & Lower Brynamman and
Crynant, Onllwyn and Seven Sisters**

UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Approval of Projects

Purpose of the Report:

To seek Members approval on the recommendation to approve projects for the purpose of openness and transparency. The projects are: 1) Amman Valley Dial-a-Ride Pilot, 2) Community Based Youth Work Training and Services, 3) Community Bicycle Project, which all have Member involvement and have been submitted under the Neath Port Talbot UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Third Party Grants Fund Sustainable Communities Growth Fund.

Executive Summary:

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

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

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.

Third Party Grant Funds – recommendations for approval:

Project 1: Amman Valley Dial-a-Ride Pilot, Canolfan Maerdy was assessed against the Fund criteria and the Funding Panel decision was:

That this was a worthwhile and much needed project with confirmed support from NPTCBC Transport Manager. If the vehicle was purchased it would be a lasting legacy for the community. Panel felt that as a pilot an evaluation of the project would demonstrate whether schemes like this actually work and if positive, the evidence would then be available as an opportunity to run schemes in other areas once known outcomes are available. The organisation works closely with the Local Authority and have a good reach and knowledge of their community. Panel Approved £97,411.

Cllr S Reynolds is involved in this project as a Trustee of Canolfan Maerdy.

It is recommended that the Amman Valley Dial-a-Ride Pilot, Canolfan Maerdy is approved by Cabinet.

Summary of Project:

To develop and pilot a new dial-a-ride bus scheme, taking residents from Upper Brynamman to Pontardawe and back, at times of the day not currently serviced by public transport. The intention is to link with existing bus services down the Swansea Valley but should need be identified, to seek to extend operations to Swansea. Passengers will have to book a seat to guarantee transport. This service will be affordable and help tackle transport poverty for those with mobility issues or those finding it hard to get to and from work. The grant will be used to purchase an 'accessible' vehicle and pay for a Driver/Development Worker for 12 months to undertake the pilot as an action research project with the aim of developing a sustainable service. Canolfan Maerdy have obtained a Section 19 Community Transport Licence, and NPTCBC Transport Section have given assurances that as long as their service is not considered a

scheduled bus service they can operate within the Section 19 Licence. The project seeks to overcome the challenges of lack of transport, limited access to services, employment, training and quality affordable food. Canolfan Maerdy currently collaborates with DANSA on a community car scheme and hopes to collaborate and complement DANSA's community bus service.

Outputs:

Number of Neighbourhood Improvements undertaken - 1

Number of local events or activities supported - 3

Number of volunteering opportunities supported - 10

Number of people attending training sessions - 25

Number of people reached - 1764

Number of facilities supported/created - 1

UKSPF Grant request: £97,411

Project 2: Community Based Youth Work Training and Services, Canolfan Maerdy was assessed against the Fund criteria and the Funding Panel decision was:

That this project supported an isolated area where this is nothing for the young people. Currently the Youth Service support the young people in Canolfan Maerdy with Welsh Language, should there be no youth provision available then there would be a danger that all youth services would be at risk. Panel Approved: £48,512.18

Cllr S Reynolds is involved in this project as a Trustee of Canolfan Maerdy.

It is recommended that the Community Based Youth Work Training and Service Project, Canolfan Maerdy is approved by Cabinet.

Summary of Project:

To sustain the employment of a Senior Youth Leader and extend the hours of the current Assistant Youth Worker to support ongoing provision of youth services and develop Maerdy Youth as a sustainable bilingual youth provision, improving accessibility and enhancing activities by developing the skills of those who support the young people and promoting life, leadership and practical skills of the young people themselves. The aims are to support the growth of Canolfan Maerdy's Social Enterprise, developing entrepreneurial skills within our workers and young people whilst exploring the feasibility of developing a dedicated youth facility to house the constantly growing youth provision and sustain the benefits for young people within our communities. Funding will also pay training costs for a further 4 volunteers to level 2 (qualified youth worker status) whilst enabling existing staff, trainees and other volunteers to gain greater awareness, skills and where available appropriate certification, in key areas of challenge for youth in our area, such as; substance abuse, mental health, dealing with conflict and aggressive behaviour and supporting those with neurodiverse conditions. There is a disused building in danger of dereliction sitting within a park area and there is little opportunity for other usage, sale or income generating tenants from this building. It is in the interest of the Authority to have the building occupied and maintained; hence the lease cost is very low. If needed further grants/fundraising could be available to support this facility should a lease be agreed. This project does not depend on establishing this dedicated facility but will contribute to feasibility considerations which will involve the young people themselves developing more entrepreneurial skills.

Outputs:

Number of Neighbourhood Improvements undertaken – 2

Number of local events or activities supported – 20

Number of volunteering opportunities supported – 100

Number of people attending training sessions – 19

Number of people reached – 180

Number of facilities supported/created – 1

UKSPF Grant request: £48,512.18

Project 3: Community Bicycle Project, Friends of Seven Sisters was assessed against the Fund criteria and the Funding Panel decision was:

That for a small amount, this project had a strong community cohesion with the involvement of local volunteers, the support of the PASS Team and for those local families struggling with the cost of living crisis. This also fits in with SCGF Equality theme through the health and wellbeing element. Panel Approved £5,000

Cllr S Hunt is involved in this project as a Vice Chair/Treasurer of The Friends of Seven Sisters.

It is recommended that the Community Bicycle Project, Friends of Seven Sisters is approved by Cabinet.

Summary of Project:

To provide a biking facility to the residents of Seven Sisters following a previous successful pilot delivered by the PASS team. The grant would purchase bikes and a groundhog for storage. Bikes can be loaned to those in the area that are struggling to purchase bikes for themselves and their families – there is a dedicated cycle track which cyclists can use. Bike maintenance sessions would be offered by volunteers.

Outputs:

Number of people attending training sessions – 60
Number of new or improved community facilities – 1
Number of people reached - 100

UKSPF Grant request: £5,000

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 Officers 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:

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) Third Party Grants Fund Sustainable Communities Growth Fund:
 - 1) Canolfan Maerdy - Amman Valley Dial-a-Ride Pilot
 - 2) Canolfan Maerdy - Community Based Youth Work Training and Services
 - 3) Friends of Seven Sisters – Community Bicycle Project

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:

Applications and supporting documents submitted.

Officer Contact:

Chris Millis
Head of Education Development
c.d.millis@npt.gov.uk

Angeline Spooner -Cleverly
Employability, Skills and Poverty Co-ordinator
a.spooner-cleverly@npt.gov.uk