

# Individual Decision

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The attached report will be taken as Individual Portfolio Member Decision on:

**Monday 16 February 2026**

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ID4781	Revised UKSPF Funding Plan	Councillor Justin Pemberton	3 - 16



West Berkshire  
COUNCIL

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## Revised UKSPF Funding Plan

<b>Committee considering report:</b>	Individual Executive Member Decisions
<b>Date of Committee:</b>	16 February 2026
<b>Portfolio Member:</b>	Councillor Justin Pemberton
<b>Report Author:</b>	James Read
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	ID4781

### 1 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To set out an updated delivery plan utilising the Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) allocations, within the new funding timeframe extending until 30 September 2026. This report sets out revisions to the original Investment Plan approved by Individual Member Decision (16 May 2025). These revisions will ensure compliant spend and delivery of funding in line with the original objectives of the Investment Plan and the wider priorities of both the shared prosperity funds and the Council.

### 2 Recommendations

2.1 Recommendations are as follows:

- That the allocations for UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) set out in section 5.17 of this report are approved.
- That delegated authority is provided to the Executive Director of Place in conjunction with Section 151 Officer and Portfolio Holder to amend the allocations in line the original objectives of the Investment Plan and the wider priorities of both the shared prosperity funds and the Council.

### 3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
<b>Financial:</b>	The 2025/26 UKSPF and REPF allocations remain £327,146 (Capital £60,401; Revenue £266,745) and £179,363 (all Capital) respectively. Their spend and delivery deadline has

	<p>been extended to 30 September 2026, meaning the funds can continue to be utilised in Q1 and Q2 in 2026/27.</p> <p>This report proposes a delivery plan to utilise current underspend* (Capital £6,051; Revenue £148,375).</p> <p>Agreed staffing savings from the original agreed report (16 May 2025) and Budget Build (Full Council, February 2025) are retained within the project allocations as planned. The same applies to the agreed management and administration spend in line with UKSPF requirements.</p>
<b>Human Resource:</b>	No additional posts are required. Officer time will be recorded against the Thatcham Community Hub and other capital projects, in-line with the new staffing requirements. The original member decision allows for the requisition of £50,000 for staffing costs. To date £25,000 of UKSPF spend has been officially recorded against officer time.
<b>Legal:</b>	Standard contracting and procurement processes will apply (e.g., design and signage commissions, website refresh, small equipment purchases) and applicable payments will follow the spend panel process.
<b>Risk Management:</b>	<p>Primary risk is underspend and potential clawback. However, this has been mitigated to a degree by the news of the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) UKSPF and REPF extension into September and is further mitigated by focusing on projects that can be delivered in this timescale and by utilising the government's in-year reallocation flexibility (up to 30% of the total allocation between priorities without material change – no limit within priorities)<sup>1</sup>. This approach was set out and endorsed in the original report.</p> <p>Each project will, or already does, have its own risk register managed by project leads.</p>
<b>Property:</b>	Minor property implications may arise in relation to Shaw House and Downland Sports Centre, led by Community

<sup>1</sup> For instance, there is no limit to reallocations within the 'Communities and Place' priority, however, only 30% of the total UKSPF allocation could be moved to another priority area (i.e. People and Skills) before sign off from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government would be required.

	Services. No direct property implications for this report. Project leads will advise where implications may arise.
<b>Policy:</b>	UKSPF and REPF objectives (set out in the 2025/26 Technical Note and the Council's Investment Plan) are maintained and supplemented with new national and local strategies and policies (ie. Pride in Place). Amended allocations align with the Communities & Place, Supporting Local Business, and People & Skills priorities – and support delivery of the Newbury Masterplan, which has been a Council priority for several years.

	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
<b>Equalities Impact:</b>				
<b>A</b> Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?	x			Projects are predominantly town-centre, cultural and community focused with inclusive delivery; each project will consider accessibility and engagement as required.
<b>B</b> Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?	x			As both the UKSPF and REPF have the objective of increasing people's life chances and improving the socio-economic environment, the impact would overall be a positive one. Each project supported by the fund would have its individual impact assessed and managed in terms of employees, service users and resident groups.

