

Rother District Council

Report to: Cabinet

Date: 8 April 2024

Title: Levelling Up Partnership Funding and Projects

Report of: Ben Hook, Director – Place and Climate Change

Cabinet Members: Councillor Bayliss

Ward(s): All Wards

Decision Type: Key

Officer

Recommendation(s): **Recommendation to COUNCIL:** That the Levelling Up Partnership funding allocated by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities for projects across Rother be added to the 2024/5 Capital Programme and Revenue Budgets at the amounts £18.080m and £0.410m, respectively.

AND

It be **RESOLVED:** That:

- 1) subject to full Council approval of the programme of projects outlined in this report, the total of £18,490,000 Levelling Up Fund be accepted, and the Director – Place and Climate Change be granted delegated authority to agree terms and conditions of the grant, in consultation with Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Economic Development;
- 2) delegated authority be granted to the Director – Place and Climate Change, in consultation with legal colleagues and the Council's Section 151 Officer to extend Levelling Up Partnership grant funds to third party entities, as decided by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities allocation advice, via individual grant agreements; and
- 3) the Councils' role as the accountable body for the Levelling Up Partnership be noted.

Reasons for

Recommendations: The DLUHC grant funding for the Levelling Up Partnership Programme 24/25 needs to be formally received by the Council and added to the Council's Revenue and Capital budgets. The funds will be provided to delivery organisations in-line with decisions made by DLUHC.

Introduction

1. The Levelling Up Partnership (LUP) is a government initiative administered through the Department of Levelling Up and Communities (DLUHC). The Government stated purpose of the LUPs initiative is to boost economic growth, improve infrastructure, enhance social well-being and reduce disparities in areas most in need¹.
2. This funding is separate to the funding previously reported (the Levelling Up Fund) which was allocated by DLUHC to the De La Warr Pavilion and Sidley. This funding is a range of capital and revenue projects, Rother wide to boost economic growth and community infrastructure across the district.
3. Whilst the Council was consulted regarding strategic priorities, the final decisions on which projects would be allocated funding, and the amounts provisionally awarded, were made by DLUHC as a result of direct liaison with community and business projects and representatives.
4. The grant award is for 2024/25 spend and contains both Capital and Revenue funding.

Overview

5. The prospective deliverers of the funded projects are:
 - Rother District Council (RDC)
 - Rother Voluntary Action (RVA)
 - The Pelham, Bexhill
 - Flatlands CIC for Beeching Road Studios, Bexhill
 - Chambers of Commerce for Battle, Bexhill and Rye
 - Sussex Police (for benefit to Rother district)

Project overviews can be found at Appendix A.

6. Projects need to be delivered by March 2025 with the formal announcement (and lifting of the embargo) expected from DLUHC by 1 April 2024.
7. An additional point to note is that DLUHC has also funded several other projects, for which East Sussex County Council is the accountable body. These are listed for information at the end of Appendix A.
8. Reporting of delivery progress and spend to DLUHC will be undertaken by the Levelling Up Partnership Manager, approved by the Director – Place and Climate Change, in line with DLUHC grant agreement requirements to be advised.
9. All projects will be screened and assessed, if necessary, under Subsidy Control regulations.
10. An initial communications plan has been developed with the Marketing Communications Account Manager.

¹ [Partnerships in Place: The Business of Levelling Up | Local Government Association](#)

11. The Levelling Up Partnership Manager is working with Legal, Finance and Procurement Services to scope out and develop estimated costings to inform allocation of funding necessary to cover capacity costs.

Economic Impact and Community Value

12. A full economic and social impact assessment will be undertaken for the LUP programme alongside that for the 3-year investment plan for the Bexhill Town Board (which is subject of a separate Cabinet paper of the same date). This will be ongoing and completed by 1 August 2024.
13. It is evident that the programme will provide significant direct social benefit in terms of social capital development, community health and wellbeing, directly addressing poverty and lack of affordable housing. It will also contribute to long term business growth through business infrastructure development and crime prevention. For example:
 - The funding for RDC delivered projects will enable much needed leisure and housing and primary and preventative health provision to be provided or enhanced.
 - The RDC delivered project to support the Rother Wine Economy will enhance work already being undertaken with funding through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).
 - The funding for the rural mobile community hub will enable the provision of primary care services (including vaccinations), food bank and other services in the most deprived/isolated rural areas.
 - The funding for the Chambers of Commerce has already led to improved collaboration between these organisations and RDC and can act as a catalyst for their own organisational development.
 - The funding for The Pelham and Flatlands (Beeching Road Studios) will play a major role in enabling financial sustainability for individual community organisations. It will also be a driver for more locality-based delivery of public and voluntary/community service provision and for the development of creative activity.
 - Further, funding for the Bexhill Community Hub is a key measure within the Council's adopted Anti-Poverty Strategy (2022-27) and will support the core aims of the strategy, namely to improve the coordination and accessibility of support and advice services locally.
 - Funding for the Database and Intranet for Safer Communities software system will allow real time evidence gathering of anti-social behaviour, shoplifting and other crimes which negatively impact on retail businesses and residents, especially in town centres.

