

ANGUS COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 27 FEBRUARY 2024

PLACE PROSPERITY PROGRAMME: UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUNDED PROJECTS

REPORT BY ALISON SMITH, DIRECTOR OF VIBRANT COMMUNITIES & SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

1. ABSTRACT

This report provides an update on projects approved or deferred under the under the Place Prosperity Programme funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Funding in Angus in September 2023. It recommends that members agree the further deferral of a decision on Arbroath Community Centre until the feasibility study is complete and agree to carry forward the amount ringfenced at the moment for this project in to 2024/25; Agree to re-allocate £108,500 of UK Shared Prosperity funding of the £143,540 previously awarded to the Angus Alive Signal Tower project to an alternative project submitted to the Place Based Investment Programme 2023/24, to carry forward the remaining £35,040 and agree an award of £108,500 from the 2024/25 allocation subject to compliance with all grant pre-conditions by the applicant; and; to approve an award of £108,500 of UK Shared Prosperity funding for 2023/24 to Brechin Station Footbridge and Access Improvements as the alternative project.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICIES

2.1 This report contributes to the following priorities in the Angus Council Plan 2023-28:

Caring for our Place

- Engage with communities to support their ambitions to deliver on local aspirations (e.g., community asset transfer requests, community gardens, food hubs)
- Maximise funding opportunities and grants to the Third Sector and communities to support their ambitions to deliver services.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee: -

- (i) Notes the updated position on the Arbroath Community Centre project and agree that consideration of funding for this project be further deferred until completion of the feasibility study by the local community in March 2024 and agrees to carry forward the proposed amount of UK Shared Prosperity funding of £200,000 to 2024/25.
- (ii) Agree not to proceed with allocation of £143,540 from 2023/24 UK Shared Prosperity Funding to the Angus Alive Signal Tower project, as previously approved by committee.
- (iii) Agree to re-allocate and award £108,500 of the 2023/24 UK Shared Prosperity funding noted at recommendation (ii) above to Brechin Station Footbridge and access improvements.
- (iv) Agree to carry forward the remaining £35,040 of the 2023/24 UK Shared Prosperity funding noted at recommendation (ii) above to be included in the 2024/25 allocation; and
- (v) Agree for £143,540 to be committed from the 2024/25 UK Shared Prosperity Funding for the Angus Alive Signal Tower Museum project, subject to Angus Alive complying with all pre conditions of the grant offer by no later than 31 March 2024.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Communities Committee at their meeting of the 26th September 2023 considered projects submitted to the Place-Based Investment Programme ([Report 262/33 Refers](#)). The programme brought together funding from the Scottish Government Capital Place-Based Investment Programme (PBIP) and UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).
- 4.2 Given the related nature of funding within Interventions S1 (Place Based Improvements, Regeneration and Town Centre Improvements) and S4 (Design and Management of the Built and Landscaped Environment of the UKSPF Angus Investment Plan ([Report 165/23 refers](#))) a total of £525,000 was added to the PBIP. This allowed officers to coordinate through a single application and assessment process, increase the funding available and help to ensure delivery within this financial year.
- 4.3 Specific to the element of the programme to be funded through the UKSPF the Committee agreed at that meeting to approve an allocation of £143,540 towards the Angus Alive Signal Tower project and to defer a decision on a match of £200,000 from the UKSPF towards the Arbroath Community Centre project to a future meeting.

5. CURRENT POSITION

- 5.1 The UKSPF is a three year programme (2022-2025) however the terms and conditions of the fund had set out that funds must be fully spent within the relevant financial year with no opportunity for carry forward. Due to delays in sign off of the Investment Plans UK Government had previously advised in February 2023 that Year 1 (2022/23) underspends could be carried forward to Year 2 (2023/24) however no further carry forward beyond this period.
- 5.2 On 9th November 2023 the UK Government Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) provided an update letter to local authorities on the approach to management of Year 2 (2023/24) underspends advising that these can be retained. The impact of this is that funds will no longer remain at risk if not spent by March 2024 and existing committed project funds can be carried forward to 2024/25.
- 5.3 This flexibility is welcomed however the DLUHC at UK Government have advised that there is no further commitment to UKSPF beyond the current end date of March 2025 and therefore all projects require to be completed and funds spent by this date.
- 5.4 The assessment and scoring process for the Place Based Investment Programme as set out below therefore weighted deliverability as one of the higher scoring elements to ensure that funds would be spent prior to the end of March 2024.
- 5.5 A full update on the detail and impact on the overall programme will be included within the UKSPF update report to Policy and Resources Committee on 12th March 2024.

Criteria	Maximum Score per assessor
Impact	15
Deliverability within the timescales set	15
Sustainability	10
Place based evidence of need	10
Leverage	5
Carbon reduction	5
Total	60

- 5.6 Due to various factors as outlined below both UKSPF funded projects will be unable to commit or spend any funds within the 2023/24 financial year.

Arbroath Community Centre

- 5.7 The project is to fund the replacement of the Arbroath Community Centre roof and lower this to make it more energy efficiency and wind and watertight.
- 5.8 Further to the committee decision to defer, a drone survey was undertaken to provide a more detailed analysis of the works required to the roof. This has indicated that a less costly option is potentially possible and costs for this are being developed.
- 5.9 The feasibility study to consider community interest in taking on the community centre was delayed as the lead contact on behalf of the community was ill however, work on this is now underway and due for completion by the end of February/start of March.
- 5.10 This information is required prior to bringing a recommendation back to committee and we aim to bring a report to Communities committee on 16th April 2024. We are therefore unable to commit or spend any funds on this project this financial year.