<b>Environmental Impact:</b>	x			As both the UKSPF and REPF have the objective of increasing people's life chances and improving the socio-economic environment, the impact would overall be a positive one. Each project supported by the fund would have its individual impact assessed and managed in terms of employees, service users and resident groups.
<b>Health Impact:</b>	x			<p>Part of the overarching objective of both UKSPF and REPF is to improve life chances; through improving the economic performance of the area and supporting the provision of improved amenities, this has correlation with positive health and wellbeing outcomes.</p> <p>A subtheme of UKSPF Communities and Place focuses on health and wellbeing; the potential outcomes from increased active travel and improved blue and green spaces aligns with this subtheme.</p>
<b>ICT Impact:</b>		x		The footfall data supports digital engagement and monitoring; however, no significant ICT resource impact is anticipated.
<b>Digital Services Impact:</b>		x		Digital solutions will be considered on a project-by-project basis where need arises in consultation with the Council's Digital Team.

<b>Council Strategy Priorities:</b>	x			<p>Delivery of the UKSPF and REPF funded activity will support the Council priorities as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress the Masterplans for Newbury and Thatcham to deliver high quality local facilities and services to communities (Council Strategy – 5.9)</li> <li>• Work with partners to focus on the canal as an asset for residents and businesses (Council Strategy – 5.10)</li> <li>• Work with rural businesses to invest in capital opportunities to promote resilience, growth and jobs (Council Strategy – 4.3)</li> <li>• Improvements to Shaw House to maximise its potential as a business Conference Centre, visitor destination and heritage asset and to deliver additional benefits to residents by improving the grounds offer for residents to enjoy (Council Strategy – 4.5, 5.5)</li> </ul>
<b>Core Business:</b>	x			<p>The existing and proposed projects and programmes will support the Council's existing workstream including initiatives to improve the economic development of the area, the long-term viability of local assets and the continued delivery of core services to communities across West Berkshire.</p>
<b>Data Impact:</b>		x		<p>Where applicable, arrangements for compliant collection, use and data storage will be made in line with GDPR.</p>

<b>Consultation and Engagement:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic Development</li> <li>• Community Services</li> <li>• Finance</li> <li>• Portfolio Holder</li> </ul>
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## 4 Executive Summary

4.1 This report sets out an updated delivery plan to utilise UKSPF underspend through a set of reallocations and linked actions to ensure compliance with the priorities and terms of the scheme and support local businesses and communities. This includes variations to five existing projects (including the introduction of new elements) and the creation of one new programme, encompassing a series of deliverable improvements to a community, heritage and business destination in the district.

4.2 These proposals include the reduction of allocations for the following projects:

- Newbury Masterplan (£117,875 > £78,643)
- Annual Business Forums (£10,000 > £4,000)
- Get Britain Working Plan (£40,000 > £15,250)

The increase of the following allocations:

- Rural Business Capital Grants (£109,363 > £115,414)
- Downland Sports Centre Project (£70,000 > £90,000)

The creation of new allocations for:

- Improvements to Shaw House (£50,000)

4.3 This approach aligns with the adopted UKSPF and REPF Investment Plans from May 2025 and long-standing strategies, like the Newbury Town Centre Masterplan (2022), West Berkshire Cultural Heritage Strategy (2020-2030), Leisure Strategy (2022-32) and updates to them. It is also compliant with the terms and conditions of the MOU the Council signed with MHCLG to receive both UKSPF and REPF awards for 2025/26.