Programme Governance

14. The Council will be the accountable body for the LUP funded projects. Grant agreements between the Council and each individual grant recipient will make clear the terms under which the grant is awarded and minimise any risk to the

Council as accountable body; however, given the complexity of this programme which covers 13 distinct projects, it is important that a robust programme management and performance monitoring approach is followed, to ensure the terms of the grant agreements are met. The recently appointed Levelling Up Partnership Manager will oversee the grant delivery agreements with both internal (RDC) and external delivery partners, to ensure the financial and performance monitoring of projects, prepare reports to Senior Leaders, the Council and DLUHC, develop and deliver an effective communications programme, and ensure compliance with the reporting requirements of the LUP.

Conclusion

15. The award of LUP funding represents much needed investment in community building infrastructure and capacity building that underpins social capital and reduction in social and health inequalities.
16. Whilst RDC is not the decision-making body for how the funding has been allocated, it is the accountable body as well as a delivery partner. This makes the robustness and clarity of governance arrangements particularly important.

Environmental Implications

17. The LUP programme of funded projects will be tested through the new RDC Carbon and Co-Benefits Decision Support Tool by end April 24, and updated in terms of Environmental Implications through the update of the Project Initiation Document which will be regularly sighted by the Senior Leadership Team.

Equalities Impact

18. A full equalities impact assessment will be developed for the programme by end April 24 and in-line with any requirements of the forthcoming DLUHC requirements. In addition, an assessment of the socio-economic impact will be developed as per the Council's recent commitment to do so. In the meantime, there are no negative equalities implications identified. Through grant agreements, all construction and public realm enhancement will be required to show consideration of equalities impact and compliance with Disability Discrimination Act (1995 and updates) and the Equality Act (2010 and updates).

Risk Management

19. A risk register has been initiated through the Project Initiation Document (PID) for this programme which will be initially reported to the Corporate Programme Board 21 March 2024. A risk workshop is planned for April with relevant RDC managers. A networking group of external funding organisations will also meet regularly and an informal, peer risk identification and mitigation process will form part of this, in addition to the risk management provided through performance monitoring of the grant agreements. The overall risk register will be updated as regularly, informed by these in-depth risk assessment processes and in-line with DLUHC's own requirements.
20. Once the programme has been established, the Internal Audit Manager will be invited to review and provide feedback on both the registers and the

overarching risk management process. Risk management will form part of regular updates of the LUP PID to the Senior Leadership Team.

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	Yes
Crime and Disorder	Yes	Consultation	No
Sustainability	Yes	Access to Information	No
Risk Management	Yes	Exempt from publication	No

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Appendices:	Appendix A – Project Details
Relevant Previous Minutes:	None
Background Papers:	None
Reference Documents:	None

Details of projects awarded DLUHC funding (as per the order of DLUHC award notification)

Note: DLUHC funded projects ROTH_06, ROTH_07, ROTH_14 will be delivered by East Sussex County Council, and they will be the accountable body. They are therefore excluded from the scope of this report.

DLUHC ref	Project	Deliverer	Capital (CDEL) 24/5 in £m	Revenue (RDEL) 24/5 in £m
ROTH_01	Residential units and leisure centre at King Offa	RDC	9.0	0.1
ROTH_02	Welcome Centre at Camber	RDC	1.69	
ROTH_03	Swimming pool and Leisure Centre improvements at Rye	RDC	0.65	
ROTH_04	Establishment of Barnhorn Green Health Centre, Sidley	RDC	5.0	
ROTH_05	Purchase and fitting of a mobile community hub (minibus) for rural Rother.	RVA	0.13	
ROTH_08	Bexhill Community Hub building purchase and renovation	RDC->lease to RVA		
ROTH_09	Final phase of the renovation of The Pelham community centre	The Pelham	0.34	
ROTH_10	Expansion and enhancement of Beeching Road Studios facilities for additional studio, exhibition and storage space	Flatlands CIC	0.12	
ROTH_11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhancements to Battle High Street tbc following further consultation with Chamber members and alignment (c. 0.01m CDEL) - Pot for enhancement of Bexhill public realm - tbc following further consultation with Chamber members and to align with any forthcoming Town Board priorities (c. 0.03m CDEL) - Public realm improvements for Rye - tbc following further consultation with Chamber members (c. 0.03m CDEL) - Capacity funding for business support development via Bexhill Chamber and case for Maritime Centre Bexhill to RIBA 3 (c.0.057m RDEL) - Preparation of case for Rye Business Improvement District (c. 0.063m RDEL) 	Chambers of Commerce: Battle; Bexhill; Rye	0.07	0.12
ROTH_12	Signage and virtual asset to support Rother Wine Economy	RDC	0.05	
ROTH_13	Licensing and 2 years management of DISC system ²	Sussex Police	0.03	

² Database and Intranet for Safer Communities

Table 2: List of DLUHC funded projects (24/5) for which East Sussex County Council is the accountable body. These are outside the direct scope of this report but are shown here for information to our best knowledge on 24 March 2023

DLUHC ref	Project	Deliverer	Capital (CDEL) 24/5 in £m	Revenue (RDEL) 24/5 in £m
ROTH_06	Sidley Family Hub and Youth Services - funding for extensive improvements to Sidley Family Hub allowing for multiple services to be delivered at the same time	ESCC is accountable body	0.09	-
ROTH_07	Funding for a new mobile youth bus, which would be delivered by ESCC, and would aid delivery of youth services in rural areas and tackle anti-social behaviour	ESCC is accountable body	0.07	-
ROTH_14	Flexible pot administered by ESCC to support proposals from FE colleges and other organisations to improve skills provision.	ESCC is accountable body	0.53	-