Angus Alive Signal Tower Project

- 5.11 This project is to deliver a unique community garden and courtyard café activity space at Signal Tower Museum. The application had advised that the project could be delivered by March 2024 and works were scheduled to complete in February 2024.
- 5.12 Following agreement to fund the project the applicant advised of issues relating to the terms and conditions of the grant funding and that further work was required in relation to procurement. The most recent project update advised that whilst there had been some further discussions on procurement the project was unlikely to start this financial year and therefore cannot commit or spend any of the grant allocation in 2023/24.
- 5.13 It is therefore recommended the funding earmarked for this project be re-allocated for 2023/24 as set out in Section 6 below and that the sum of £143,540 be committed from the 2024/25 UK Shared Prosperity Funding for the Angus Alive Signal Tower Museum project subject to Angus Alive complying with all terms and conditions of the grant offer by no later than 31 March 2024.
- 5.14 Should Angus Alive be unable to meet the 31 March 2024 deadline, the project would need to be resubmitted for 2024/25 as part of a further call for applications which can commit and spend all funding by no later than 31 March 2025, with no guarantee of being approved.

6. PROPOSALS

- 6.1 Given the slippage in spend across all projects, particularly capital, it is important that we have projects underway quickly and therefore officers recommend that an alternative project is brought forward to utilise some of the underspend from the 2023/24 allocation which was originally earmarked for the Signal Tower project.
- 6.2 Brechin Railway Footbridge and Access Improvements will see a Victorian footbridge, acquired by the Brechin Caledonian Railway put in place that will allow access to wheelchair and wheelers. It will providing safe direct access to the station from the timber yard used as parking space to the station platform, thus improving visitor access.
- 6.3 The project scored highly through the officer assessment panel (Appendix 2). The project had a robust delivery plan, match funding in place, and a six month timescale from grant officer to completion sign off. Works could be mobilised prior to financial year end, committing funds and providing some spend. However, it was rejected at the time due to other potential alternative funding sources including Levelling Up Fund possibly being available. However, a decision was made in November 2023 that remaining LUF funds would be awarded to unsuccessful projects from Round 2. This funding source is therefore no longer available. The project provides a clear fit with Intervention S4 (Design and Management of the Built and Landscaped Environment) of the UKSPF.
- 6.4 Work is continuing with consultants Systra and council officers to develop the overall business case for Brechin Caledonian Railway to target future funding sources. Whilst this project is only a small element of the overall project it will support continued improvements to this successful attraction.

- 6.5 Re-allocation of the funding from 2023/24 will support UKSPF spend for 2023/24, reduce the level of underspend and ensure that we have more committed projects underway.
- 6.6 Officers therefore recommend that £108,500 of UK Shared Prosperity funding of the £143,540 previously awarded to the Angus Alive Signal Tower project be re-allocated to Brechin Station Footbridge and Access Improvements as the alternative project.
- 6.7 It is also recommended that the balance of £35,040 be carried forward to 2024/25 and that £143,540 be committed from the 2024/25 for the Angus Alive Signal Tower Museum project in 2024/25 rather than 2023/24, subject to confirmation that they can meet the terms and conditions of the grant offer. This would be a reduction in the funding available to support other projects in 2024/25, reducing the amount from £306,500 to £169,960 for 2024/25 within Intervention S4 of UKSPF

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications as funding is contained within the overall UK Shared Prosperity Fund however all funding must be spent by end of March 2025 otherwise will be unable to be drawn down.
- 7.2 The Communities and Place Priority total funding allocated over the 3 year period of UKSPF is £1,846,965.

The table below summaries the position as at 31st December 2023 prior to the recent review of projects.

	2023/24 (incl. 22/23 CF)	2024/25
Available	737,784	1,109,181
Allocated	698,784	208,000
Remaining	39,000	901,181

- 7.3 Should the recommendations as set out in this report a summary of the impacts of funding allocated to the Communities and Place priority is set out below. This does not take account of any other shifts in project programming within this intervention.

	2023/24 (incl. 22/23 CF)	2024/25
Available	737,784	1,344,221
Allocated	463,744	551,540
Remaining	274,040	792,681

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 There are no specific risks in the Corporate Risk Register that would impact on these proposals. Ensuring commitment of external funding to deliverable projects ensures we are able to fully maximise opportunities.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Brechin Footbridge and Access Improvements will provide a positive environmental impact through reduction in carbon emissions by encouraging trips by walking and wheeling.

10. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT, HUMAN RIGHTS AND FAIRER SCOTLAND DUTY

- 10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was previously carried out and this has been updated to incorporate the assessment of the Brechin Station Footbridge and Access Improvements. This is included as Appendix 1 to the Report.

11. CONSULTATION

- 11.1 The Director of Finance and Director of Legal, Governance and Change were consulted in the preparation of this report.

NOTE: No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

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List of Appendices:

- Appendix 1 Equality Impact Assessment
Appendix 2 Original Project Summary Sheets with Officer Recommendations