## 5 Introduction/Background

### Introduction

- 5.1 The UKSPF is a blend of capital and revenue funding and has the overarching objective of kickstarting economic growth and promoting opportunity in all parts of the UK. It is allocated by MHCLG per local authority and allocations sums vary according to government assessment of need.
- 5.2 The REPF is a capital fund managed by Defra and acts as a rural top up to UKSPF, providing allocations for eligible local authorities in England to help address the additional needs and challenges facing rural areas. Delivery of REPF is integrated into UKSPF and will continue to mirror its delivery geographies.
- 5.3 Each fund was disbursed by MHCLG and Defra in May 2025, following the Council's submission of financial and performance returns for 2024/25, outline spend allocations and outcome priorities for 2025/26, and the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the parties.
- 5.4 The Council allocated £163,745 of revenue and £60,401 of capital to the Communities and Place priority. This included £117,875 for the delivery relating to the Newbury Masterplan (including Bond Riverside and connectivity between sites), £54,350 for the next phase of the Thatcham Community Hub Feasibility, and £45,870 for a Newbury Car Park Feasibility/Strategy. A capital contingency of £6,051 was set aside within the Communities and Place priority.
- 5.5 The Council allocated £40,000 of revenue to the Supporting Local Business Priority, including a £30,000 contribution to the Berkshire Prosperity Board and £10,000 for both annual and rural business forums. Following this initial allocation, £10,000 of spend on the preparation for the Thames Valley Mayoral Strategic Authority proposal was designated against this priority.
- 5.6 A budget of £40,000 was allocated to the Get Britain Working Plan, including £25-30,000 for the creation of a plan for Berkshire.
- 5.7 A settlement of £179,363 was received from Defra in REPF funding. This was allocated to a Rural Business Capital Grant Scheme (£109,363) and a Dowland Sports Centre project (£70,000). A £13,000 Management and Administration (M&A) allocation was created to administer both schemes. This provision was created under the terms allowing for 4 percent of total funding award (£327,164) to be used for management and administration activities.
- 5.8 As part of the Council's Revenue Build for 2025/26, it was further agreed that up to £50,000 of revenue project funding could be used to cover staff time on those projects, with an initial estimate that £37,000 would be claimed.

5.9 Any UKSPF or REPF underspend **cannot be retained at the end of the funding period (30 September 2026) and should not be viewed as a saving to the Council as it will be returned to MHCLG and Defra**. Underspend carries the risk of West Berkshire's access to future funding, as it could appear that the Council is unable to fully deliver funding directly to local communities, businesses and residents in line with agreed priorities provided through both funds.

5.10 Local authorities are obligated to report on spend and performance every 6 months. For 2025-26 these periods cover 1 April to 30 September 2025 (Q1 and Q2) and 1 October 2025 to 31 March 2026 (Q3 and Q4).

## **Background**

5.11 During the first period (1 April to 30 September 2025), despite progress on project conception and delivery, only £36,000 (11 percent of allocation) had been spent.

5.12 This delay to spend can be attributed to a number of factors, including (but not limited to): significant staffing issues within the Economic Development Service, the time required to scope and procure for specific projects, the Council's approach prioritising payment on compliant completion, and unforeseen complications in the enabling period of project mobilisation.

5.13 Since the end of the first 6-month delivery period, considerable progress has been made to rectify this situation. The Council has hired a new Principal Officer in Economic Development to oversee UKSPF and REPF delivery, dormant projects have been revitalised and those behind schedule accelerated, clarity has been established on the status of joint projects, and opportunities for utilising underspend have been identified.

5.14 The updated delivery plan is focused on achieving objectives in relation to the three UKSPF and REPF priorities (Communities and Place; Supporting Local Business; People and Skills).

5.15 Three projects set out in relation to the UKSPF and REPF priorities can no longer deliver in full against their original allocations, including the following:

- Newbury Masterplan – the lack of an associated project lead following an internal restructuring has resulted in only minor spend to date (£9,250).
- Business Forum(s) – substantial underspend on the rural event (~£1,000) and lower projected expenditure on the annual business forum (~£3,000) necessitate a reduction in allocation.
- Get Britain Working Plan – the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has since agreed to cover the costs of the creation of a Berkshire

Wide Plan that was due to require the vast majority of the wider project's allocation (£30,000).

