

<b>This report is public</b>	
<b>UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) 2025/26 programme</b>	
<b>Committee</b>	Portfolio Holder Decision
<b>Date of Committee</b>	N/A – Portfolio Holder Decision
<b>Portfolio Holder presenting the report</b>	Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration, Councillor Lesley McLean
<b>Date Portfolio Holder agreed report</b>	13 May 2025
<b>Report of</b>	Corporate Director of Communities, Ian Boll

## **Purpose of report**

To ensure that the council meets the government guidelines associated with the UKSPF and REPF funding, including ensuring that all allocated funding is positively utilised within the financial year 2025/26.

To ensure that the funding makes a positive impact for Cherwell and helps to support the council's missions.

To support existing projects to continue to contribute positive outcomes to the programme as well as the delivery of new projects.

## **1. Recommendations**

The Portfolio Holder resolves:

- 1.1 To approve the 2025/26 transition year programme for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) as set out in the report.
- 1.2 To delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Communities (in consultation with Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration) to agree any change requests.

## **2. Executive Summary**

- 2.1 The council's three-year UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and two-year Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) programmes ended on 31 March 2025 following successful delivery of all projects. The government has extended the UKSPF and REPF for a further one-year (Transition year). This report sets out the proposed programme of expenditure for the 2025/26 programme in line with the council's corporate priorities.

## Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary			
<p><b>Finance</b></p>	<p>The UKSPF and REPF schemes are 100 per cent grant funded, meaning there is no financial risk to Cherwell District Council's budgets.</p> <p>Expenditure of the UKSPF and REPF allocations will be monitored in line with the Expenditure Profile submitted in the Forecast Report.</p> <p>The Council will ensure that appropriate overheads are charged to the grant in line with grant conditions.</p> <p>Kelly Wheeler, Finance Business Partner, 8 May 2025.</p>			
<p><b>Legal</b></p>	<p>The Council has the necessary legal powers under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to deliver the Fund's objectives. The Council will be required to ensure that the proposed projects are delivered in a legally compliant way in accordance with all relevant legislation in relation to the activities undertaken.</p> <p>All spend of the Funds by the Council must be assessed by the Council in advance to ensure that proposed investment is compliant with the Council's Constitution, the Procurement Act 2023, Subsidy Control Act 2022 and UKSPF grant rules, including requirements set out in the 25/26 UKSPF Prospectus. Mechanisms should be implemented to recover unspent funding including where beneficiaries do not comply with fund requirements. Mechanisms may be legal or any other requirements, processes and procedures as and where relevant.</p> <p>Mubin Khan, Lawyer (Contracts and Procurement), 7 May 2025</p>			
<p><b>Risk Management</b></p>	<p>There will be an ongoing need for robust programme management to ensure that projects are delivered and completed before 31st March 2026.</p> <p>Risk: Any unspent UKSPF and REPF funds would have to be returned to DLUHC after March 2025. To mitigate this, spend will be monitored regularly to ensure delivery is according to the necessary timescales, with the desired outputs/outcomes.</p> <p>This risk will be managed through the service operational risk register and escalated to the Leadership Risk Register as and when necessary.</p> <p>Julie Miles, Performance Analyst and Developer, 13 May 2025</p>			
<p><b>Impact Assessments</b></p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Negative</p>	<p>Commentary</p>

<b>Equality Impact</b>		x		Other than the positive impacts mentioned below there are no other Equalities implications associated with this report. Julie Miles, Performance Analyst and Developer 13 May 2025
<b>A</b> Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?	x			REPF projects will be focussed on rural communities, addressing rural inequalities.
<b>B</b> Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?	x			One of the projects will be focussed on supporting economically inactive residents.
<b>Climate &amp; Environmental Impact</b>	x			Proposed projects will support businesses to lower carbon emissions and enable carbon emissions reduction at district level as well as covering flood prevention measures.
<b>ICT &amp; Digital Impact</b>		x		not applicable
<b>Data Impact</b>		x		not applicable
<b>Procurement &amp; subsidy</b>		x		Projects will be required to be delivered within the subsidy control regime.  The Council is required to meet its statutory public sector equality duty in carrying out their duties related to the UKSPF and REPF.  Christopher Wain, Senior Procurement Officer, 7 May 2025
<b>Council Priorities</b>	The proposed programme will deliver against the Council Priorities Priority 1 – Economic prosperity Priority 2 – Community leadership			
<b>Human Resources</b>	Not applicable			
<b>Property</b>	N/A			
<b>Consultation &amp; Engagement</b>	To inform the development of the UKSPF and REPF (2025/26) programme, officers have consulted with internal colleagues, Portfolio Holder and stakeholders (including the Local Strategic Partnership, other district representatives, skills and business			

	support providers), to successfully assess impact, deliverability and strategic fit when analysing and selecting themes and projects.
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## Supporting Information

