

Appendix A

Briefing Note (12/04/2024): Investment to support villages, parishes and market towns across East Lindsey

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 East Lindsey District Council has been awarded a significant allocation of UK Shared Prosperity and Rural Prosperity Funding (£6.14m, less administration). Launching in January 2023, the Programme delivers on an Investment Plan agreed with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), itself based on an extensive consultation with local communities and elected Members. The Programme is divided into three themes:

- **Communities and Place** – Supporting pride in place, culture, heritage and tourism.
- **Supporting Local Businesses** – Supporting local businesses to grow and local productivity, supporting employment growth.
- **People & Skills** – Reducing economic activity, supporting employment growth and improving the skills of adult learners.

1.3. Members and the wider community, upon extensive consultation, have highlighted investment in parishes and market towns as a strategic priority. This priority is embodied within SELCP's emerging Growth and Prosperity Plan. This is why the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Programme has invested a major proportion of its available funds into initiatives that support this, both through the main Programme (such as through investment in the Old Bolingbroke Gas House and the transformation of Wainfleet Market Place) and through a substantial (£645,750, inc. administration), ringfenced fund for small grants (up to £24,999) to parish councils, village halls and community projects – LCF GRASSroots.

1.4. The GRASSroots scheme, administered by the Lincolnshire Community Foundation, has been a major success, investing over £725,000 in community assets across the Partnership area in only nine months, with positive reviews and at a low administrative cost to the taxpayer (comparing favourably with delivering 'in house'). Examples of projects supported in East Lindsey District include:

- Woodhall Spa Cricket Club – New cricket nets (£19,842)
- Skegness Sports Association – A new boiler and replacement furniture for the Club House (£24,999)
- Horncastle Town Council – A series of community events and improving signage and the public realm in Horncastle (£17,207)
- The Coastal Eco Centre – A Programme of arts and crafts for local residents (£17,086).
- Aby with Greenfields Parish Council – Renovations to Aby Village Hall (£16,000)
- Spilsby Town Council – New play equipment (£21,000).

1.5. Both the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Rural England Prosperity Fund are currently time limited until March 2025. The future beyond March 2025 is unclear,

due to the requirement for a national decision on the future of UKSPF/REPF funding. This means that these community projects must be delivered in completion by March 2025. It also means that the support offered to these community groups ends abruptly at this point, as does time-limited provision for supporting project sustainability and future project development.

- 1.6. The success of this scheme has also meant that demand far outstrips the supply of funding available, with only £228,000 remaining to distribute. It is therefore likely that the scheme will close before the end of the UKSPF Programme (March 2025). The next Round (to be determined in April 2024) has £279,131 in Applications, currently being processed. There is a risk that the Fund will close in the early Summer without additional support.
- 1.8. A Community Reserve application may be more appropriate for a parish than a UKSPF grant in the following circumstances:
 - The application does not meet the outcomes required by the UKSPF Communities and Place Investment Plan. A number of applications have been submitted to the UKSPF/RPF Programme which meet this definition.
 - The application is of a value above £24,999 (the maximum value of a GRASSroots grant) or cannot be delivered in multiple phases below £50,000 - £75,000.
 - The project cannot be delivered in full prior to March 2025 (the end of the UKSPF/RPF Programme).

Currently, the facility is under-utilised and there is an opportunity to create a comprehensive 'single point of contact' for funding parishes, communities and market towns to facilitate and maximise the available grant and loan funding available from both the Council and third-party funding sources.

2. PROPOSAL

- 2.1. The proposal is to build on the successes of the Communities and Place UKSPF Strand and to resolve some of the inherent risks associated with the impending end of the UKSPF Programme and the under-utilisation of the Community Reserve by allocating additional investment from Corporate Priority Reserve, and by unifying the Community Reserve with the UKSPF/RPF Programme.