5.16 Other projects (the Rural Business Capital Grants and the Downland Sports Centre Project) were scaled back to fit within the UKSPF and REPF budget profile for 2025/26, each with the potential to be upscaled should additional funding become available.

## Proposals

5.17 That a targeted reprofiling of UKSPF and REPF allocations is undertaken with an endorsement of proposed actions to ensure compliant delivery and spend against agreed priorities by 30 September 2026. This re-allocation of funds be directed as follows:

### Proposed reallocations

Priority	Project	New Revenue budget	New Capital budget
Communities and Place	Town Centre Masterplans	£78,643	£0
	Shaw House Improvements (new)	£50,000	
	Thatcham Community Hub Feasibility Work	£0	£54,350
	Newbury Parking Strategy	£45,870	£0
	Match funding for Rural Business Capital Grants	£0	£6,051
	Match funding for Downland Sports Centre Project	£20,000	£0
	<b>Communities and Place allocation</b>	<b>£194,513</b>	<b>£60,401</b>
Supporting Local Business	Thames Valley Mayoral Project	£10,000	£0
	Berkshire Prosperity Board Workstream	£30,000	£0
	Business Forum(s)	£4,000	£0
	<b>Supporting Local Business allocation</b>	<b>£44,000</b>	<b>£0</b>
People and Skills	Get Britain Working Plan	£15,250	£0
	<b>People and Skills allocation</b>	<b>£15,250</b>	<b>£0</b>
Rural England Prosperity Fund	Rural Business Capital Grants	£0	£109,363
	Downland Sports Centre Project	£0	£70,000
	<b>REPF allocation</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£179,363</b>
UKSPF Management and Administration		£13,000	£0
<b>UKSPF Total</b>		<b>£266,763</b>	<b>£60,401</b>
<b>REPF Total</b>		<b>£0</b>	<b>£179,363</b>

5.18 The above reallocation allows for considerable continuity with agreed priorities and proposals (only one new project is introduced). Furthermore, concurrent initiatives, at risk due to undefined budgets, are delivered within existing project remits where a direct link is established to the delivery and outcomes of said project.

5.19 These amendments are detailed on a project-by-project basis below:

- **Town Centre Masterplans** (formerly 'Newbury Masterplan') has its allocation reduced from £117,875 to £78,643. This new budget covers previous staff time (£9,250), hourly town centre footfall data (£5,300) and a town centre improvements fund (£64,093) to be directed on priorities following a review of possible interventions and the establishment of a working group (both of which have now taken place) under the direction of the Portfolio Holder. These initiatives further the Council Strategy's directives to progress town centre masterplans to deliver high quality local facilities and services to communities (5.9).
- **Shaw House Improvements** denotes a programme of initiatives to improve the community, heritage and business offer at the house and within its grounds to drive the visitor economy. This is being delivered by the Communities Service and includes (a) the restoration of the Heritage Gate and the creation of exhibition rooms (£20,000), and (b) the establishment of a new multi-use playground (£30,000) to further Shaw House's offer as a visitor destination – especially for families with young children. This project will be delivered following procurement in line with sections 4.5 and 5.5 of the Council's Strategy relating to improvements to business venues, and visitor and heritage destinations.
- As detailed the budget requirements for the **business forums** are lower than anticipated, freeing up budget to support opportunities relating to other priorities. In this case, a reduction in budget from £10,000 to £4,000 is recommended. Of the two proposed events, the Rural Business Forum was delivered for circa £1,000 and a developed plan for the Annual Business Forum this summer estimates a requirement for £3,000 of funding. Thus, the project delivers in line with agreed priorities (Council Strategy – 4.5) and outcomes, whilst simultaneously freeing up spend for other opportunities.
- The Council's originally agreed allocation for the **Get Britain Working** project is also no longer required in its entirety (£40,000). DWP's decision to cover the costs of the initiative, releases funding for

alternative provision. In line with the remit of the People and Skills UKSPF priority and existing local programmes, it is recommended that a budget is retained to support local placements for 16–25-year-olds through a partnership with the British Film Office (£6,000) and provision is kept for officer time to date (£9,250). Therefore, skilled opportunities are provided for local children and adults potentially leading to job opportunities – in line with Priority Area 2 of the Council’s Strategy.