### 3. Background

- 3.1 The UKSPF, launched in April 2022, and the REPF, launched in April 2023, were designed to replace European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIFs) and support the government's "levelling up" agenda, focusing on local investment and addressing inequalities across the UK, with a focus on rural issues for REPF.
- 3.2 At the time of the launch, the government announced a three-year UKSPF settlement for Cherwell worth £1.25 million, and a two-year REPF settlement worth £526,000. The council, as lead local authority, was required to set out a three-year Investment Plan, running from 2022-25, to deliver the objectives of the UKSPF and REPF. This investment programme has been successfully delivered.
- 3.3 The UKSPF and REPF have supported a significant number of projects within the district, leveraging in additional investment, safeguarding and creating jobs and helping the council achieve its priorities for the district's communities, businesses and residents.
- 3.4 In October 2024, the new government confirmed that the UKSPF would only be extended for one year (transition year) and that funding would be at a reduced level. Confirmation that Cherwell would receive a total of £410,878 of UKSPF funding for 2025/26 was received in December 2024. The funding is split as £75,861 Capital (minimum) and £335,017 Revenue (maximum).
- 3.5 In early March 2025, the new government also confirmed that REPF would be extended for a transition year and again, that funding would be at a reduced level. Confirmation that Cherwell would receive a total of £158,281 Capital was received at the end of March 2025.

### 4. Details

- 4.1 The 2025/26 funding must be entirely spent by the end of March 2026. It cannot be rolled over to the following financial year as the funding period ends.
- 4.2 Each lead local authority can use up to 4% of the allocation, by default, to undertake necessary fund management and administration.
- 4.3 The Council is not required to submit a new Local Investment Plan. The new Government is retaining the three priorities of Communities and Place, Supporting Local Business and People & Skills but have introduced five sub-themes to align with their missions. These are 'healthy, safe and inclusive communities', 'thriving

places', 'support for business', 'employability' and 'skills'. A number of sub-themes sit under these headings.

- 4.4 After carefully reviewing the activity delivered through the previous tranche of UKSPF and REPF funding and potential new deliverable projects, a programme of activity is being recommended for delivery with the transition year of the UKSPF funding (Appendix A) and REPF funding (Appendix B)
- 4.5 The proposed programme of activity will deliver a range of positive outcomes that will support the delivery of the council's missions and will deliver against council priorities, and the government's guidelines for the funding, as detailed at Appendices A and B.
- 4.6 40% of the budget will be focussed on officer resource to enhance economic growth and to support sustainable growth and climate resilience.
- 4.7 The proposed programme has been shared with and commented on by the Council's Management Board on 1st April 2025 and the Local Strategic Partnership Board on 22nd April 2025.

## **5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection**

- 5.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: Several other projects were considered for potential inclusion within the UKSPF/REPF transition year programme of activity. These included the continuation of other projects that had been delivered through the previous tranche of UKSPF funding. All projects were reviewed for deliverability, value for money, ability to achieve positive outcomes for Cherwell, how they supported the council's missions and how they fitted within the government's guidelines for the funding.

## **6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations**

- 6.1 The proposed 2025/26 programmes for the UKSPF and REPF transition year will enable the council to continue to support key projects that delivered successfully under the 2022-25 programmes and launch new ones, which will bring benefits to businesses, communities and individuals in the district.
- 6.2 The recommendations will allow officers to progress delivery of the proposed delivery programme within the timescales set by government.

## **Decision Information**

<b>Key Decision</b>	No
<b>Subject to Call in</b>	Yes
<b>If not, why not subject to call in</b>	N/A

<b>Ward(s) Affected</b>	All
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## Document Information

<b>Appendices</b>	
<b>Appendix 1</b>	UKSPF proposed delivery programme for 2025/26
<b>Appendix 2</b>	REPF proposed delivery programme for 2025/26
<b>Background Papers</b>	None
<b>Reference Papers</b>	N/A
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<b>Corporate Director Approval (unless Corporate Director or Statutory Officer report)</b>	Ian Boll, Corporate Director for Communities, 9 May 2025