- It is recommended that the unallocated capital contingency (£6,051) is merged with the budget for the **Rural Business Capital Grants** (£109,363) to allow further support to be delivered to local businesses in rural areas. This directly links to the aim of working with rural businesses to invest in capital opportunities to promote resilience, growth and jobs (Council Strategy – 4.3). An application process has been conducted and suitable projects identified for support. Agreements and distribution of funds is waiting on Finance sign off. Where the original budget didn’t allow for full awards for all funded projects, the addition of contingency would rectify this imbalance – allowing for a fairer scheme to be delivered.
- The **Downlands Sports Centre** (£70,000) project looks to create and upgrade rural amenities at the site in Compton, providing services for the rural communities located across the north of the district. This includes the purchase of equipment and works to build on the Council’s long-term partnership with Everyday Active to improve user experience, realise commercialisation opportunities and safeguard the future of the centre. Utilising additional funding (£20,000) the project team from the Communities Service can upgrade the gym, increasing its capacity and ensuring that rural communities have access to a greater range of uses on site. This builds on the success of the project to date and directly contributes to the Council Strategy’s priorities to deliver better services (1), provide opportunities for all (2) and support thriving communities (5).

5.20 The above reallocations and actions provide the clearest way to achieve spend, outcomes and ensure strategic investments that contributes to long-term service provision and financial stability.

5.21 Whilst the terms of both funds preclude the Council from retaining funds and thus making savings where underspend arises, all projects are set out with risk and financial efficiency in mind and will comply with new processes such as spend panel to ensure best value for money is achieved.

## **6 Supporting Information**

6.1 The guidance, terms and conditions of both UKSPF and REPF are set out in the [UK Shared Prosperity Fund 2025-26: Technical Note](#) and embedded Prospectus.

## **7 Options for consideration**

7.1 Alternative option 1 – Do nothing. This risks considerable underspend and failure to achieve community, business and resident priorities and objectives. The underspend being returned to Government and therefore able to be accumulated as a saving to the Council.

7.2 Alternative option 2 – recommended reallocations and actions are revisited while other options are considered. This option would put progress on outcomes and spend on hold, setting back the programme – possibly by months. Service leads from across the Council have been consulted in addition to existing project leads and therefore revised suggestions would take time and considerable engagement to explore and ensure that can feasibly delivered in line with agreed objectives by the end of September.

## **8 Conclusion**

8.1 The recommended reallocations and actions are approved and are pursued to achieve MHCLG's and Defra's spend and performance targets, progress on local priorities set out in the original approved plan and the Council Strategy, and invest to support future service delivery and its financial requirements. Given the short timescale to spend the funding, and the possibility of it being clawed by Central Government, it is recommended that delegated authority is provided to the Executive Director of Place in conjunction with Section 151 Officer and Portfolio Holder to amend the allocations in line the original objectives of the Investment Plan and the wider priorities of both the shared prosperity funds and the Council. It is hoped that this will not be necessary but allows flexibility should any of the projects stall due to unforeseen circumstances.

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### **Background Papers:**

[UK Shared Prosperity Fund 2025-26: Technical Note](#)

[Individual Member Decision 16 May 2025](#)

**Subject to Call-In:**

Yes: x      No:

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval

Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council

Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position

Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees or Task Groups within preceding six months

Item is Urgent Key Decision

Report is to note only

**Wards affected:** All wards

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